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Message from the publisher

j. stanley marshall



The biggest item on the agenda of the Florida Legislature this spring is education. More particularly, it's the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan including opportunity scholarships, which are dollar awards to be given to parents to cover the cost of schooling in private schools or other public schools of the parents' choice.

It's no surprise that education is getting more space in Florida's newspapers and more time on radio and TV than any other domestic issue. Opponents of the Bush/Brogan plan are exercised by the prospect of the plan's passage and many seem almost apoplectic about giving parents the privilege of choosing their children's schools and having the tax dollars follow the child. It's the worst nightmare of much of the education establishment and especially the teachers' unions.

In a recent issue of the *Orlando Sentinel*, Seminole County School Superintendent Paul Hagerty acknowledged that he had attended a Catholic school and he would be glad to have today's children do the same if the public schools to which they've been assigned do not meet their needs. But Superintendent Hagerty is saying more than that. By implication, his message to parents is this: however bad your child's school is, whether or not it meets the "standards and levels of accountability that govern public education in Florida" (Hagerty's code words for maintaining the status quo), the

parents' choice should be to send their children to a private school and to pay the tuition with no relief from the tax they pay to support their child in the school the child no longer attends. Superintendent Hagerty seems not to recognize the plain fact that some parents cannot afford to exercise that choice.

My attention was called to the superintendent's essay by a member of the Institute's Board of Directors, Lee F. Arnold of Winter Springs. He had responded to Hagerty's article by submitting a letter to the editor of the *Sentinel*. I received a copy of both Hagerty's article and Arnold's letter. Because it states the case for vouchers so well, I am including the Arnold letter in its entirety on this page.

Publishers and editors always admire good writing and the elegance of Arnold's letter, and its content, make it hard to pass up. I am prompted to encourage others among our readers to think about writing for some of our publications, including *The Journal*. While we receive letters occasionally from readers, we haven't included a "letters" feature in *The Journal* and maybe it's time. What do you think? In any case, Lee, thanks for using your time and talent to help influence public opinion on an issue important to all of us and maybe, just maybe, initiating a useful new feature for *The Journal*. ❧

Orlando Sentinel April 4, 1999
Letters from Readers

Vouchers Offer Hope

Paul Hagerty's vehement opposition to school vouchers reeks of a "let them eat cake" philosophy at odds with America's promise of universal educational opportunity. We abdicate our responsibilities when we trap our weakest citizens in chronically dysfunctional government schools.

Scattered throughout Florida are schools that simply don't work and are forever resistant to reform—the equivalent of the Amtrak train that never runs on time and the post office that misdelivers your mail. Vouchers grant parents the opportunity to flee to education's equivalent of FedEx and Southwest Airlines.

Hagerty stands in the schoolhouse door, this time to prevent exit rather than entry. Citizens should just accept whatever government gives us. As an escape valve, he offers that, "as individuals, we can use our private money to buy additional service."

Has Hagerty ever met the people who would receive vouchers? Many toil at minimum wage, struggle to maintain some semblance of family, and battle their own demons. They simply can't buy their children's deliverance. So two classes of citizens emerge in Hagerty's America—those who buy their way out of government-supplied mediocrity and those condemned to hopelessness.

Our heritage demands a different result. School choice, including vouchers, grants each citizen the power to engage in a quintessential American act—voting with one's feet. That's why, in other parts of America, poor and disadvantaged parents line up by the thousands for the opportunity to choose a better place for their children.

Floridians deserve better. Let my people go.

Lee F. Arnold
Winter Springs

COVER STORY

what florida's college students say they didn't learn in their high school government class

by susan a. macmanus



Florida high school graduates say they lack basic knowledge of how to register and vote.

Call it a “citizenship crisis.” Label it “democracy’s biggest threat.” The bottom line is that the growing disaffection for politics among our nation’s younger generations is a serious problem. Young people are, for the most part, alienated from politics.¹ Today, fewer vote, run for office, or choose to follow public service careers.

