

12 WAYS WE CAN ACTUALLY...

FIX DOWNTOWN

ROBIN LUMB - PAGE 9



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WHERE TO FIND US - PAGE 15

The Jacksonville OBSERVER MONTHLY

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Issue #1 - May 2010

Local Prostitution Goes Digital

SHOCKING TRUTH:
Underage Girls Bought
and Sold as Sex Slaves
Today in Jacksonville

By Ryan Day

Recruited. Groomed. Prepared. Chosen. These are just some of the ways that women as young as 14 describe how they were led into the sex slave industry.

The common misconception is that prostitution only happens late at night on the wrong side of town. But in an age where commerce is moving rapidly to the Internet, the buying and selling of young women has also made the digital leap.

"I've been doing this for two years," said "Beth", a 17-year-old Jacksonville resident who currently advertises herself on the popular classifieds website Craigslist. "I'm looking for a sugar daddy. Maybe something long term. Maybe not. I just want someone to take me out. We can go dancing, dinner, whatever, you know? And if anything happens at the end of the night, then whatever. That's up to you and me."

Beth asked that her name be withheld not only for privacy purposes but because she doesn't want her mother to know the life she's leading.



NOTE: We have used assumed names to ensure the safety of all the girls interviewed for this article.

iStockPhoto

Continued on page 8

Yes, We're Now in Print!

By Austin Cassidy

When the *Jacksonville Observer* launched as an online publication in May of 2009, I wasn't sure what kind of reaction we would get. Would anyone care? Would anyone actually visit the website?

Well, here we are a year later and clearly something has gone right. Not only has the website been a tremendous success, but we've expanded to radio and print as well!

That's right - every Wednesday you can hear the *Jacksonville Observer Radio Show* with host Tom Patton on ABC 1320 WBOB. And on Saturday morning our sports columnist Richard Miller has his very own program, called *Inside the Game*.

And of course, the monthly print publication that you're holding in your hands at this very moment.

We know Jacksonville has no shortage of free weekly and monthly alternative magazines. Finding a space in the marketplace will be no easy challenge. But if the upward momentum we've experienced during the past year is any clue, it seems like Jacksonville is finally ready for a conservative alternative!

We hope you enjoy this first edition and we look forward to putting out many more.

In between paper versions, we also hope you'll take a few moments to check out our digital counterpart at www.JaxObserver.com.

The Tea Party: A Third Party in the Making?

By Darcy G. Richardson

Like a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle, the tea party movement is arguably the most complex, if not confusing, citizen-led phenomenon in U.S. history. One almost needs a scorecard to keep track of the various groups and players involved and a crystal ball to predict where it might lead.

It's a phenomenon that has struck fear in the hearts of politicians on both

sides of the aisle. An aroused citizenry is the last thing leaders in both major parties want to see. Nervous Democrats fear that the angry populism embodied in the growing movement could sweep them from power in November while the Republicans worry that the anti-government insurgency they helped fuel could eventually spiral out of control, resulting in the creation of a new and potentially viable third-party movement that could doom the GOP

to minority status for the foreseeable future.

Given the country's current national debt and economic crisis — a fiscal and financial catastrophe in which both major parties share a large degree of culpability — Democrats and Republicans alike have plenty of reason to be worried.

From the moment CNBC's Rick Santelli, in a rage-fueled display of television theatrics, accused the

Obama administration of "promoting bad behavior" and called for a "Tea Party" protest in February 2009, the tea party movement has grown by leaps and bounds. According to a recent USA Today/Gallup survey, some 28 percent of the American people now consider themselves supporters of the movement, up from 17 percent only a month ago.

While Santelli, who sparked the greatest civic reawakening in nearly

twenty years when he criticized President Obama's plan to provide mortgage assistance for struggling homeowners on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, quickly distanced himself from the nascent movement, the tea party has spawned several nationally-organized groups and thousands of local organizations throughout the country. Jacksonville is one of those communities, boasting

Continued on pages 5-7

THE JACKSONVILLE OBSERVER RADIO SHOW

Hosted by Tom Patton

Listen Every Wednesday at 5:00pm on ABC 1320 WBOB

“Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt.”
—Herbert Hoover

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Contact Us

The Jacksonville Observer welcomes comments and suggestions, as well as information about errors that call for corrections. We are committed to presenting information fairly and accurately.

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Things To Do...

JACKSONVILLE SHARKS
Veterans Arena - May 14 & 22

Experience Arena football action at one of these two home games for the Jacksonville Sharks.

On Friday, May 14, the Sharks will face-off against the Dallas Vigilantes.

Then on Saturday May 22, the Sharks will take on the Cleveland Gladiators.

Tickets start at \$8.

Find out more about the Sharks: www.JaxSharks.com

JACKSONVILLE GREEN, HEALTH AND WELLNESS EXPO
Prime Osborn - May 15-16
Organized by Global GreenUp, LLC.

This event's goal is to inspire and encourage individuals to embrace a life of health, wellness and fitness through awareness of natural and alternative resources and solutions, energy conservation and recycling, advanced medicine research, education, nutrition, exercise, lifelong benefits of living a healthy lifestyle and long term savings.

The two-day event will feature a new and innovative mix of exhibitors and expert speakers through several classes, workshops, demos, kids activities and face painting, networking, a recycling drive and much more!

Admission is only \$5 for adults and kids under 12 get in free.

Find out more online: www.GlobalGreenUp.com

JACKSONVILLE CRAFT AND IMPORT BEER FESTIVAL
Veterans Arena - May 21

An even more impressive selection of American craft beers and imported beers from around the world will be available to sample at the 2nd Annual Jacksonville Craft and Import Beer Festival.

For those who celebrate and search for great beer, join us at the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena, to experience the rich, bold, and unique flavors you can only get at this event.

General admission is only \$30, VIP passed cost only \$45.

Find out more about this event: www.JaxBeerFest.com

CHICAGO: THE MUSICAL
Times Union Center - May 21-23

In this day and age, when everyone wants more bang for their buck, it's good to know there's a "sure thing" - CHICAGO: The Musical.

It's got the funniest songs, the hottest dancing, the sexiest cast and the greatest story on Broadway. No wonder CHICAGO has been honored with six Tony Awards®, two Olivier Awards, a Grammy® and thousands of standing ovations.

Plus, it makes any event more special from killer first dates to unforgettable anniversaries.

For more information and tickets: www.JaxEvents.com

BUSINESS EXPO 2010
Prime Osborn - May 26

Over 200 exhibitors will offer information and samples of their products and services. Additional workshops will also be offered throughout the day.

Take advantage of this opportunity to network with over 1,500 business professionals. The event is open to the general public and admission is free.

Find out more online at: www.OpportunityJacksonville.com

AXEMEN "PROS VS. JOES"
UNF Hodges Stadium - May 29

This is a pre-season "Pros vs. Joes" Game that includes UNF Rugby players.

For more information, call (904) 536-7501 or email Spinnerhowland@comcast.net.

JOAN RIVERS
Florida Theatre - June 3

Joan Rivers made her name in the 1960s as a sharp-tongued New York comedian. A graduate of Barnard College, she started off as a serious actress but quickly moved into stand-up comedy. By 1965 she was appearing on Johnny Carson's late night talk show, and by the end of the decade she was one of the few nationally known female comics.

Rivers appeared on Carson's The Tonight Show nearly 100 times and served as the show's only "permanent guest host" between 1983 and 1986.

Find out more online: www.FloridaTheatre.com

THE JACKSONVILLE JAZZ FESTIVAL
Downtown Jax - May 27-30

Announced performers for the 2010 Jacksonville Jazz Festival include Patti LaBelle, Spyro Gyra, Tito Puente Jr., Chris Botti, Ledisi, Irvin Mayfield, Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Bernie Williams, Basia, Superstars of Jazz Fusion, Buckwheat Zydeco, among many others.

Admission to the festival is free but attendees will also have the opportunity to purchase Experience Jazz packages and daily preferred seating passes for all festival days and many other festival perks.

For more information visit: www.COJ.net

THE JACKSONVILLE SUNS
The Baseball Grounds

The Jacksonville Suns provide some of the best baseball you can find anywhere.

Baseball greats such as Hammerin' Hank Aaron, Nolan Ryan, Tom Seaver, and Alex Rodriguez have all spent time in Jacksonville perfecting their skills. Who knows? Some of today's Suns could be tomorrow's stars! So, bring the family down to the ballpark, grab a hotdog, and see for yourself what all the excitement is about.

May 26-30: Against the Chattanooga Lookouts.

May 31-June 4: Against the Carolina Mudcats.

Find out more online: www.JaxSuns.com

What's The Buzz?

Hosted by Republican Insiders Lenny Curry and Cindy Graves



Every Thursday at 5pm on ABC 1320 WBOB

Is Now The Right Time to Buy?

By Adam J. Locklear
and Alex Rose

Clearly 2009 was a confusing time to be a homebuyer in Florida. But if you follow local and national trends, you know that things are looking up.

Flip on the HDTV and you see various television series featuring first time homebuyers searching for their dream villa.

Ask any Realtor the basic question of rent versus buy and you will get a very direct answer. With the swift punch of a mortgage calculator and a few encouraging words they will quickly persuade you to purchase a home.

But what type of home should you buy and how will you comfortably complete such a task in the current economy?

Following the mortgage meltdown you could ask the average person on the street what they knew about the real estate market and you would get the same dull answer: "it is bad" they would haphazardly tell you.

At the same time, every news station was telling them hope is a dim light at the end of a long tunnel.

In reality, most people will remain idle until they know for sure things are safe.

While sitting on the fence, renters who continue to pay off their landlord's mortgage, will miss out on the best real estate buyer's market of the last century. Federal tax credits coupled with the lowest interest rates on record are seeing buyers settle into homes with housing payments less than their previous rental payments.

With first time home buyers comprising more than 80% of the market, it's clear that the next generation of homebuyers has arrived. Programs such as "Florida Assist" and "H2H" help first time homebuyers receive federal and local assistance towards the down payment on their first home. They must repay the



Has the housing market finally turned the corner?

Stock Photo

funds upon the sale of the home, but are not charged for the loan as the interest rate is 0%. With hints of new programs on the way from local banks and government entities, buyers will continue to receive support from the private and public sector to secure a homestead.

Buyers not only have down payment assistance, low interest rates and tax credits but also have a nearly endless supply of housing to choose from.

Retail buyers can go to anything from staged retail deals, livable short sale properties and handyman bank foreclosures. While sellers and mortgagors bite the nail in a declining

real estate market, buyers with a little common sense stand the best chance to weather the storm.

Plus, if you purchase a home for less than 80% Loan to Value (LTV) you do not have to pay private mortgage insurance. That can reduce your mortgage payment by as much as a few hundred dollars a month.

When you find a home you like contact an expert Realtor who can assess market conditions and tell you what the home is worth. Do your research. Many homes are priced at 80% LTV or less already.

Not all short sales and bank foreclosures are ugly houses. Many

deals sell with little to no repair.

Do not be afraid to get your hands dirty, all you need is to meet the right people who can help you succeed.

Who knows, you could find the deal of your lifetime!

Do not wait to buy a home, by the time the bottom of this real estate market is realized the opportunity will already be gone.

Buy a discount home now and reap the benefits later.

To learn more, contact Alex Rose or Adam Locklear of Locklear Realty at (904) 993-1346.

NASCAR Needs a Boost

Tribune Media Service

NASCAR pledged the 2010 season would be aimed at placating its hard-core supporters with rough-and-tumble racing, but the recession still seems to be slamming the wallets of its middle-class fan base.

According to estimates from official box scores, attendance decreased in nine of the first 10 races, with double-digit drops at Bristol Motor Speedway (14 percent), Phoenix International Raceway (13 percent) and Talladega Superspeedway (13 percent). International Speedway Corp., which owns Phoenix, Talladega and 10 more tracks that host Sprint Cup races, said during a first-quarter conference call last month that crowds at its speedways were at 81 percent of capacity.

"The year is unfolding as predicted," said Roger VanDerSnick, ISC's chief operating officer. "The biggest impediment is the economy."

To spice up its competition, NASCAR tried to encourage more action by loosening the rules. But the short tracks most renowned for the fender-banging embraced by longtime fans also have suffered erosion in crowds that have been a bellwether of NASCAR popularity.

After 55 consecutive sellouts, Bristol's 0.533-mile oval was more than 20,000 short of its 160,000 capacity March 21.

Richmond International Raceway, which sold out 33 consecutive races from 1991 to 2008, was listed at 93,000 in early May, its first crowd below six figures since the Chase for the Sprint Cup began in 2004.

VanDerSnick said blogs and Internet forums indicated fans still were warming up to NASCAR's changes.

Spirituality: Our Faith is Demonstrated by How We Handle Calamities

By Norris Burkes,
Florida Today

"I'm glad I'm sitting next to a chaplain," said a fellow passenger after hearing the pilot's announcement of a possible problem with our landing gear.

On our final approach, when we could see the emergency vehicles racing alongside us, my seatmate added, "I'm hoping you have some pull with the Big Guy upstairs."

That incident happened in the late '80s, but it wasn't the last time my traveling companions identified me as their good luck charm. It happened while patrolling in the aftermath of Katrina, during a bird strike on a military aircraft and also through a very dicey thunderstorm in a 35-year-old single-engine Cessna.

While sometimes charming, I know I'm not a good luck charm. Nevertheless, as I prepared to visit a few chaplain friends last month, I was praying for some of that luck.