A 1999 study sponsored by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) reported some chilling national statistics regarding youth and voting.² It was based on a random sample of 1,005 15-to 24-year-olds conducted via telephone in November 1998. Some of the most indicative statistics of participatory patterns for young persons ages 18 and 24 are:

- Only 49 percent of this age group were registered to vote in 1996.
- Since the 1972 presidential election, when the voting age was lowered to 18, there has been nearly a 20 percent decrease in voting among this age group.
- 55 percent agree with the statement that “schools do not do a very good job of giving young people the information they need to vote.”

While each of these statistics is troubling, the last one is the focus of this article.

Florida: Beginning Point of a National Study

The slippage in political participation rates of American's young people is of great concern to many groups across the country. To find out the cause and the cure, the American Political Science Association created a task force on civic renewal, and a research subset was formed to study this problem. Two members of the research group, the author and Dr. Diana Owens of Georgetown University, are surveying college students in every state, asking a wide range of questions about their high school government or civics class, and soliciting recommendations for improving these courses. The initial survey instrument was designed by Professor MacManus and administered to students enrolled in introductory political science courses at the University of South Florida in Tampa, all of whom attended high schools in the state.

The results of the USF survey show that Florida's high school government classes generally do not teach students the basic how to's of being an involved citizen, especially at the state and local levels. Students rarely interact with political candidates or elected officials, nor do they learn about government as a career option.

Table 1

Young Voters as Percentage of All Voters

AGE GROUP	% OF ALL FLORIDA VOTERS	
	1996 PRES.	1998 NON-PRES.
18 – 29	15	8
30 – 49	30	23
50 – 64	24	27
65+	31	42

*Source: Voter News Service, New York, N.Y.
Used by permission.*

Votes Drop Off in State and Local Elections

Nothing is stronger evidence of the sharp drop-off in the youngest cohort's vote in nonpresidential election years than figures from the most recent exit surveys conducted by the Voter News Service (VNS).³ Their proportional make-up of the voting public in state and local elections held in 1998 was nearly halved—from 15 percent in the 1996 presidential election year to 8 percent in the 1998 nonpresidential election year. (See Table 1.)

Some attribute the drop-off in young people to the disproportionate reliance on television among the young. Television simply cannot cover all the state and local races in its regular news format. But our data suggest a more basic problem—young people are not receiving sufficient instruction about state and local politics in their high school government classes.

It is easy to understand why, in

light of the short time most high school students spend studying government.

Social Studies Requirements


Under Florida law, high school students must take one semester (one half credit) of American government in order to graduate.⁴ In addition, they are required to take one semester of economics plus a full year (two semesters) of American history and another full year of world history.

In some Florida counties, students take American government in the ninth grade. In others, they take it later. Most of those surveyed who took it in the ninth grade say that it was counterproductive; that is, it was too far removed from registering to vote and from their first trip to the ballot box.

At the same time, high school American government teachers have almost an impossible job on their hands. State standards call for them to cover an extensive amount of material in this one-semester course—more than in the average one-semester college or university course on American government.⁵ A cursory coverage of a lot of topics is, unfortunately, the “best case scenario” under current Florida law. Few are able to spend time on much more than the basics, which cover the three branches of government and how a bill becomes a law. (See Table 2.)

What gets the shortest shrift are

the mechanics of registering and voting and coverage of state and local government. The latter is true even though the 1997 Florida Legislature mandated that “the elements of civil government shall include the primary functions of and interrelationships between the federal government, the state, and its counties, municipalities, school districts, and special districts.”⁶



It is easy to understand the problem in light of the short time most high school students spend studying government.

Topics Covered

USF students were presented with questions designed to determine what topics they studied in their high school government class (and how often). For each topic, they were asked whether they covered it “fairly often,” “some,” or “never.” The results, presented in Table 2, should be a wake-up call for educators and legislators responsible for what our young people learn about government and good citizenship. The results reinforce the findings of the National Association of Secretaries of State survey, namely that “schools do not do a very good job giving young people the information needed to vote.”