My first visit was to a hospice

chaplain who serves as comforting angel to the terminally ill. Unfortunately, she's not exempt from the devilish misery sometimes inflicted on good people.

While on an errand with her daughter, she met a drunken driver in the middle of a Sacramento, Calif., intersection.

"I'm glad I'm sitting next to a chaplain," said a fellow passenger after hearing the pilot's announcement of a possible problem with our landing gear.

Her daughter is OK, but the jury still is out on my friend.

After weeks of hospitalization, she's still unable to speak and rations her weak smiles to one per visitor.

For my second visit, I went to Tucson, Ariz., to see retired Air Force chaplain Jim Young. Suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Jim's disease is more commonly known for

its most famous victim, Yankees first baseman, Lou Gehrig.

It affects about 30,000 people in the United States by attacking the nerve cells that control voluntary muscle movement. Patients in the later stages of the disease keep their mental faculties, but often are paralyzed and die within five years of diagnosis.

If evil could customize a disease for my friend, it would be ALS. Jim's an articulate man with the voice of a PBS radio broadcaster. But ALS stole his swallowing ability, slurred his speech and took away one of his biggest joys, eating.

"It's a series of losses," he said as I poured liquid nutrients into his stomach through his feeding tube.

"You don't know what will be next."

While Jim's disease left us both wondering what happened to clergy luck, the sense of entitled protection is not limited to clergy. In the hospital patients I saw as a chaplain, I found the feeling common among good church people.

It's not a false or off-putting piousness, but rather a subconscious belief that says: "God and I are on the same team, and I ought to be shielded from worldly dangers."

It's as though we expect a believer exemption on calamity.

It's much the same thought expressed by the older son in Jesus' famous parable of the Prodigal Son. The older brother became enraged with his father for planning a welcome home party for his younger son, who had previously disowned his family and squandered his inheritance.

The rage expressed by the older son has been called the ugly side of being good. It's our expression of discontent that we weren't blessed for our faithful service. It's an unjust anger over good

things happening to bad people.

The hard truth is that people of faith are granted no more riches or inflicted with any fewer tragedies, temptations or infirmities than are those without faith.

Jesus asserted that God causes the "the sun to warm and the rain to nourish - to everyone, regardless," meaning the passengers on my plane with the faulty landing gear were facing the same possible fate, no matter what their faith or lack of it.

Our landing was uneventful that day. But it reminded me that at the end of the day, it's really not how many calamities we avoid that demonstrates our faith, it's how well we fly through the calamities to manage a peaceful landing.

Norris Burkes is a former civilian hospital chaplain and an Air National Guard chaplain.

Write norris@thechaplain.net or visit www.thechaplain.net. You can also follow him on Twitter - user name is "chaplain" - or on Facebook at facebook.com/norrisburkes.

LISTEN UP!

Wednesdays, 5pm

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with host Tom Patton

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“INSIDE THE GAME”

with Observer Sports Columnist Richard Miller

**PLUS: Coach Darrell Pasquale, NASCAR Andy and
former Florida State star wide receiver Atrews Bell**

THE OBSERVER IS ON...

ABC 1320 WBOB

Many Claim Ownership of Tea Party

By Darcy G. Richardson

(continued from page 1)

Jacksonville is one of those communities, boasting a well-organized and flourishing First Coast Tea Party, founded by local tea party activists Billie Tucker and Carole McManus.

By now, a majority of Americans have become at least vaguely familiar with a few of the more prominent national tea party organizations — the Tea Party Express, Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Nation and Freedom Works, each laying claim to the Tea Party mantle.

While many observers trace the tea party's birth to the hundreds of April 15, 2009, Tax Day rallies held across the country, the current tea party movement actually grew out of Ron Paul's 2008 presidential campaign when thousands of his supporters organized tea parties around the country on December 16, 2007, the 234th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, a dramatic rallying cry against taxation without representation. Though only grudgingly acknowledged in the mainstream media and almost never by those who have sought to co-opt the movement, the 2007 tea party rallies organized by Paul's supporters coincided with a record-setting "money bomb," a 24-hour on-line fundraising frenzy that raised an estimated \$6 million from more than 58,000 contributors for the Texas congressman's insurgent candidacy.

"Congressman Paul is generally credited with helping to start the Tea Party movement back in 2007," said Mark Elam, a veteran Republican political consultant who helped the iconoclastic lawmaker fend off three tea party-backed challengers in last month's Republican primary in Texas. "It's very clear that that was the beginning of the Tea Party activities."

Wes Benedict, the Libertarian Party's national executive director who personally participated in the December 2007 tea party rally in Austin, Texas, also believes that supporters of Rep. Paul's presidential campaign deserve credit for inspiring the modern-day tea party movement. Like other libertarians, however, Benedict is growing increasingly worried about the movement's direction. "Unfortunately," he said wistfully, "with Fox News and other Republican boosters getting involved, the movement is putting out more of a distinctly partisan message than an anti-big government message," as Ron Paul originally intended.

Paul, who modestly acknowledges paving the way for the tea party movement, has expressed similar disappointment that his libertarian, free market and smaller government message has been diluted by many of those who have joined or co-opted the movement.

The Libertarian Party, the nation's third largest political party whose Illinois chapter conceived of the idea of a "Boston Tea Party" Tax Day rally in Chicago as early as December of 2008, also played a critical role in the movement's founding before a renegade party member ran off with their idea. The Libertarians were among those who helped organize hundreds of tea party rallies held around the country on April 15, 2009.

They watched helplessly, however, as the movement grew beyond anyone's wildest expectations, slowly

slipping from their grasp as it gained momentum.

Thomas L. Knapp of St. Louis, who founded the Boston Tea Party four years ago — a libertarian-oriented party committed to "reducing the size, scope and power of government at all levels" — laments that libertarian activists failed to seize the opportunity to provide direction to the fledgling and vaguely anti-government and anti-tax tea party movement.

"The Libertarian Party made a courtship play, but was rebuffed," wrote Knapp, publisher of the libertarian *Rational Review News Digest*, "probably because it forgot to bring flowers and chocolates and instead took its 'seriousness' so seriously that it came off like the five-year-old playing dress-up in Daddy's suit." Even his own ideally-named Boston Tea Party, though much smaller than the Libertarian Party, failed to take advantage of the situation. "We were already in position, already had an election under our belt...and yet somehow let it sweep right past us."

Fraught with rivalries, infighting and finger-pointing almost from the moment of its inception, the current tea party movement barely resembles the libertarian-leaning, limited government uprising envisioned by Paul's supporters nearly two and half years ago.

The professionally managed and glitzy Tea Party Express, a lavishly-financed group promoted heavily by Fox News, is probably the best known of the nationally-organized groups that have rushed in to provide leadership to the disorganized tea party movement. One of several high-profile "AstroTurf" (artificial grassroots) organizations that sprung up in the past year, the Tea Party Express was founded by Sal Russo, a Sacramento lawyer and longtime political operative who has been championing GOP candidates and causes for nearly half a century.

Staffed by Russo's law firm and funded by his \$4.5 million "Our Country Deserves Better" PAC — a political action committee formed during the 2008 presidential campaign — the Tea Party Express recently completed its third national tour, a four-bus caravan that stopped in 42 cities before culminating in an April 15 rally in the nation's capital. The tour was launched in Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's hometown of Searchlight, Nevada, a former gold-mining camp fifty miles south of Las Vegas, where former Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin was one of the featured speakers.

The Tea Party Express has been sharply criticized by a handful of rival tea party factions, including the Tea Party Patriots, whose members believe that Russo's slick organization is nothing more than an inauthentic creation of political consultants. Russo, a former aide to Ronald Reagan, brushes off such criticism. "Before we can take back America, we've got to take back one of the major parties," he explained. "And we have a shorter distance to go with the Republican Party."

FreedomWorks, the conservative D.C.-based anti-tax lobbying group headed by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, is also closely aligned with the GOP. A cheerful and unpretentious former economics professor who served in Congress for eighteen years, the 69-year-old Armey has already co-authored a book purportedly speaking for the tea



Protestors at a First Coast Tea Party event

Photo: FirstCoastTeaParty.org

"Our country is broken. The people are upset and angry," said Billie Tucker, co-founder of the First Coast Tea Party.

"There's so much stress in America."

party. His book, *Don't Tread on Us: Tea Party America's Fight for Liberty, Not Legislation*, will be released in August.

Founded in 1984 and operating on a \$7 million annual budget, FreedomWorks has been widely credited with galvanizing the tens of thousands of protesters who descended on the Capitol last September to protest runaway government spending. It is also reportedly providing training and logistical support to hundreds of local tea party groups in an effort to enhance the chances of conservative Republicans in this autumn's mid-term elections. Arme's organization had endorsed conservative Marco Rubio, an early darling of the tea party crowd, against Gov. Charlie Crist in what would have been Florida's hotly-contested Republican U.S. Senate primary in August.

In addition to professional operatives eager to grab control of the embryonic movement, the tea party has also attracted its share of opportunists.

The Tea Party Nation, which organized the much-maligned national tea party convention at the Nashville Opryland Hotel this past February, charging participants \$549 and reportedly paying Sarah Palin a \$100,000 speaking fee, has been widely criticized by dozens of grassroots tea party activists, many of whom bristle at the idea that the organization's founder, Judson W. Phillips, had established his group as a "for-profit" enterprise.

A struggling Nashville lawyer, Phillips had popped up out of nowhere only a few months earlier in a bid for supremacy of the Tennessee tea party.

Not surprisingly, the Nashville convention was roundly criticized by tea party activists throughout the country. Congresswomen Michele Bachmann of Minnesota and Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, whose district borders Nashville, boycotted the event over concerns that the Tea Party Nation was being run as a money-making venture. Citing the convention's pricey cost of admission, FreedomWorks also refused to participate.

"This is a recession," said Adam Brandon, press secretary for FreedomWorks. "Some folks are going to find it prohibitively expensive."

Phillips has plenty of critics in the movement, partly because he makes no bones about his desire to deliver the tea party movement to the Republicans. He believes that those who refuse to join the GOP will be marginalized. "They're going to be sitting on the side of the road, holding their signs, wondering why nothing is happening to change the country," he said.

The little-known Nashville attorney, who reportedly doesn't have a law office and conducts much of his legal business at a local Starbucks, has been portrayed as a "brazen and bungling opportunist" with a history of financial woes, reminiscent of some of the conniving, ne'er-do-well characters who eagerly latched onto Huey P. Long's 7.5 million-member Share-Our-Wealth Society and similar protest movements in the hopes of making a quick killing during the Great Depression.

"From the beginning he talked about wanting to make a fortune off the tea party movement," said one disgruntled former Tea Party Nation volunteer.

Despite facing a lawsuit from one of the convention's chief financial backers and a growing cacophony of criticism from rank-and-file tea party activists, the 50-year-old Phillips remains undeterred, unabashedly determined to continue riding the tea party wave for all it's worth. A rash of negative publicity notwithstanding, he's currently planning a second major convention later this summer — a so-called "National Tea Party Unity Convention" at the expensive Palazzo Hotel Resort Casino in Las Vegas — to organize opposition to what he and other convention organizers describe as the "Obama/Reid/Pelosi axis of fiscal evil." There's still money to be made.

None of these groups, critics say, truly represent a spontaneous outpouring of citizen discontent. Many of them are clearly AstroTurf creations, staging highly-organized events and manufacturing public outrage, all aimed at discrediting President Obama and the Democrats before the November elections.

The one likely exception is the Tea Party Patriots, arguably the largest and best organized online network of local tea party groups in the country.

Carefully keeping an arms length from the GOP, the Tea Party Patriots, a 501(c) non-profit organization, are probably the most independent of the competing national tea party factions and they're in no mood to be co-opted by the Republicans or anyone else.

They're also in no hurry to find a leader. Representing more than 1,200 local tea party groups around the country, the Tea Party Patriots are truly an army without a general.

"One of the biggest challenges for the coordinators of Tea Party Patriots is keeping the grass-roots integrity of this movement," said Jenny Beth Martin in a recent *TIME* magazine article. Martin is the national coordinator of the Tea Party Patriots and co-chair of the Atlanta Tea Party.

Tea Party Patriots national organizer Debbie Dooley vigorously denies that the growing populist movement is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the GOP, and she wants to keep it that way. She also downplays Sarah Palin's role in the movement.

"The Tea Party movement is like a spider, we are made up of different legs," she said during a recent debate. The former Alaska governor, she explained, is only one of many leaders in the movement. "There are tens of thousands of leaders throughout the United States."

Preferring to take a "wait-and-see-approach," the Tea Party Patriots demonstrated their independence recently by refusing to join the National Tea Party Federation, a conglomeration of 21 tea party and conservative groups, including Tea Party Express, the Nashville-based Tea Party Nation and FreedomWorks, organized on April 8.

Despite their claims of independence and criticism of other tea party organizations with links to the Republicans, even the Tea Party Patriots aren't quite as pure as the driven snow, as evidenced by the fact that they worked closely with Dick Arme's FreedomWorks in organizing last September's tea party protest in Washington.

Closely aligned with GOP policymakers, FreedomWorks enjoys corporate funding from Exxon Mobil and deep-pocketed conservatives such as two-time Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes and billionaire newspaper publisher Richard Mellon Scaife.

While the Republicans hope the wildly popular tea party movement is their ticket back to power, it would be a colossal mistake for either party to assume that this is some sort of monolithic movement.

"The Tea Party movement is not about partisanship or personalities," said Chicagoan John M. O'Hara, vice president of external relations for the nonpartisan Illinois Policy Institute and author of *A New American Tea Party*. "This grassroots surge is rooted in concern for the direction of our nation regardless of what party holds the White House or Congress."

O'Hara's right. National surveys have consistently shown that tea partiers, by and large, are angry at both parties.

While 66 percent of tea party members describe themselves as conservatives, more than a third of the tea partiers are moderates or liberals, and 15 percent claim to have voted for Barack Obama in 2008. More than two-fifths identify themselves as independents or Democrats.

(continued on next page)

Could the Movement Become a Party?

This is a movement born of economic distress, as reflected in the large percentage who joined the cause as a result of the current economic crisis, many because they lost their jobs. High unemployment, record foreclosures, stagnant wages, increasing utility, energy and food prices and an inescapable feeling of despair about the direction of the country has swelled its numbers.

Millions joined the tea party out of sheer anger and frustration over the recent health care legislation and the federal government's bailouts of Wall Street and the auto industry. Most of them are deeply disturbed about last year's record \$1.42 trillion deficit and the growing national debt. Many see no end to the "Great Recession," despite administration claims to the contrary.

One thing is for sure. They all sense that something is wrong, very wrong.

"Our country is broken. The people are upset and angry," said Billie Tucker, co-founder of the First Coast Tea Party. "There's so much stress in America."

This anger and frustration has been brewing for years. "People seem to think we just started getting angry when Obama came into office," said Diana Reimer, a leader of the Philadelphia Tea Party Patriots. "But this didn't just happen. It took years for the economy to become the way it is."

Given a national unemployment rate hovering around ten percent and an astounding 12.2 percent in Florida — a figure fast approaching the level of joblessness at the start of the Great Depression when Florida shamelessly sealed its borders to keep penniless migrant workers from the Dust Bowl-ravaged region of the country, the homeless and hungry families from the southern Plains depicted in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, from entering the state — there's a lot of pent-up anger and frustration out there. It's far greater than reflected in the television images of dozens, hundreds or even thousands of sign-waving tea partiers willing to get off the couch and show up at demonstrations and rallies.

"Tea Party activists are not unlike populist political movements in the past — they are anti-establishment — but this particular phenomenon does not center around one person, such as Ross Perot or George Wallace, or an easily definable populist agenda," observed longtime political strategist Peter B. Gemma, a columnist for Middle American News who served as a senior staff member of Pat Buchanan's Reform Party presidential campaign in 2000. The movement's real potential, he said, "has yet to be measured."

According to Gemma, the election of moderate Republican Senator Scott Brown in Massachusetts last January "was not so much ideological as it was a protest against the traditional ruling political class. Brown just served as a symbol in an election of 'them' versus 'us.'"

A witty and battle-scarred veteran of countless conservative causes whose clients have included G. Gordon Liddy and nationally-syndicated pundit Joseph Sobran, Gemma believes it would be a "dangerous tactical mistake" for any candidate to assume that the tea party is naturally a Republican or conservative movement. Acknowledging that a majority of its members probably have more in common with right-of-center Republicans, Gemma believes that

"any smart politician with a credible and creative platform could capture the imagination of the tea partiers."

Ignoring a recent Rasmussen Reports survey suggesting that 52 percent of the American people support the tea party goals of limited government and fiscal responsibility, the Democrats continue to portray the movement as some sort of unruly mob, a potentially dangerous development in American politics. Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused protestors of "carrying swastikas" to a town hall meeting on health care last summer and Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tn.) recently compared the tea partiers to the Ku Klux Klan "without robes and hoods," while progressive journalist Joan Walsh has denounced the entire movement as "disturbingly racist and reactionary, from its roots to its highest branches."

"Anytime that you have severe economic conditions," said David Axelrod, President Obama's top political adviser, "there is always an element of disaffection that can mutate into something that's unhealthy."

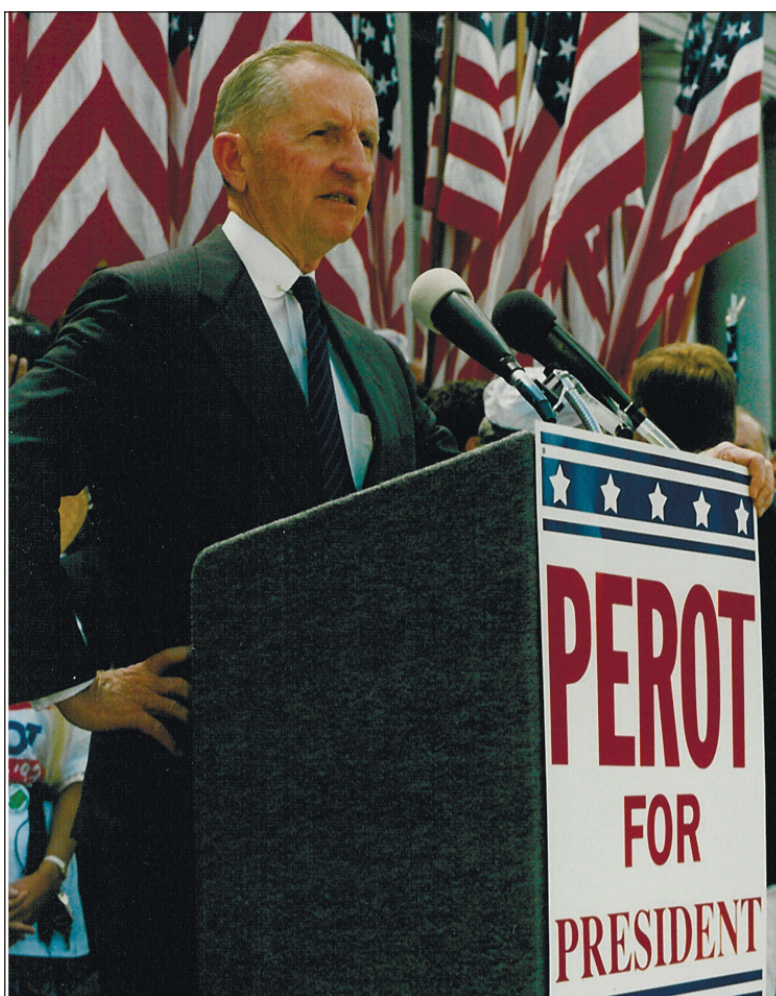
Every protest movement in American history has attracted a fringe element and the tea party is no exception. By adopting tactics used by the New Left in the 1960s — it was no coincidence that Dick Armey recently praised the brilliant organizing skills of the late Saul Alinsky, the New Left's leading tactician who spent a lifetime trying to give voice to the poor and powerless — it's not surprising that tea party leaders often find themselves defending their movement against charges of racism and hatred.

While continuing to depict the tea partiers as dangerous extremists, the Democrats fail to see the bigger picture, namely that this spontaneous grassroots movement has more to do with the country's current economic plight, the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression, than anything else. As Ron Paul recently put it, the United States is bankrupt and nobody is willing to admit it.

Not everyone on the Left is as quick to denounce the movement as the Democrats. "At least the Tea Party people have a pulse," remarked longtime consumer activist and four-time presidential candidate Ralph Nader, who's certainly no stranger to protest movements. Nader, however, isn't sure how effective the movement will be in the long run given the varying "levels of indignation" and conflicting agendas of so many of its members. He also believes their anger would be better directed at Wall Street — the avarice-driven folks he feels are responsible for the current economic crisis — than the government.

While trying to co-exist with the tea partiers — many say they're trying to co-opt the movement — the Republicans have more than a little reason to be worried about the tea party phenomenon. They're deeply concerned that this once loosely-organized and inchoate movement could develop into a powerful third-party movement, if not this year, possibly in 2012 when the stakes will be even greater.

Recognizing that as many as 40 percent of the tea party membership are willing to support third-party candidates of their own, former vice president Dan Quayle has sallied forth with a few bits of advice, not only for the tea party but for his own GOP. "There's a well-worn path of third-party movements in American history," he told the tea partiers in a



Texas billionaire and two-time Presidential candidate Ross Perot

recent Washington Post column, "and it leads straight to a dead end."

The seldom seen Quayle, a kind of poltergeist of American politics, then warned his own party to tread carefully with the tea party crowd if it wants to avoid the same fate that he and George H. W. Bush suffered in 1992:

"What started as a grass-roots phenomenon ended with 19 percent support at the ballot box — and a majority of those voters would probably have gone Republican in a two-party race," stated Quayle. "Speaking on behalf of the Bush-Quayle campaign, to this day we firmly believe that Perot cost the Republican Party the White House."

Though Quayle's assertion that the pint-sized Texas billionaire cost Bush the presidency is widely disputed by political analysts and scholars, his message was clear: the Republicans should not take the tea partiers for granted. They are as much a threat to the GOP, he cautioned, as they are to the two-party system itself. The GOP, he said, should pay close attention to their frustrations. "If the tea party remains an independent political force in 2012, with no partisan ties, so much the better," he concluded.

Quayle has good reason to worry. As a potential third force in American politics, a nationally-organized Tea Party could wreak serious havoc on both major parties, but many Republicans believe that it would prove more costly to their party.

While polls last winter showed hypothetical Tea Party congressional candidates outpolling Republicans, a more recent Rasmussen Reports survey demonstrates that the Tea Party, as a third party, continues to resonate with many voters. In a poll released on March 15, Rasmussen reported that generic Tea Party candidates for Congress would receive 21 percent of the vote this year — only six percentage points behind the Republicans and thirteen points behind the Democrats.

While former and likely future presidential hopeful Mitt Romney and other leading Republicans have joined Quayle in strongly warning tea party

they've been doing business and that's good."

In the meantime, tea party leaders have been exerting their considerable influence in dozens of contested Republican primaries this spring and summer with an eye on overturning Democratic congressional majorities in November. But no incumbent in either party is completely safe. "It's a bad year for incumbents, it's a bad year for moderates and it's a bad year for people who voted for the bailouts," said one tea party-aligned candidate in the solidly red state of Oklahoma.

Among those considered particularly vulnerable are moderate Republicans like Gov. Charlie Crist in recession-battered Florida and former GOP presidential nominee and longtime Arizona Senator John McCain, both of whom are being targeted for defeat by various tea party groups in their respective states.

Benefiting immensely from the movement's energy and enthusiasm, Marco Rubio had catapulted into a surprisingly double-digit lead against the once-popular Crist among likely Republican primary voters. A former Speaker of the Florida House, Rubio has been actively wooing tea party activists for more than a year. Some polls placed the conservative ex-state lawmaker as many as thirty points ahead of the beleaguered governor, prompting the white-haired Crist — one of the few prominent Republicans to openly embrace President Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus plan — to pull out of the August primary and announce he was running with No Party Affiliation.

As the Wall Street Journal's John Fund recently observed, Crist "has been sounding less and less like a Republican and more and more like a Ross Perot-style populist."

Like Rubio, former television sportscaster and ex-congressman J. D. Hayworth, who is challenging McCain for his party's nomination in Arizona's August 24 primary, also hopes to ride the tea party's growing anger and frustration at Washington to an upset victory against the once-invincible, 73-year-old McCain.

While the tea party knowingly immerses itself deeper and deeper in partisan Republican politics, a growing number of its activists are troubled by the increasingly cozy relationship between their grassroots movement and the GOP. "We don't want to become 'Teapublicans,'" declared Mark Herr, 40, a tea party activist from Memphis.

Unfortunately for Herr, it's a marriage that probably can't be annulled — at least not in 2010.

"Some in both groups oppose the merger — the Tea Party types because they know they're being co-opted,

The ^{91.7}
Truth

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'serious' Republican types because they fear that 'smaller government' promises might actually have to be kept in some small measure — but it's probably a done deal." So says the edgy and contemplative Tom Knapp, a columnist for the freedom movement's Center for a Stateless Society.

"A match made in hell," says Knapp, largely because "Republican infiltrators have worked tirelessly to make the movement (which started out with a plausibly 'smaller government' orientation on taxes, corporate bailouts and health care) into a 'big government' movement on foreign/military policy and immigration, and they seem to have succeeded. Having broken the Tea Party movement to saddle," he concludes, "the GOP hopes to ride it to victory this November. After that? To the knacker's yard with it."

While a majority of tea partiers appear content to work inside the Republican Party this year, a handful of other tea party activists, including a small but spirited group of Floridians, are determined to carry their fight outside the traditional two-party system in November — a possible harbinger of things to come in 2012.

In many ways, that makes perfect sense. After all, it was through a third-party candidacy that the loosely-organized tea party movement originally flexed its political muscle last fall when local businessman Doug Hoffman, embarking on a seemingly quixotic third-party bid for a seat in the U.S. House, was nearly swept into office on the Conservative Party ticket in a special election in New York's northernmost 23rd congressional district. That was eleven weeks before Massachusetts Republican Scott Brown, defying conventional political wisdom, stunned the political establishment with his "shot heard 'round the world."

Promising fiscal responsibility and a return to common sense, Hoffman's candidacy quickly gained the endorsements of dozens of high-profile national Republican leaders, including the ubiquitous Sarah Palin and Dick Army of FreedomWorks, forcing his hapless and outmaneuvered Republican opponent from the race in the campaign's waning days.