Voter Registration and Voting

It’s the basics that students say they are lacking—knowledge of how to register and how to vote, either by machine or by absentee ballot—and how to move one’s registration from one place to another.

A 21-year-old female Hispanic

Table 2

Frequency of Topics Covered in Florida High School Government Classes
(Responses are listed in descending order based on the “never” response.)

TOPIC	% NEVER	% SOME	% FAIRLY OFTEN
How to change voter registration	66	25	5
How to volunteer in a political campaign	65	25	6
How to vote absentee	61	27	7
Role of neighborhood associations	61	28	6
How to complain to government official about local problem	53	33	9
How to join a political party	52	34	9
How to run for office	44	40	12
How to register to vote	40	42	14
What school boards do	49	37	9
What counties do	47	41	8
What cities do	46	42	8
What types of careers are in government	42	40	13
How to sign a petition	41	44	10
Role of lobbying in politics	36	42	18
Why people don't vote	33	41	22
The role of media in politics	31	43	22
Voting as a civic duty and citizen's responsibility	26	48	22
Political ideologies: what's liberal or conservative	22	51	23
Study of taxes	21	52	23
Difference between general and primary elections	18	57	21
How government and economy are related	16	50	31
Study of political history	10	44	43
Difference between Republicans and Democrats	12	53	31
Study of court system	9	43	42
Study of Congress	6	44	46
Study of presidency	6	38	52

Source: Survey of 160 students enrolled in introductory political science courses at the University of South Florida, Tampa; conducted Fall 1998 by the author. (Students attended Florida high schools.) The row totals may not add to 100% due to rounding or the exclusion of missing data.

student, majoring in environmental science, faults her high school government class for not better preparing her to register and vote: “One of the problems I am encountering now is how to choose a political party, including those that are not Republican or Democrat. *No one* taught us how to vote! Up until now, I’ve found the process of voting very

intimidating, because I really had no idea how to use the voting machine.” She also acknowledged that taking government her freshman year in high school was counterproductive.

Our survey results show that many Florida college students are in the same boat as this student:

- Forty percent of the USF students surveyed say they were never

taught how to register to vote in their high school government classes.

- Two-thirds say they did *not* learn how to change their voter registration. Yet the Census Bureau tells us the average American moves every five years.⁷
- Sixty-one percent acknowledge that they were never taught how to vote absentee. Yet, a sizable proportion of college-age students temporarily live away from their permanent address or the location where they first registered to vote.

Citizen Input and Participatory Skills

Voting is not the only form of civic participation. Youth participation in other ways via different avenues is often even lower than their voting rate, both nationally and in Florida.

Sixty-five percent of the Florida university students say they never learned how to volunteer in a political campaign before coming to college and 53 percent did not learn how to join a political party. Those surveyed acknowledge they never learned about careers in government (42 percent) or how to run for political office (44 percent).

The lack of coverage, or perhaps the de-emphasis of forms of political volunteerism and activism, runs counter to other data showing the rise of volunteerism among younger cohorts over the past 10 years. The NASS study found that “this [heightened] involvement remains decidedly individualistic and apolitical” and mostly takes place “in community

institutions like soup kitchens, hospitals, and schools.”⁸

Sadly, it appears that our young people have the impression that anything involving neighborhoods, cities, counties and schools is not political (because political is “bad.”) It is a tragedy that almost half or more of the students surveyed said they did not learn what school boards, counties or cities do, and 61 percent said they learned nothing about the role of neighborhood associations in the political arena.

In spite of the fact that college students acknowledge they would like to have learned much more in their high school government class, the good news is that they did not hate the course. Over half (55 percent) rated their class “good” or “excellent,” 33 percent as “average,” but only 8 percent as “poor.” However, a majority (58 percent) also acknowledged that their government course was no better or worse than their other courses.