Panicked that they would lose a seat in a district that had been represented by the GOP since the Civil War, the Republican National Committee adopted the 56-year-old Hoffman as one of their own and paid for a last-minute flurry of television and radio ads, briefly propelling the Conservative candidate into the lead. When the dust settled, the low-keyed Lake Placid accountant came within 3,584 votes of becoming the first person elected to Congress on a third-party ticket since 1970, when New York's James L. Buckley was elected to the U.S. Senate on the Conservative Party ticket.

While the Tea Party is expected to appear on the ballot in Florida, New York and possibly Connecticut this fall, one of the most widely-watched races involving a Tea Party candidate this November is taking place in Nevada, where little-known Las Vegas asphalt contractor and political neophyte Scott Ashjian is campaigning to unseat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

Much to the chagrin of state and national Republicans who had been salivating at the opportunity to dislodge the Senate's most powerful Democratic member, Ashjian's third-party candidacy has angered Republicans while breathing some desperately needed life into Reid's flagging political fortunes.

Prior to Ashjian's unexpected candidacy, most polls showed Reid losing to either of his likely Republican



An Orlando Tea Partier expresses her displeasure with Congress at a recent rally

opponents in his bid for a fifth consecutive term in the U.S. Senate. Former state senator Sue Lowden, a New Jersey beauty queen and former television anchorwoman, and Danny Tarkanian — son of legendary UNLV basketball coach Jerry "Tark the Shark" Tarkanian — each held double-digit leads over the embattled Nevada lawmaker shortly before the 46-year-old Ashjian, a lifelong conservative Republican, jumped into the race.

Ashjian has been consistently polling between 9 to 11 percent since entering the race. An almost certain loser before the obscure political upstart entered the race, the 70-year-old Reid now suddenly finds himself with at least a fighting chance to retain his seat in a three-way race. "If the election were held today," said Reid, "I'd win."

Given his potential impact on the election's outcome, it's not surprising that Ashjian's candidacy has been vigorously attacked, not only by national Republicans but by many leaders in Nevada's tea party movement itself, many of whom believe that his candidacy is part of a ploy by Reid's campaign. Detractors point to the fact that the secretary of the Tea Party of Nevada, Barry Levinson, a Las Vegas bankruptcy lawyer, is a registered Democrat, but have provided little else to substantiate their charge that Ashjian's candidacy is part of an elaborate scheme concocted by Reid's campaign to divide the state's conservative vote in November.

Denounced as an imposter and "Sin City hustler" by his critics, Ashjian's candidacy has so worried the Republicans that Sal Russo's Tea Party Express recently released an on-line ad attacking him for running for the U.S. Senate under the Tea Party label without any support from national and local leaders of the movement.

Coincidentally, Ashjian, who has an IRS lien on his property because he reportedly owes more than \$200,000 in back taxes, has faced a series of legal problems since announcing his candidacy in February. In addition to having his contractor's license revoked

on March 24, he also faced felony charges for writing a bad check. The charges were dropped after he paid \$5,575 to cover a disputed bounced check and court costs.

Ashjian maintains that the bad check charges were "trumped up" by a prosecutor who happened to be a former county Republican chairman and was anxious to remove him from the Senate the race. "I believe the Republican Party has targeted me and my family to get me out of the race," he told the Associated Press. "We're not going anywhere. We're going to finish this race."

A licensed contractor since 1994, Ashjian candidly acknowledges his business-related problems — the IRS lien and the problems with his contractor's license — and says that he's working with his accountant to clear those issues up. He also said that those issues are precisely why he's running. "This elitist crowd doesn't have any clue about the pain and suffering experienced by the average American," he said. "Every small business owner is in the same boat."

Assuming that he survives a legal challenge to his candidacy, a minor technicality in his declaration of candidacy paperwork, filed by the ultraconservative Independent American Party — a right-wing fixture in Nevada politics for nearly four decades — the Tea Party candidate promises a vigorous campaign, saying that he intends "to earn the support of the conservative majority in Nevada and win this election."

Tea party activists are also expected to play a pivotal role in New York's Republican gubernatorial primary in September, an exciting triangular contest pitting former congressman and banking lobbyist Rick Lazio against Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, a recent convert to the GOP, and wealthy real estate developer and attorney Carl Paladino of Buffalo, the latter of whom has attracted considerable support from local tea party activists throughout the state. The winner will face Democrat Andrew Cuomo, the state's highly popular attorney general,

in November.

Reminiscent of the anger and growing dissatisfaction with both major parties that fueled the insurgent Perot movement nearly two decades ago, Paladino's candidacy appears tailor-made for New York tea party activists. "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore," he exclaimed last month, parroting Howard Beale's famous outburst in *Network*, the 1976 satirical film starring Peter Finch and Faye Dunaway. "But that doesn't begin to define my motivation," he told the *Buffalo News*. "And with today's mess, simply throwing open the window and yelling into the street is not enough."

The 63-year-old Paladino, who prides himself on being politically incorrect, said that he plans to spend approximately \$10 million of his own money on the race. The outspoken Buffalo lawyer, whose campaign is being managed by longtime Republican operative Michael Caputo, raised a few eyebrows last month when he told reporters that he plans to circulate nominating petitions to create a separate Tea Party line on the New York ballot, ostensibly to give himself another line on the November ballot, but also leaving ajar the possibility that he could run as the Tea Party's nominee even if he loses the September Republican primary.

Paladino, whose campaign got off to a rocky start when it was revealed that he had forwarded a series of racially and sexually inappropriate emails to some of his friends and colleagues, will need 15,000 valid signatures, collected between June and August, to place his Tea Party on the ballot — a requirement he should have little difficulty meeting given his immense personal resources.

As in New York, Floridians may also see a TEA Party candidate for governor on the ballot this November.

The brainchild of Orlando attorney Frederic B. O'Neal and longtime GOP political consultant and radio talk-show host Doug Guetzloe, the TEA Party — "Taxed Enough Already" — became a recognized political party in Florida last November and already boasts three candidates for Congress.

Though denounced by many self-proclaimed tea party leaders as not being representative of the state's grassroots tea party movement — a charge vigorously denied by O'Neal, Guetzloe and longtime political activist Nick Egeroff, the party's communications director — the 57-year-old O'Neal, a former Democrat, founded the party because he believes tea party activists are angry at both parties, not just the Democrats.

O'Neal is quick to point out that the first \$800 billion Wall Street bailout happened under President Bush.

As of March 31, O'Neal's fledgling TEA Party, headquartered in a small, sparsely furnished office in downtown Orlando, had raised more than \$110,000, the vast majority of it in the form of in-kind contributions from Guetzloe and himself. Not a bad start for a new party, which is only just beginning to find its footing.

But it hasn't been easy. Among other things, the party faces a federal lawsuit demanding that it change its name "to avoid public confusion that the Florida 'Tea Party' is somehow endorsed or approved" by various grassroots tea party organizations in the state. In their amended complaint, the plaintiffs say they "are working toward reform within the Republican Party and view third party candidacies as counter-productive."

"There's been a steady campaign to try to drive a wedge between the TEA Party and the other people in the tea party movement," said O'Neal, a self-

described "Reagan Democrat" before launching his fledgling party. "They're trying to basically discredit what we're doing."

Last month, the TEA Party landed its first candidate when Peg Dunmire, a former hospital administrator, dropped out of the crowded Republican primary field in Florida's 8th congressional district — covering parts of Orange, Osceola, Lake and Marion counties, including parts of Orlando — and announced her intention to run on the new party's ticket against Democratic incumbent Alan Grayson. In typical fashion, the pugnacious congressman welcomed Dunmire into the race by referring to her as one of Sarah Palin's "undead minions."

A lifelong Republican before switching parties, Dunmire had long been active in the tea party movement, attending rallies and even traveling to Washington last year for the widely-publicized September 12 protest.

The 63-year-old grandmother, who holds a master's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, said that she joined the TEA Party because the Republicans had lost their way.

"I think we've really had about fifteen years of a disconnect with the populace and the people we send to Washington," said Dunmire.

"This is a non-partisan campaign," she told the Lakeland Ledger. "We welcome Democrats, Republicans and non-partisans. The Tea Party is very specific — we mainly talk about financial issues and constitutional issues. I want to offer an alternative based on balancing the budget and getting us out of debt."

A former certified financial planner, Dunmire proposes a three-point plan on her campaign website for revitalizing the private sector and creating much-needed jobs in the Sunshine State. In addition to eliminating all payroll taxes for employers for a period of three years, she also supports off-shore drilling for oil and natural gas and the construction of new nuclear power plants in Florida. She also advocates rescinding the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, legislation enacted in 2002 in response to a wave of corporate and accounting scandals.

"Peg had already made considerable inroads among Republicans in the district before switching to the TEA Party," said Guetzloe, founder and chairman of the Orlando-based Ax the Tax organization, a taxpayers' group that has successfully led more than a dozen anti-tax initiatives since its founding in 1982, saving taxpayers more than \$25 billion.

In addition to Dunmire's candidacy, the TEA Party has already vetted a few dozen potential candidates for the Florida legislature, including at least ten that they found to their liking, said Guetzloe. Those candidates have until June 18 to qualify for the ballot.

The party's most dramatic development may happen then. "It's possible that Florida could join New York in offering a TEA Party candidate for governor," said Guetzloe in a recent interview with the *Observer*.

Guetzloe said that O'Neal and members of the party's 12-member executive committee are currently "evaluating the viability of offering a candidate for governor" — based on the strong probability that the two major parties will nominate candidates who they consider pro-tax, pro-government advocates. The committee has already met with several potential candidates who agree with the new party's principles.

Darcy G. Richardson is an author and historian who has written six books on American politics.

PROSTITUTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

I got to know Beth when I visited the Jacksonville section of Craigslist, a website with countless community-moderated classified postings from all over the world. She is one of the thousands of women who are posted up on the Craigslist classifieds boards as though she were a commodity. We spoke by phone on several occasions and in those discussions she told me about her family, her childhood, where she grew up and how she got on the path she's walking today.

And to be honest, it broke my heart. There was one time I had to tell Beth that I'd call her back, hung up the phone and just wept.

What Beth is going through is a possibility for any girl. If you think you're safe because you're a middle class family too busy living the American Dream in the suburbs of Avondale, Mandarin or Riverside to be lured into the world of modern-day prostitution, you're dead wrong.

"We're seeing kids who are getting into this stuff that do not match society's stereotype," said Ernie Allen, president and CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. "These are not just kids in poor families who have no other options. We're seeing kids from the full spectrum of society, and a lot of that is due to recruitment over the internet."

The simple fact is that prostitution is no longer the business of a lonely corner under a dimly lit street light. It is right under everyone's nose: a virtual marketplace has been created on popular social networking websites like MySpace, Craigslist and myRedbook.

"I had a boyfriend when I was 15 who put me up on there [Craigslist and MySpace]," said Beth. "I've met a couple of guys off of there, nothing too big. Most of them cool. Maybe a dozen, two dozen, I don't know. But he said I could make money and I did. I'm 300 dollars a night."

According to the Human Trafficking Project, a website dedicated to raising awareness of modern-day slavery and exploring solutions to stop it, pimps typically play the part of the victims' boyfriends or caregivers -- runaways are desperate for love, affirmation and attention. Once pimps earn the loyalty of their victims, they forcefully and/or deceitfully place the victims into an environment where they are prostituting themselves. Oftentimes, girls are not allowed to come home to the pimps until the daily quota is met. Otherwise, they will face the consequences of verbal or physical abuse. Teenagers who find themselves in abusive homes run away only to find themselves entrapped by the false affection and promises of these pimps.

"I got away from my momma when I was 14 and went with him [Beth's boyfriend]. I didn't like my mom. Never there. Always with her man," Beth told me. "My younger sister came with me. He's helping both of us out. I feel good, he feels good. I get bored and I don't want to do nothing else."

"If these girls don't have good role models or a guiding force in their life, they are left wide open to this kind of activity," said Eric Fenner, a leading advocate for the exploited and the executive director of Franklin County Children Services in Ohio. "These are smooth-talking people in most cases who have made coercing these young girls into a science. We need to recognize that these girls are victims."

The U.S. Department of State estimates that between 15,000 to 18,000 women and girls are trafficked in the U.S. each year. Up to 300,000 may be at risk because they live in poverty, have a family history of abuse or are vulnerable for other reasons.

"All prostitution hurts women," said Dr. Melissa Farley, Director of a group called Prostitution Research and Education. "Prostitutes are told they are 'untouchables', valueless, dehumanized. The very words 'slut' and 'whore' mean subhuman. Prostitutes, no matter what they say, do not want to be

"I had a boyfriend when I was 15 who put me up on there [Craigslist and MySpace]... he said I could make money and I did. I'm 300 dollars a night."

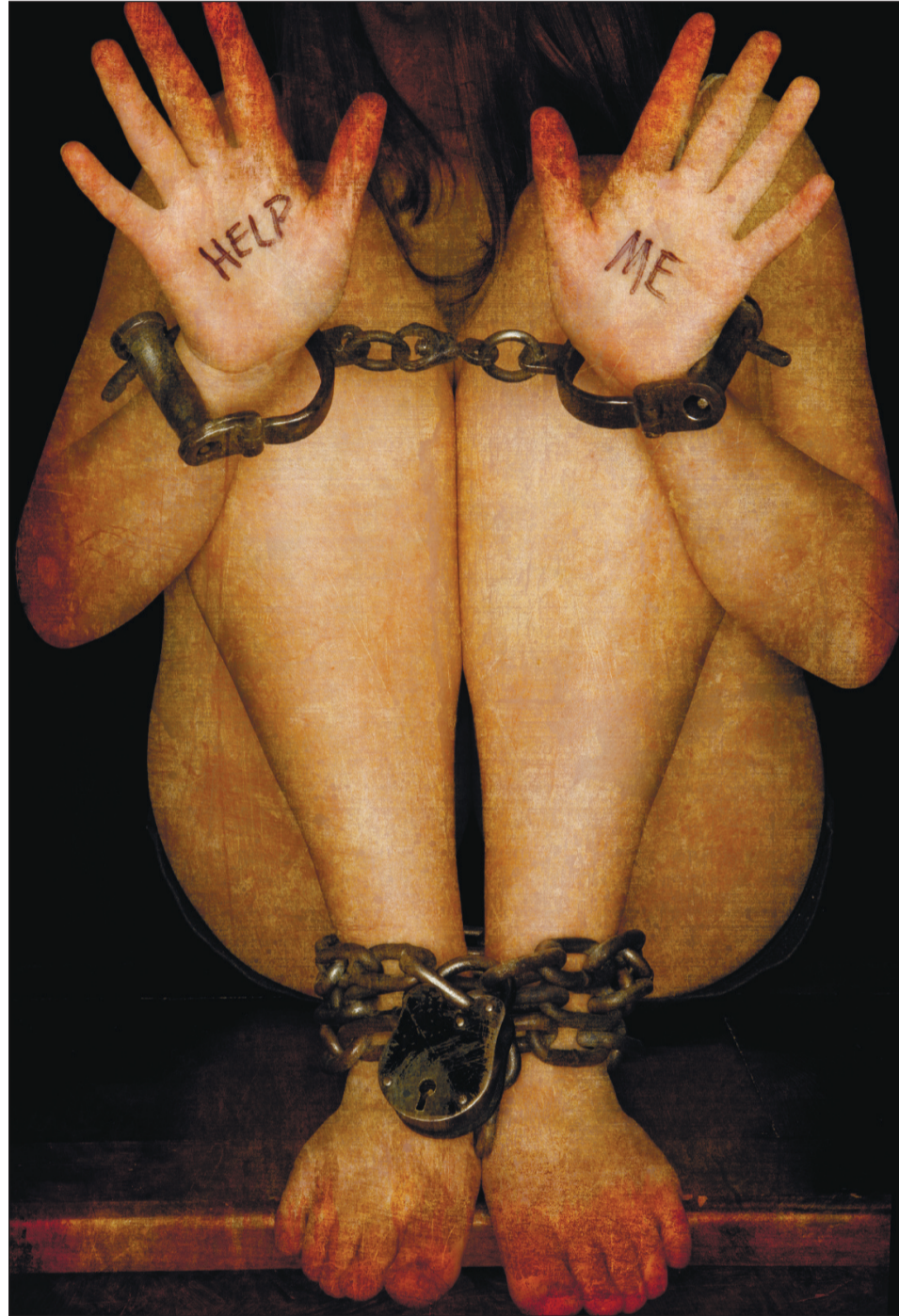


Photo: iStockPhoto

prostitutes. They do it out of desperation."

With tens of thousands of women already caught in the trap, and hundreds of thousands more at risk, the face of prostitution is changing and expanding every day, especially here on the First Coast.

A recent survey of Jacksonville's Craigslist postings in the "adult gigs" section shows that pimps frequently include females looking to recruit other females and men pimping themselves.

One call to a start-up massage parlor in Jacksonville had me talking to a woman, Maria, who was recruiting college-aged women "looking to make top dollars" as massage girls. Maria said she was looking for women for "outcalls" for what she called "full body rubs" -- a frequently used codeword.

Maria explained that because the process to fully license a woman for massage therapy was both costly and timely, the term "full body rub" is used instead. These are not the same as massages you'd get from professionals and the girls are chosen after a screening process which Maria said includes simply sending a picture to her cell phone and letting her know that days you'd be available to work.

"We charge eighty dollars an hour, that's the fee for the outcall," Maria said. "Our massages are a little more sensual, light touch, stuff like

that. Most of our clientele is obviously older guys, they're respectable men, with our girls ranging about 300 dollars a day. It's pretty lucrative. Some girls do extra for when they need extra money, but that's up to them."

Even some men have begun prostituting themselves on social networking sites. One man, Will, a 20-year-old self-described bisexual living in the Mandarin area of Jacksonville, posted himself on Jacksonville's Craigslist forum. When I responded to the ad, Will got back to me within thirty minutes, asking me if I'd like a "full body massage" for \$130. When I asked him what he meant by "full body massage" he said "until you're done" implying a sexual act. I told him I was not interested and he pleaded with me, telling me he would lower the price "if you're good looking" and that we could even meet at my house if I wasn't interested in driving all that way.

At the end of my conversation with Will, I asked him what he'd do if I was a cop. He said "there's nothing [anyone] could do since it's only online and it's not the same as in person."

But according to officials, soliciting sex online is no different from soliciting in person. It doesn't matter if you're offering the sex or asking for it, just because you're doing it online doesn't mean it isn't just as punishable. In fact, in the last two years, Jacksonville police have

started targeting online sex offenders more and more.

According to the Jacksonville's Sheriff's Office, online prostitution had become such a problem on the First Coast that they hosted a sting operation in which they posted a single ad on Craigslist and left it up for three days. The police said that in only three days, over 30 men were arrested including teachers, firefighters and camp counselors.

Will and Beth are not isolated incidents either. Every day, the number of new classifieds advertising sex on Jacksonville's section of Craigslist is in the dozens. In larger cities such as Los Angeles, New York and Miami that figure can range in the hundreds. Hundreds of men and women every day enticed into the world of sexual exploitation.

"Craigslist is the single largest source of prostitution in the nation," said Sheriff Thomas J. Dart of Cook County, Illinois, who filed suit in the U.S. District Court against the owners of Craigslist, accusing them of knowingly promoting and facilitating prostitution.

These are strong claims, but Dart contends that with women posting nude photos of themselves and listing hourly rates, Craigslist needs to be doing everything in their power to stop the further exploitation of women.

Jim Buckmaster, the CEO of Craigslist, said the ads are not necessarily advertising illegal services. "There's nothing illegal about charging by the hour," he said. "I would encourage you to do some research on what constitutes an ad soliciting sex in exchange for money."

"Missing children, runaways, abused women and women trafficked in from foreign countries are routinely...being pimped on Craigslist," Dart contended.

Prostitution doesn't start when a pimp convinces a woman to sell herself for him, according to Alexis Lito, Executive Director of the Barnaba Institute, a non-profit that reaches out to at-risk and sexually exploited youth. Lito contends that it all starts when a young girl is inundated by popular culture -- movies, television and music that is filled with references to sexuality, sexual violence and sexual exploitation.

This inundation, Lito explains, is a major contributing factor to why young women begin thinking that selling themselves for sex is not as big a deal as it truly is.

"The sexualization of children and especially pre-teen and teen girls contributes to the demand for youth as sexual commodities," said Lito. "Sexual violence in media, video games, music, movies and TV is a serious contributing issue to girl's low self-esteem and view that their self-worth is intricately tied into their sexuality."

Lito also said that many young men often subconsciously support this behavior with their approval of women in pornographic movies and magazines. Our society, which has been oversaturated with the sexual exploitation of women, has become blind. A woman selling her body has become so commonplace that men simply accept in the name of lust.

Even visiting these pornographic websites is an emotional nod of approval. You are essentially consenting that it is okay for men and women to sell themselves for money. This approval is what perpetuates the idea that women are only as valuable as how much they will physically gratify others. That belief is rampant in our society and seeps into young men and women's minds at a younger age than most of us would care to realize.

"Boys need to be educated too: they need to understand that what society views as 'whores' and 'prostitutes' are actually abused youth and women who need help and exit services," said Lito. "They're not sexual commodities that can be freely used to fulfill their twisted sexual fantasies. Reducing demand and creating a realistic and compassionate view of the youth and woman entangled in prostitution is just as important, if not more so, than educating girls on how to protect themselves."

How Would You Fix Downtown Jacksonville?

we want to know -- feedback@jaxobserver.com

FIXING DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE

It's Time for Incrementalism, Common Sense and to Pick Some Low Hanging Fruit

By Robin Lumb

There's been a lot of talk lately about Downtown Jacksonville and what we should be doing to fix it.

Here are my thoughts:

1. Rather than a "Grand Plan" intended to transform Downtown Jacksonville in one fell swoop, an incremental approach would allow the City to put some low cost fixes in place while waiting for the economy to turn around. We might have a clearer path to follow if we allowed organic change to play out over the next few years. A revitalization effort that unfolded naturally and in response to market forces might be superior to one that originated from a master plan.

2. With that in mind, let's remember that Jacksonville's new \$350 million courthouse, aka "The Villa in LaVilla", is scheduled for completion sometime in 2012. It's a huge and imposing structure that will act as a magnet for new investment and a hub for a significant amount of new business activity in this heretofore underperforming part of downtown. Reiterating the conclusion from number one above, we should wait and gauge the impact of the new courthouse before we craft a plan that takes us in a direction we may not need to go.

3. Concentrate on the low hanging fruit and do the common sense things that are likely to produce the best result for the least amount of money. As Times-Union columnist Ron Littlepage suggested (he's not always my cup of tea but when he's right, he's right), the City should buy a couple of pressure washers and some paint. Upgrade the property safety (and appearance) codes and then enforce them. Pick up litter, keep the City's landscaped property well manicured and fix the Southbank Riverwalk (although I kind of like Friendship Fountain the way it is).

4. There are three populations that support any Downtown: Those who work there, those who live there and those who visit. The Times-Union reports there are 55,000 people who work Downtown but only 2,500 who live there. If these numbers are correct, those who work Downtown constitute a large pool of potential new residents that should be tapped into. If it turns out these prospective tenants are unwilling to relocate Downtown because it's too expensive or is otherwise unattractive, then we will have gone a long way toward identifying whatever problems underlie the issue of Downtown livability.



5. On a related note, be kind to developers with the high-rise apartment buildings who are trying to make Downtown more livable. This is especially true for those that received City backed financing and who now find themselves trying to stay afloat in a deteriorating real estate market. Some are asking the City to lighten their burden by allowing them to make interest-only loan payments until the market improves. If local leaders make demands that these developers are unable to meet, our City will get a reputation for being unreasonable. Cut these developers some slack.

6. To bring more visitors to Downtown, especially those drawn from the lucrative tourist market, some have argued we should invest in a new and improved convention center. But a new convention center only makes sense if the Tourist Development Council can demonstrate that a level of demand exists sufficient to retire the revenue bonds necessary to finance it. If we do build a new convention center it should be configured to hold a number of smaller events simultaneously and should incorporate all the latest video conferencing technology. Being able to do smaller conferences and conventions exceptionally well might be the niche market that Jacksonville needs to pursue.

7. If what we're looking for is to establish a thriving 'core' at the center of our city, then we need to expand our definition of 'Downtown' to include nearby neighborhoods that are vital in this effort. Downtown proper should be the locus of office based commerce, government, high rise living and the major sports and performance venues. For a thriving mercantile and entertainment district in close proximity to Downtown, we should be thinking about the Five Points area of Riverside, the Southbank and San Marco

Square. These areas work because they are street level, brightly lit and have lots of parking. If the City wants to be inclusive they should draw Brooklyn, LaVilla and Springfield into the mix as well.

8. The areas under the Fuller Warren Bridge immediately East and West of Park Street look like open cesspools. I once saw a truck that hauls sewage emptying its tank into "Lake Cesspool West". It turns out they had a contract to haul non-toxic wastewater from a FDOT construction site nearby...but still. Nobody passing these eyesores would be persuaded that Jacksonville is serious about its Downtown core. While they're at it, the City needs to take a serious look at the perimeter of downtown for other aesthetically challenged streetscapes.

9. The City of Jacksonville should take a lesson from the community based efforts that have turned around Riverside and Five Points. For years Riverside was treated like a red-headed stepchild. It wasn't until community leaders created Riverside Avondale Preservation 35 years ago that things began to turn around. Last year a group of visionaries led by Dr. Wayne Wood and Doug Coleman launched the Riverside Arts Market as a project of Riverside Avondale Preservation. Every Saturday from March through December the area under the Fuller Warren Bridge at Riverside Avenue is alive with artists, artisans and organic produce vendors. The Downtown Art Walk is another example of how creative thinking can create a new dynamic for an urban neighborhood.

10. Build a decent upscale grocery store somewhere in the Southbank area between the St. Johns River and I-95. Such a location would be accessible from San Marco and St. Nicholas as well as Downtown and would create the essential

anchor that every community needs to build around. Riverside had no neighborhood grocery store for over 30 years and languished as a result. When Publix opened its new store in 2001 it was the catalyst for a number of commercial and residential projects throughout the area and the impetus for a revitalized Five Points shopping district.

11. Like it or not, the perception among many northeast Florida residents is that downtown Jacksonville is unsafe. More police and a highly visible City run security force could help alter this perception. Riverside Avondale Preservation has recently suggested to the JSO that it secure several dozen AmeriCorps volunteers to aid in this effort. Each 'full time' volunteer would cost the City less than \$2,000 a year and could provide the level of security that's currently missing. (And yes, I know that the concept of a paid 'volunteer' is a misnomer, especially one funded by a Federal grant).