Practical Politics in the Classroom

Only 6 percent of the students said their high school government teacher ever brought in a political candidate to talk about running for office, and just 9 percent report ever having an elected official come talk to their class. Discussion about how to get involved in neighborhood associations occurred in only 8 percent of the students’ courses. Just one in five participated in any type of mock election. More common were discussions of specific instances where one

vote made a difference (43 percent) or the showing of videos (69 percent).

Sixty-three percent rated their high school government teacher as “good” or “excellent” relative to their other high school teachers. Students tend to give much higher ratings to their high school teachers who bring government into the classroom in a personal way, and appreciate having contact with elected government officials and candidates. Bringing politicians to class has another payoff—an increase in the student’s interest in politics *and* running for office. For example, among those taking a class where an elected official came in for a visit, 64 percent answered “yes” or “maybe” to the question “Would you want to run for office someday?” In contrast, 62 percent who never saw an elected official indicated they would *not* want to run for office.

Conclusion

This probative study of students educated in Florida high schools has dramatically shown that many graduate with little knowledge of the practical how to’s of registering and voting. Some take the course in their freshman year in high school—too far in advance of their eligibility to vote.

Students acknowledge they are woefully undereducated about state and local politics and know little about the various ways of engaging in civic activism in their own neighbor-

hood. Thus, it is not surprising that turnout rates of the youngest cohorts in elections at these levels have been plummeting in recent years.

The fact that few have ever met an elected official or candidate helps explain their reticence to run for office.⁹


While college and university courses can remedy some of these deficiencies, less than half of all high school students ever go to college. Only 22 percent of Florida’s population are college graduates whereas 83 percent are high school graduates.¹⁰ Students who are not exposed to the

how to’s of participating in the electoral process before they graduate from high school are far more likely to be nonvoters as adults than their college-educated counterparts.

Suggestions

We asked the USF students to make some tangible suggestions as to how to improve their high school government classes. Among the most common suggestions are:

- Lengthen the course to two semesters.
- Require it during the senior year—closer to one’s actual eligibility to vote.
- Bring a votomatic machine to school or use a web page demonstration (like the State of Florida) to show students how to vote.
- Clarify how to get and use an absentee ballot.



More than 50 percent of respondents say they did not learn how to join a political party.



- Explain how to run for office or the many ways to get involved in government.
- Bring in more officeholders and people running for office to discuss their own political ideologies and platforms.
- Introduce more current events into the classroom.
- Conduct debates, mock trials, and elections.
- Engage in more role-playing in the classroom, like assigning people to take different sides on a bill being considered by the state legislature.¹¹

Recommendations

The following recommendations are from the author, other groups and individuals concerned about the decline of civic activism among young people in our state.

The Department of Education should:

- Collect and review instructional materials from all 67 school districts. Each county differs with regard to its course design and performance standards.
- Survey government teachers to ask how much time they devote to specific topics. Identify topics they don't feel they have time to cover as well as they would like. Identify shortcomings of available textbooks.
- Continue to survey students to see if mandated topics are being covered adequately.

Elected officials and candidates should:

- Visit classrooms more often.

- Discuss how they got into politics and what is exciting about it.
- Elaborate on careers available in the public sector.

Candidates should:

- Visit and mingle with student groups and organizations.

Supervisors of Elections should:

- Develop more videos and simple handouts that can be distributed to high school students and teachers.

The Secretary of State—Division of Election should:

- Promote the Mock Vote Election program more vigorously. Research on the KidsVote program has shown that adult turnout rates are positively impacted by this program as well.

Ignorance Is Not Bliss

The bottom line is that we cannot assume that just because topics are listed in course outlines or state standards that they are being adequately covered. Short of statewide exams, surveys of this type are essential to determining the degree to which our government classes are producing informed citizens. Our democratic system of government is at stake. ☞

Susan A. MacManus is professor of public administration and political science at the University of South Florida, Tampa, and a member of The James Madison Institute's Research Advisory Council.