12. I've saved the most controversial item for last: Downtown will always have an image problem as long as there are large numbers homeless roaming the streets. When I refer to the 'homeless' I'm not talking about families who are without shelter because a breadwinner lost her job. Folks like these respond well to temporary assistance and can get back on their feet. I'm talking about those who've become habituated to life on the street and who suffer from mental illness, substance abuse problems or both. Having worked in and around Downtown, and as someone who lives in Riverside, I can tell you that the homeless have an affect on the neighborhoods they inhabit. While we need to be thoughtful and compassionate, encouraging the homeless to relocate from Downtown is just good policy.

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FEMA's Disaster Fund Runs Dry

Tribune News Service

This year's numerous disasters have tapped the Federal Emergency Management Agency dry, even as hurricane season fast approaches.

The House agreed back in March to give the agency an extra \$5.1 billion for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. But the Senate hasn't acted, despite recent flooding in Tennessee.

Hurricane season begins June 1. "We've got projects that are starting to be held up," said Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La. "The jar is empty."

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said while visiting Tennessee recently that "there's an urgency" to approving the funding. He said the agency could respond to emergencies as they occur but couldn't help rebuild afterward.

"We are not going to be delayed in helping individuals in the emergency response costs," Fugate said. "But as this flood is going to show, we already have almost \$1 billion in outstanding projects from previous disasters that we cannot move forward on."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., tried to win unanimous Senate approval of the FEMA money. But Republicans won't cooperate unless spending is cut elsewhere in the budget.

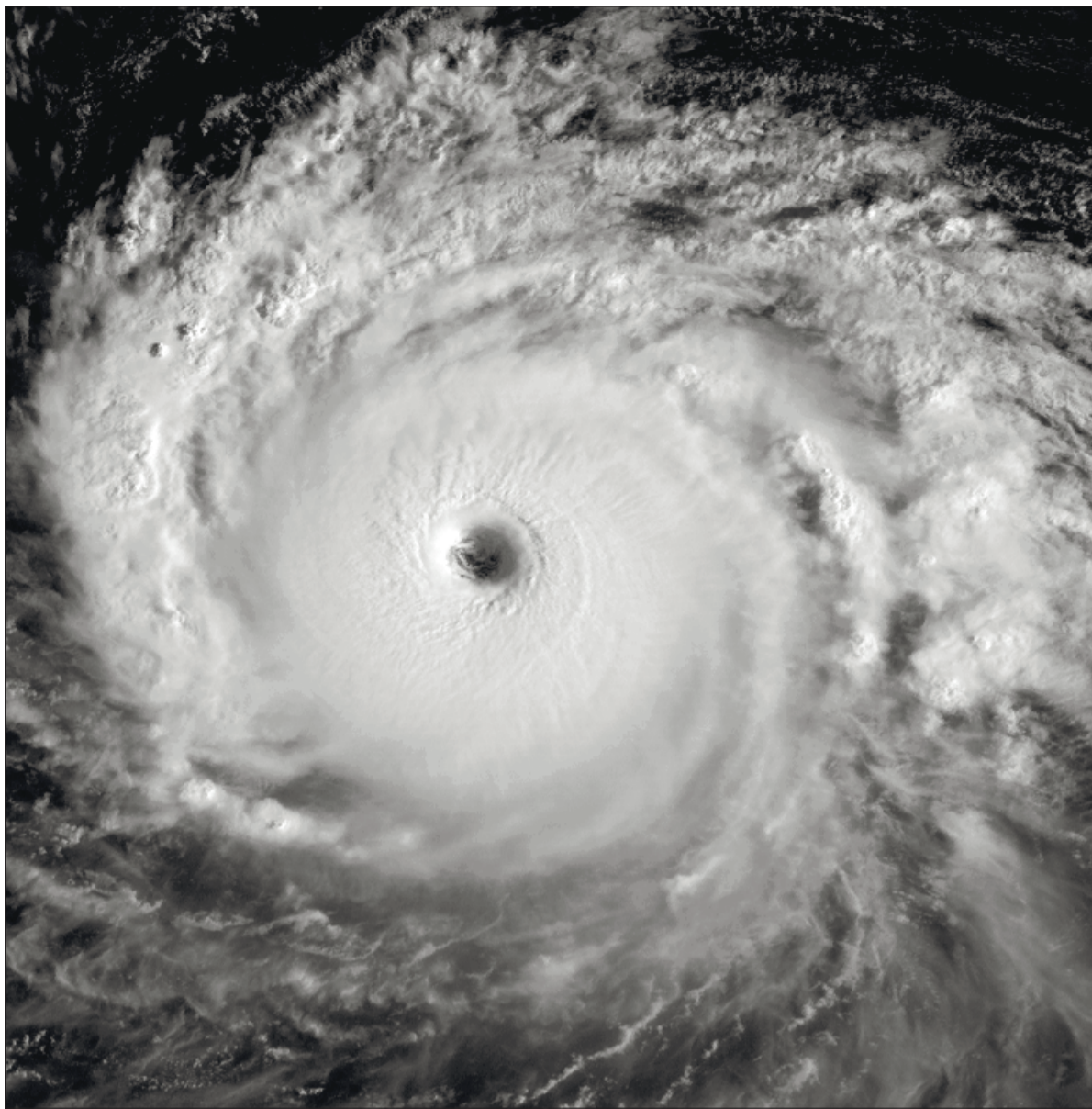
"We will continue to work on this issue until it is resolved," Reid said.

Reid attempted to lump the FEMA money in with other spending items, including \$1.25 billion for black farmers who were denied equal access to loan programs and additional funding for Haiti earthquake relief, for a package that could reach \$50 billion.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut independent who heads the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said disaster relief enjoys bipartisan support, but he wasn't sure which path FEMA funding might take.

"The only thing I know is that they need more money in disaster assistance," Lieberman said.

Meanwhile, natural disasters keep stacking up. Sixteen states experienced



Hurricane Season Begins June 1st.

Photo: Hurricane Isabel (2003)

a combined 18 disasters this year before the House voted to give FEMA extra funding in March.

Since then, major disasters have been declared for winter storms or flooding in Maine, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Connecticut, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Maryland.

Record flooding in early May in Nashville killed at least 20 people and

caused an estimated \$1.5 billion in damage.

FEMA's disaster fund provides temporary housing and counseling for disaster survivors and repairs or replaces public buildings, roads, bridges and utilities. The agency gets about \$2 billion a year for disasters, but also routinely asks for additional funding, peaking at \$43 billion in 2005 and nearly \$11 billion in 2008.

FEMA is still paying for disasters dating to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. For example, the agency is still

rebuilding schools in New Orleans, and an arbitration panel ruled in January that the agency must pay \$474 million to rebuild Charity Hospital.

"While we can meet the immediate needs of survivors in these declared disasters, and we can support state and local government in the immediate response, we do not have the ability now to fund permanent work," Fugate said. "And that's going to be a key factor in this recovery as well as previous disasters going all the way back to Katrina."

WANTED: Lt. Governor

Tribune News Service

DENVER - Wanted: a double stroller, a screenwriter and a candidate for Colorado lieutenant governor.

Only the last posting on Craigslist comes from candidate for governor, Jason R. Clark, who says if you want independent-minded leaders, you need to be willing to look anywhere and everywhere for them.

"We want to invite everybody in," he said in a recent interview. "We want the best and the brightest. We want some new ideas, new leadership. If you're out there and you think you might be interested in this area, give me a call. We'll interview you and put you on the list."

The classified posting lays out the guidelines for any possible candidate. They must have been registered as an independent or unaffiliated before June 15, 2009. They must be at least 30 years old and have been a resident of Colorado for the last two years. The salary is \$68,500.

He says the reaction to the Craigslist posting has been spectacular.

"We need more independent thinkers," he said. "We need leaders who want to be held accountable. We need leaders who seek out and take responsibility for their actions," Clark said.

The businessman and former U.S. Army officer said he doesn't feel represented by either of the major parties and that he feels he's best-suited to rebuild the state's economy.

He says the health care debate is the perfect example of the system gone awry where most everyone in one party voted one way and everyone in the other voted the other way.

"You're telling me there's not any independent thinkers that thought maybe there's another way to do this," Clark said. "Maybe there are some new, fresh ideas we could bring into the process?"



ilovethetruth.com

Stimulus Cash Being Spent Ahead of Schedule

News Service of Florida

Florida had spent more than \$16 billion from the federal stimulus dollars by the end of March and is on track to spend at least \$1 billion more by the end of the year, the state's recovery point man said recently.

Don Winstead, appointed by Gov. Charlie Crist to oversee the collection and distribution of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds, said nearly \$20 billion in federal stimulus dollars has been awarded or is expected as the state continues to reap the benefits of federal tax dollars aimed at jump-starting the national economy.

While the state has record

unemployment at 12.3 percent, it could have gone as high as 14 percent, Winstead said.

"The simple fact is without these monies, that unemployment rate would be higher than it is today and the situation would be even worse," Winstead said. "That is what compels us to implement these monies as quickly as possible."

Winstead made the remarks as part of a series of quarterly updates on how the state is spending money from the federally-backed recovery effort.

The figures are accurate through March 31 and reflect spending from state agencies, city and county governments, non-profit organizations and private firms that have been

awarded contracts.

Newly allocated federal stimulus money, nearly \$2.5 billion, is included in the 2010/11 budget awaiting the governor's signature. In addition, another \$2 billion in previously awarded federal stimulus funds is bolstering state spending for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

"I think the rate of spending is maybe a little ahead of what I had expected," Winstead said. "I'm generally pleased with the rate."

Not included in the \$20 billion figure is \$1.25 billion for high speed rail and millions more to be awarded to private companies that are now submitting bids for competitive projects.

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Why Charlie Can't Win As An Independent

By Robin Lumb

Spurred on by the debate over the teacher merit pay plan – Senate Bill 6 – I started writing a series of columns on education reform about three and half weeks ago.

When Charlie Crist vetoed the legislation, I put those columns aside and began to write about the rampant speculation that Crist would use the veto to position himself to run for the Senate as an independent. Although I strongly suspected Crist would bolt the Republican Party, there were enough good arguments against it to warrant a will-he-or-won't-he analysis.

Work on that column – which lasted for about a day and a half – came to a halt when even a casual reading of the tea leaves revealed that Crist had no intention of honoring his pledge to remain in the Republican primary.

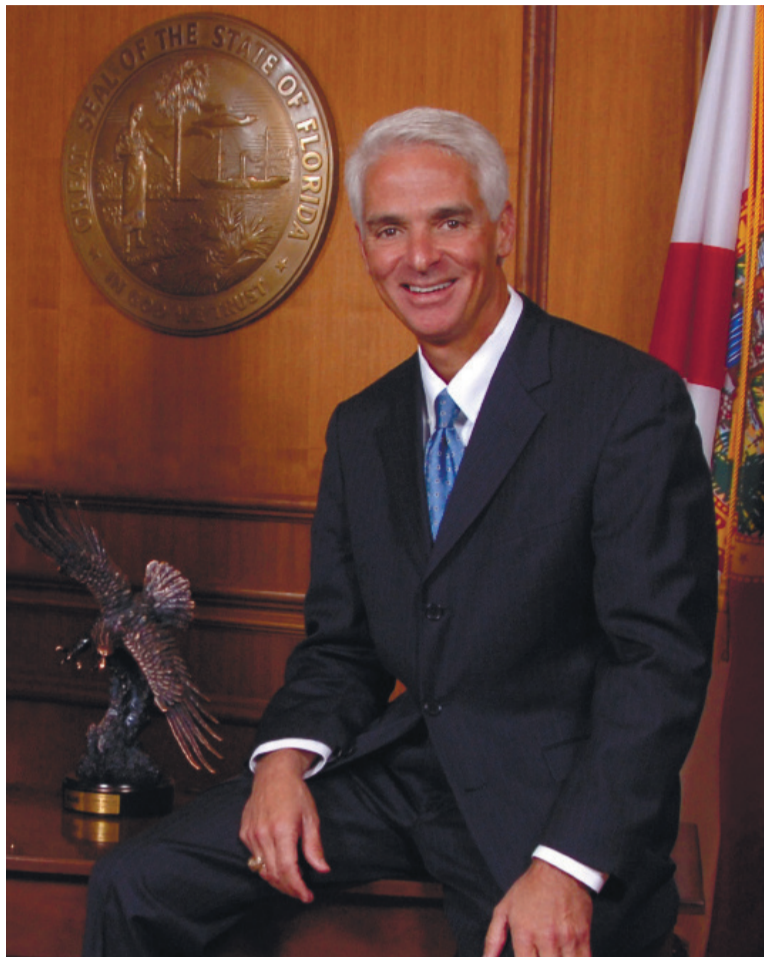
I still plan to write about education reform, but now that Charlie Crist has officially declared himself an independent candidate for the U.S. Senate (and in the process proved that he has no loyalty to any cause larger than his ego), wouldn't it be more instructive to concentrate on the one question worth asking: Can Charlie Crist win as an independent?

No... and here's why.

1. The polls are not encouraging. Media spin notwithstanding, recent polling on a hypothetical three-way race for the US Senate isn't very encouraging for Governor Crist. A Rasmussen poll of likely voters released last week had Rubio at 37%, Crist at 30% and Kendrick Meek at 22%. An earlier Quinnipiac poll, taken just after the veto, showed Crist slightly ahead at 32% with Rubio and Kendrick Meek at 30% and 24% respectively. That result was well within the margin of error and given the dynamics of a live-fire campaign, probably will be Charlie's high water mark.

2. Charlie Crist will become the poster child for everything that's reprehensible about politicians. When Senate Bill 6 was working its way through the legislature Crist had committed himself to signing. Then he started to have second thoughts. To hear the Governor tell it, it was because he'd spent the week leading up to the veto "listening to the people". When he finally vetoed the bill, Crist assured reporters that "it [had] nothing to do with politics; it [was] all about the children of Florida." We're supposed to believe the most calculating politician to come out of Florida in a generation never once thought about the political consequences of such a move? Right.

3. Charlie Crist will be indelibly tagged as the greatest flip-flopper



"Any Republican or conservative who votes for Crist will have to perform a series of mental gymnastics that are almost too painful to contemplate."

in Florida history. In his Fox News interview on March 28th with Chris Wallace, Crist was asked straight up if would even consider running as an Independent. His answer? "I'm running as a Republican."

Throughout the legislative session the Crist campaign was assuring anyone who would listen that Charlie was fully committed to running as a Republican in the Republican Party. Oops!

4. The (Jeb) Bush factor. With Rubio in the lead in a Republican primary and for the sake of party unity, it was likely the former Governor would have remained on the sidelines until after the Primary Election. But with Crist running as an independent the still popular Bush has the perfect opening to wade in and give his full throated support to Marco Rubio.

Those who underestimate the importance of Jeb Bush in Florida politics do so at their own peril: Despite one of the most negative, fractious and expensive special election campaigns

in recent memory, John Thrasher broke through the pack and won election to the Florida Senate largely on the strength of a Jeb Bush endorsement.

5. Rubiowill make a credible claim that Crist will vote with President Obama and the Democrats. Because Republicans are unlikely to win back the Senate in 2010 and because Charlie won't be able to indulge his ambitions by serving in the minority, it's only logical that Crist will vote to organize with the Democrats and bargain his support in return for a committee chairmanship or some other plum.

The only way Crist could blunt this attack is by assuring voters that he would vote to organize with the Republicans. But who would believe him? The surest way for Rubio to carve out a victory is to tie Crist to an increasingly unpopular President and to make the Rubio-Crist portion of the contest a referendum on Mr. Obama.

6. Charlie Crist will become Kendrick Meek's number one target. With the Governor running as an

independent, Kendrick Meek will immediately shift the focus of his campaign to a sustained attack on Charlie Crist. Think about it: If the race could be won with as little as 34% or 35% of the vote, where does Meek go in search of his margin of victory? He certainly doesn't try to peel away Rubio supporters; he goes after Charlie Crist instead! If Meek runs to the center while painting Charlie as the candidate no voter can trust, he ends up poaching votes from a hapless Crist.

7. With Charlie Crist running as an independent, Rubio can run to the center. The only reason some Republicans and moderates would consider voting for Crist is if they saw Rubio as out of the mainstream. But with the Republican nomination all but locked up, Rubio can concentrate on the kitchen table issues that concern most voters: Jobs, the deficit and long term economic security. While still touting himself as the "true conservative in the race", Marco can craft a message of common sense conservatism that should appeal to any voter concerned with the overreaching agenda of the Democrat Party.

8. The Republican Party – at both the state and national level – will come down on Crist like a ton of bricks. Already the embodiment of RINO (Republican-In-Name-Only) Republicanism, Charlie has now made himself a pariah. He'll be repudiated by every Republican in elective office and shunned by almost every political ally he ever had.

Endorsements for Rubio will flood in and as Crist ratchets up his attacks, anti-Crist sentiment will only intensify.

The sin qua non of party politics, win or lose, is loyalty to the party and its nominees. Charlie Crist is about to discover that the world of politics is a different place when you violate this basic tenet.

9. Charlie Crist will be running without the benefit of a grassroots organization. It's nice to have lots of money, but in politics there's no substitute for boots on the ground when it comes to boosting voter turnout. In a tight race, a well organized get-out-the-the-vote effort can provide the margin of victory by padding a candidate's vote total by as much as 3% or 4%.

The advantage political parties have is that they're organized down to the precinct level and have large numbers of volunteers they can draw on. By bailing on the Republican Party, Crist loses any hope for a decent ground game and in a close election that places him at a major disadvantage.

10. Any Republican or conservative who votes for Crist will have to perform a series of mental gymnastics that are almost too painful to contemplate. The right to vote one's conscience is sacrosanct and there are as many reasons for how we vote as there are voters. Believing that he was a genuine and thoughtful conservative, I voted for Charlie Crist in both the Primary and General Election in 2006. Plenty of other voters – Republicans, Independents and more than a few Democrats – voted the same way. But in a political environment where integrity and principled leadership are at a premium, it's hard to imagine how Charlie Crist can ever make that sale again. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

In Florida, as in much of the country, the battle for votes is in the middle. Hard core Republicans, about 30% of likely voters, and hard core Democrats, another 30%, will support their party's nominee no matter what. This means the winning margin for Crist has to come from somewhere inside the same block of swing votes that gave Barack Obama his winning margin in 2008.

But the independent voters who've become disillusioned with Obama and who abandoned the Democrat party in Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts are those least likely to view an independent run by Crist as anything more than political opportunism.

Running as an independent, Charlie Crist will only reinforce the widespread cynicism that underlies voter dissatisfaction. In an election cycle where an angry electorate is motivated largely by distrust, what could be worse than a politician who abandons his party – after clearly forswearing this possibility – for the purpose of gaining a political advantage?

No matter how he spins it, Crist will have a hard time explaining why he felt comfortable running and winning as a Republican for over twenty years only to bug out when the tide turned against him.

If you want to know what the campaign narrative will sound like, here it is:

Marco Rubio: If you send Charlie Crist to Washington he'll vote with the Barack Obama and the Democrats.

Charlie Crist: No, I won't.

Marco Rubio: How can you believe a man who deliberately misled Florida voters? How can you trust someone who turned his back on his own party?

Charlie Crist doesn't win in that exchange. Marco Rubio does.

YOUR MESSAGE HERE?

austin@jaxobserver.com

Work Daze: Accepting Rejection

By Bob Goldman

If there's one aspect of business life in which you really don't need any advice, it's your ability to accept rejection. Heaven knows, you've had plenty of practice.

Apparently, not everyone has achieved your skill level in taking punches to the mid-career. That's why Yahoo! HotJobs writer, Charles Purdy, penned his recent article, "After the Recruiter Says No: How to Handle Job-Search Rejections."

"You had high hopes for this job," Purdy writes. "The job requirements matched your skill set perfectly. You aced your interviews. And you imagined hearing those sweet words so many of us long to hear: 'You're hired.' Instead, you got another rejection letter."

Putting aside for the moment the incontrovertible fact that the sweet words we most long to hear are, "it's lunch time, and I'm buying," it is painful to be rejected for a job, especially if it's a job you never much wanted in the first place.

It's cold comfort, but you should be happy you even got a rejection letter. Most job hunters that contact me report that they never hear back from potential employers, a symbol of what I call the "New Rudeness."

After firing off a few hundred resumes into the ether without a response, you begin to feel it would be more rewarding to put your CV in a

bottle and toss it out to sea.

Assuming you do get an interview and get a rejection, the number one recommendation is "don't beat yourself up about it." According to John Kador, the author of "301 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview," you may be

Either way, you win.

If you came to your interview via a recruiter, it's OK to ask for feedback. Just make it crystal clear that you will accept any negative information with a smiley face. "No one will talk to you if they think you are going to argue or

applying for relevant jobs and stay in touch with the recruiters you've met. "If a posting says 'no calls,' I wouldn't call," he says, "but that doesn't mean you can't write."

It also doesn't mean you can't stalk. What recruiter wouldn't be pleased as

"If you're like me, you know there's only one thing better than getting a new job... That's getting even."

relieved to learn that "sometimes you didn't do anything wrong. Someone else was more qualified or more connected. Companies sometimes go through the motions of interviewing applicants when they've already selected a candidate."

This raises the question — do you really want to work for a company that asks you to get all psyched up and all spiffed up for an interview, which is a total mockery? And it makes me think that the 302nd best question you could ask is: "Hey, bozo, is this interview a total farce designed to make you look like you're doing your job when you're really just looking for cover to hire that bimbo you've been eyeing behind the counter at Starbucks?"

Try asking! You may get points for candor or grounds for blackmail.

appeal," says Kador.

Still, you may want to make some small gesture to express your displeasure. I suggest you make a voodoo doll in the image of your interviewer and skewer it like a shish kebab. Come to think of it, why not bring the doll to your interview? What better way to demonstrate your empathetic nature than to smile sympathetically as you push pins into the vital organs of Mr. or Ms. Decision Maker while they writhe in pain.

Despite your disappointment, the experts do advise that you should not let one negative response discourage you from pursuing new opportunities in companies that reject you. Though admitting that promises to "keep your resume on file" are generally saps, Kador says you should keep

punch to have someone as lovely as you following them every step of the day? What better way to show your dedication to finding a position?

And when you find that position, as you surely will, it doesn't mean the end of your relationship with the idiots who rejected you.

According to Liz Lynch, the author of "Smart Networking," "you should write him or her a note and include your new business card."

You don't want to brag about your new job, or point out all the many ways it's so much better than the stupid job for which you were so cruelly rejected. Or maybe you do!

If you're like me, you know there's only one thing better than getting a new job.

That's getting even.

Lawsuit: Scam Targets Iraqi Americans

Tribune News Service

Hundreds of Iraqi Americans were fleeced of millions of dollars in a ponzi scheme operated by two Michigan men, according to a class action filed recently in U.S. District Court in Detroit.

"Most of the families in Dearborn have been touched by the scheme," Troy lawyer Gerard Mantese said Friday, a day after the suit was filed. He said investors ranged from students, homemakers and blue-collar workers to multimillionaires, who lost several thousand to several million dollars each.

Mantese estimated the total losses at more than \$1 billion.

Federal authorities confirmed that they have begun reviewing the allegations in the suit.

The suit identified the plaintiffs as John Does 1-114 because they are afraid of reprisals if named, Mantese said. The suit alleges Abdzhra Shalushi and Ahmed Alabadi masterminded the scheme, with 18 agents and three corporations listed as codefendants.

"Defendants took advantage of cultural and religious concepts of honor and fairness to cloak their promises and their agents' promises with credibility," the suit charged.

Prostitution: Why Government Isn't The Answer!



Editorial by Jeff Hunt

In the past, when I have argued the case for the decriminalization of prostitution, "morality" has always been the greatest hurdle.

This is a good thing!

If people were not moral I would be afraid to leave my home, so it is fortunate that most people are moral. Most people wish to live peaceful lives with one another and tend to frown when they see an injustice. Those people recognize the hazards associated with prostitution, both for the prostitute and their client.

It is people's general concern for their fellow man which prompts them to shun prostitution.

That's why it's very important for me to address the "morality" of prostitution before making an argument for its decriminalization. I want to make it very clear that this article is not intended to argue the "morality" of prostitution, but only to lobby for its decriminalization.

There are many activities which much of the population would

consider immoral, yet are perfectly legal. For example, many (not all) Christians believe it to be immoral to get divorced. Yet, divorce is perfectly legal in this country. Likewise, there are many that believe gambling to be immoral, yet many States sponsor their own game, in the form of a lottery. Gluttony is also considered immoral in many religious circles, but as it stands today you are perfectly free to stuff your face with as much chocolate cake and red meat as your heart can take.

Using the force of government to alleviate the problems associated with prostitution is not the answer; it causes even more problems than it solves.

Governments do not operate like non profits. Governments do not make suggestions to individuals on how to live their lives, nor do governments provide support groups or outreach programs where people can go for help; rather they use coercion in order to force people to comply.

When the police prosecute individuals for the crime of prostitution, what happens? These individuals are either sent to jail or fined heavily. Either way their lives become ruined. In the case of imprisonment, family structures are destroyed, often times beyond repair. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the case, an individual could be slapped with a permanent criminal record which would make it increasingly difficult for them to get a decent paying job later on in life. Clearly the inability to obtain such a job greatly inhibits an individual's chances of becoming a productive

member of society.

Furthermore, as resources are poured into the enforcement and prosecution of non-violent crimes such as prostitution, fewer resources are then available for the enforcement and prosecution of violent crimes, such as rape, murder, robbery, etc.

Remember, we live in a world of scarce resources. It is only logical that every resource that is spent on the prosecution of prostitution crimes must be a resource that has been diverted away from the prosecution

"Whenever you turn on C-SPAN or even watch your local City Council meeting, all the legislators are doing is voting on whom to point the gun at."

of other, more violent crimes.

I believe you'd be hard pressed to find anyone who believes that government enforcement of prostitution laws in any way reduces the prevalence of prostitution within a society. Keep in mind that prostitution is very commonly referred to as "the world's oldest profession."

We've lived with governments in our society for a long time and clearly they've done nothing to alleviate the problem of prostitution. So, what is the answer?

Think back to the era of Alcohol Prohibition in the 1920's, although I'm sure there won't be many of you who remember those times, but you can certainly read about it in history books and watch documentaries. One of the things that you will notice about those times was that crime was rampant. This makes perfect sense. If governments pass a law which makes

peaceful citizens now criminals, then effectively all you've done was to create, out of thin air, a whole new "criminal" class.

In order for the government to deal with all of these new "criminals" it has just created, it must arm the police force and build more prisons in order to house all of these new "criminals."

It is no coincidence that during Alcohol Prohibition we saw the birth of the Mafia as we know it today.

The social ills associated with

prostitution (crime, disease, etc.) are only enhanced by government involvement.

During Alcohol Prohibition there was a sharp increase in the number of health problems associated with alcohol consumption. Because it was illegal to purchase or consume alcohol, no consumer-level manufacturers would go into the business. Therefore, there was an increase in the amount of alcohol which was produced on the black market. Since there was no quality control, no one could be quite sure about the purity of the alcohol they were ingesting.

This is very much the same situation we have with prostitution today.

If prostitution were allowed to be handled by the free market, there would certainly be quality control, which would mean far fewer sexually transmitted diseases.

Just think of a restaurant. If you knew that the local fast food place on your block had gotten three people sick from salmonella poisoning last week, are you going to eat there anymore? Also, if prostitution was brought into the free market there would be no need to "sell it" on the street. This situation creates a much healthier environment for not only the prostitute and their client but also for the community at large.

The solution for the social problems caused by prostitution is simple; remove the government from the equation.

Homeowner associations already have strict codes regulating what activities are acceptable within the local neighborhood. The same goes for business and property developers. Do you really think that The St. Johns Town Center is going to allow a brothel to open up on its property? Of course not, the public outrage alone would force nearby shops to close down.

The problems associated with prostitution can be handled peacefully; there is no need to involve the government.

Remember, government is force. That is all they know how to do. Whenever you turn on C-SPAN or even watch your local City Council meeting, all the legislators are doing is voting on whom to point the gun at.

It is my argument that individuals operating voluntarily with one another are better capable of handling the issues surrounding prostitution than governments are, who only know how to use force in order to solve their problems.

Did Glorious Johnson Really Call Me Evil?

By Austin Cassidy, publisher of the Jacksonville Observer

It is clear to anyone watching that Jacksonville City Councilwoman Glorious Johnson has accomplished something rather amazing. She has somehow created a coalition of left-wing Democrats and right-wing Republicans and Tea Partiers that is fueling her remarkable campaign for Mayor.

But that's a tough group to keep together and it gets really tough when votes like the Parvez Ahmed one come before the council.

Not long ago, a friend forwarded me an email that has apparently been circulating around. It seems that Councilwoman Johnson is upset with me because I said her explanation of her vote against Parvez Ahmed didn't make any sense.

But what else could she do?

If she voted against the nomination, she risked alienating her Democratic base... but if she voted for the nomination she risked losing her cross-over appeal.

So Councilwoman Johnson decided to do both.

She stood up and said: "Look at us. Just look at us. We have separated ourselves from one another. This makes no sense."

It sounded like she was preparing to launch a vigorous defense of Ahmed's nomination, but about half-way through her statement she turned on a dime.

"If he is on the commission it will polarize what we are trying to do on the commission," Johnson said. "For that reason I will be voting against Mr. Ahmed's nomination to the commission."

Fellow Democrat John Crescimbeni shot right back at Johnson: "That's probably the worst excuse I've heard."

Republican Councilman and Mayoral candidate Kevin Hyde asked a logical question. Would Johnson have opposed Thurgood Marshall's nomination to the Supreme Court because it was controversial and a distraction?

Johnson never really responded to that and continued on to vote against



"It's not everyday that a high ranking city official calls you evil. Actually, now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure she's the only person who has ever called me evil."

Ahmed's nomination, much to the confusion of nearly everyone in the room.

Now she thinks I'm an "evil" man. But what makes me evil? Let's see Councilwoman Johnson's email...

"Austin Cassidy is a Republican who writes the Jacksonville Observer (Republican eNewsletter) This man is evil and he continues to attack me because I refuse to be a good little girl

what an insult. The writing below was in a forum called Jaxoutloud.com."

Johnson then went on to offer up an excerpted section of a post I made on the JaxOutLoud forum several days earlier.

The part of my original post that Ms. Johnson failed to include in her message was the part where I said that I may very well have voted against Ahmed too, but I'd have done it

because of his ties to CAIR.

"Redman made it clear his opposition to Ahmed was based entirely on religious issues that were totally irrelevant to the discussion."

Yarborough offered a well thought out statement on CAIR's ties to extremist groups, backed up with letters from the FBI, etc.

But.... Glorious Johnson's vote made absolutely no sense. She stands up and basically says that she's ashamed that we're even debating the nomination. And then says that she won't support the nominee because the controversy will distract from the work of the board.

So, are we to take it, that if the KKK promised to protest against the appointment of a black man to a city board that Councilwoman Johnson would oppose his nomination because the controversy would be a distraction?

(Note, clearly this is a more extreme example. Frankly, Ahmed's ties to CAIR do give me significant pause about his nomination. But if Councilwoman Johnson had the same concerns about CAIR, she should have based her vote on that and not on the argument she made.)"

Ms. Johnson's email seemed to be going to a couple of dozen community leaders and even a few regular readers of the Jacksonville Observer, one of whom was kind enough to share the thread with me.

I honestly wasn't sure what to think at first. It's not everyday that a high ranking city official calls you evil. Actually, now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure she's the only person who has ever called me evil.

It's a strange reaction to someone disagreeing with you. I usually reserve the word "evil" for murderers, terrorists, etc. Not for anyone and everyone who disagrees with me. But I guess Councilwoman Johnson marches to her own beat.

Moving along, the email discussion continued and Councilwoman Johnson's most recent reply went on to defend her vote against Ahmed, saying that the whole thing was a contrived conspiracy to distract attention from the Council's Waste Management

contract vote and the garbage fee increase. I guess.

What Mr. Cassidy, from the Jacksonville Observer, failed to understand is that by using Dr. Ahmed as a distraction, the no-bid (generational contract) with Waste Management passed as well as the doubled garbage fees/taxes passed.

I have spoken with high leveled people in Washington, New York, and the Pentagon regarding Dr. Ahmed, but I was waiting for some of my questions to be answered, if at all possible.

But, in the mean time, friends, neighbors, and relatives were spewing such mean spirited behavior towards each other over this nomination. In fact, I believe that there were others, with an agenda, who wanted this controversy to escalate so the real issues of a 3/4 billion dollar ("generational contract") no bid and doubled garbage fees, would nearly go by unnoticed. Had they not, they could have asked Ahmed to withdraw his nomination and re-nominate him in the future. But, Dr. Ahmed was not asked to withdraw nor did he offer to withdraw. Which begs another question. He is being displayed as a peacemaker. Would not a person's intent upon peace perhaps notice that the controversy surrounding him was not going to be conducive to creating peace in Jacksonville and may be causing greater problems?

I believe there are deeper issues of concern and we are only dealing with the face value of issues. I look deeper into situations. Maybe this does not fair with certain people. Is it wrong to care about our city, our state, and our country? What are we going to leave our children and their children? We must continue to fight for our liberty and freedom or else we will pay the price for losing it.

Glorious"

The subject line of these emails, by the way, is "So-called Republican" — apparently I'm being called a fake Republican by a Councilwoman who was elected twice as a Republican and then switched parties and re-registered as a Democrat last year.

That makes about as much sense as Johnson's explanation of her vote.

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THE BACK PAGE

Gary Varvel



BEATING EACH OTHER SENSELESS FOR INTERNET FAME

By Mitch Albom, Tribune Media Services

They are all over the Internet, short video clips with titles out of a boxing poster. "Raul vs. Pedro." "Red vs. Robert." "Twinkie vs. Saylor."

But these are not professional fighters. These are kids. High school kids, middle-school kids. They punch each other, pound each other, slap, yank, pull, tackle, rip, scratch and kick each other.

And all the time, someone is filming. "Ten seconds" is what some call it, a macho exercise in which children inflict as much pain as they can for 10 seconds. Perhaps the thinking is "you can't get killed in 10 seconds" -- but you sure can inflict pain.

Recently, a Troy, Mich., middle-school student was taken to a hospital after he and two classmates staged their own "10 seconds" routine. They were suspended from school -- because they held this sad activity in the school restroom.

The school restroom? Yep. And if you go to YouTube you'll see many more. Filmed on cell phones. Shot in bathrooms. Or in parking lots. Or out in fields.

On one video, a big kid chases a smaller kid, spins him, grabs him, lifts him from around the neck and slams him to the ground -- all while another kid tags behind.

Not stopping it. Filming it. Fighting just for the cameras. Now, fighting as kids is nothing new. I did it. Maybe you did, too. But

this is not one of those generation gap issues. There are serious and disturbing differences between the eras.

For one thing, when we fought, there was a reason. Kids didn't just say, "Hey, let's pound the crap out of each other after school today."

And secondly, no one recorded it. The sickest part of this phenomenon is that anger is not igniting these fights -- fame is. These kids see this as their piece of the Internet pie. YouTube has flattened the Earth into a single stage where anyone can perform. That is too tempting for kids who are growing up in a "fame is everything" world. They may not be able to act. They may not be able to sing or dance. But anyone can punch.

Or try to. The thing is, once you start hitting someone, anger may not be the catalyst, but it quickly can become the gasoline. And a staged routine can turn to serious violence.

In less than 10 seconds. The obvious response to this is, "Why don't parents teach their kids that this is wrong?" My guess is many do. My guess is even more are totally unaware of what's going on. Ask yourself this, Mom and Dad: How many YouTube fights have you watched lately?

Well, go online and type "ten seconds" and "fight" and see what comes up.

Then, after you watch two teens claw and yank as their shirts ride up and their arms flail wildly, see how many other clips come up. They appear endless. "Toker vs. Daniel." "Alejandro vs. Jonathon and William." Some fights last 10 seconds, some much longer.

There's one labeled "10 seconds" that shows a bunch of kids in a school band room pounding each other between the instruments and the music stands.

New lessons of the fight game

How can this go on, you ask? Well, remember, these kids live in a world of mixed martial arts fighting. MMA was created as a way of using anything and everything in a fight -- boxing, karate, jiu-

jitsu, you name it. And while it has been cleaned up lately and its practitioners are well trained, it began with an almost a fight-to-the-death mentality.

And that is the approach being mimicked by the "10 seconds" kids who, for the most part, aren't trained or accomplished or even aware of the consequences.

They are hyped-up kids in a hyped-up world, where doing things for the camera is the only reason to do anything at all. To some of these kids, seeing their name on the side of a YouTube page is a narcotic hit that is addicting.

And so maybe our conversations need to change.

Not long ago, a father took his son outside, taught him to hold up his fists, but also said, "Don't hit anyone unprovoked."

Today, we need to say, "Son, YouTube is not a reason to do something. And violence done in the name of fame is not only dangerous, it's insane."

Or you could remind them that Andy Warhol predicted that everyone one day would be famous for 15 minutes.

And he was off by 14 minutes and 50 seconds.

Mitch Albom is a best-selling author, journalist, screenwriter, radio and television broadcaster and musician. His books have sold over 26 million copies worldwide.

WEBSITE OFFERS FAMILIES CLOSURE

By Jeff Martin

The words flashed on her computer late last year and tears instantly poured out.

More than two decades after her sister Paula Beverly Davis disappeared, Alice Beverly finally had found out what

happened to her.

The news came from a website known as NamUs, an acronym for the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, which matches missing person cases with unidentified human remains nationwide.

Even though she learned her missing sister had been murdered in 1987, Beverly says the news gave her some sense of closure.

"I just broke down crying instantly," she recalls now. "It was like, 'We found her!'"

NamUs became fully operational last year and so far is credited with solving 17 cases, spokeswoman Michele Money-Carson says.

Paula Beverly Davis vanished from Kansas City in the summer of 1987. She was strangled, and her body left near a freeway outside Dayton, Ohio, hours after she was reported missing. But since no one in Ohio knew who she was, she was buried as a Jane Doe in an Ohio cemetery.

"We never gave up," Beverly says.

Davis' body will be exhumed from that cemetery, another sister, Stephanie Clack learned last week. She will be cremated in Ohio, and the sisters will bring her ashes back home, Clack says.

The NamUs concept began with medical examiners, who called for a nationwide system in 2005 to provide a comprehensive site to help identify missing people, says Kevin Lothridge, CEO of the National Forensic Science Technology Center.

The Largo, Fla.-based center partners with the U.S. Department of Justice to operate the site under an agreement reached in 2007. It cost about \$1.8 million to operate last year, Money-Carson says.

NamUs - at www.namus.gov - essentially has two sets of information. The first is known details of missing person cases around the nation provided by law officers and relatives of the missing.

The other is a database of unknown human remains in morgues across the country, with details entered by coroners and medical examiners.

It allows one-stop sleuthing for amateurs, families and police. Anyone can search and enter data they have on a missing person.

Medical examiners can enter data on unidentified bodies, and anyone can search the database for potential matches, Money-Carson says.

In Las Vegas, Clark County Coroner Mike Murphy is among several coroners nationwide who worked on developing the system after a local site convinced him of its power to solve missing person cases.

In 2002, Clark County began posting details of unidentified bodies and human remains on its own website. Within hours, they had identified the first such case and eventually solved about 40 cases, he says.

Tips and leads came not only from relatives of victims, but also "armchair detectives," citizens who investigated cases on their own, he says.

"I believe that the light of hope burns eternally bright," Murphy says. "We have 40 cases that indicate that it burns very bright."

PLEASE RECYCLE