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florida forever needs a sharp focus

by david r. colburn and lance dehaven smith



**Florida Forever
should focus on
purchasing land or
development
rights to protect
the state's large
water-dependent
ecosystems.**

Preservation 2000, Florida's main land acquisition program, will probably be renamed and extended in the 1999 legislative session. Its new name will be Florida Forever and it will function at least until the year 2010.

The drafting of Florida Forever should be used as an opportunity to review Florida's entire system of growth management and environmental protection. The main weakness of Preservation 2000 has been a lack of focus. Land has been purchased throughout the state with little attention given to how parcels relate to one another and to Florida's most stressed ecosystems. This same lack of focus can be found throughout Florida's framework for managing growth and protecting the environment. As policy makers design Florida Forever, they should think ahead about possible changes that could be made to related policies to give greater protection to Florida's most important environmental resources.

Why an Overhaul Is Needed


A major restructuring of Florida's system of growth management and environmental permitting is needed for both programmatic and political reasons. The programmatic reason for change is that the systems are not meeting the needs of the state and the reasonable expectations of citizens and policy makers. The political reason is that Florida has not paid adequate attention to the rights of property

owners, and the latter have mobilized a property rights movement to require compensation when land use regulation reduces property values.

Environmentalists have been trying to accommodate the concerns of the property rights movement by calling for “sustainable development.” The concept of “sustainability” was coined at a 1992 meeting of the United Nations. In 1993, the governor of Florida embraced the concept and appointed a Commission for a Sustainable South Florida. However, the notion of sustainability has proved to be too nebulous a concept to meet environmental and economic needs. It is becoming increasingly clear that Florida’s (and the nation’s) environmental protection and growth management policies must be restructured and redirected if they are going to be economically fair and realistic, not to mention successful.


Florida’s growth management system has failed to prevent the intrusion of urbanization into the state’s most sensitive ecosystems. The system excessively regulates local governments and developers, but pays little attention to the more important issue of urban form. Florida’s land acquisition programs, which purchase small parcels of environmentally sensitive lands throughout the state rather than focusing on the most important

ecosystems, suffer from a similar weakness. Taking all sources together (federal, state, and local), Florida has roughly 13 million acres of publicly owned land. Most of this land is owned outright rather than being limited to development rights. There are almost 900 parcels of publicly owned land, ranging from one acre to one and one-half million acres. Almost one-third of the parcels are less than 100 acres and one-fifth are less than 50 acres.



Politically speaking, the environmental movement must find common ground with the property rights movement in Florida.

Reforming Environmental Permitting



The legislature has repeatedly shied away from policies to shape regional urban development patterns because such policies are seen as a step toward “state zoning.” The 1985 growth management laws specifically preclude development of a state land use map. But protecting the state’s largest and most important ecosystems would not require the radical step of state zoning. It could be done by designating ecosystems to be protected by a combination of programs that would include acquisition of land or development rights. Landowners should receive fair compensation for any loss in their land values. Clearly, Florida cannot buy everything and this is precisely why greater focus is needed in what it does buy. Rather than diminish almost every developer’s land values

with a growth management system that regulates everything, the state should identify those ecosystems that are of critical importance, use regulation and condemnation to greatly limit development in and around them, and fairly compensate landowners for their losses.

Efforts have already begun to reorient environmental permitting to protect entire ecosystems rather than only individual resources within those ecosystems. But the reforms have not been supported sufficiently by top leaders, and they have met with debilitating resistance from low level bureaucrats who have been overzealous in their desire to protect individual species and habitats rather than the environment as a whole. The new orientation is referred to as “ecosystem management” and “ecosystem team permitting.” The aim has been to develop a methodology quite different from that used in single-issue permitting. Under the latter approach, projects are typically expected to safeguard to the maximum extent possible the environmental values being protected by each permitting agency. The problem with this approach is that it sometimes works to the detriment of the overall ecosystem and fails to recognize the interactions between environmental objectives.

Florida has had single-issue permit-


ting since the 1950s, along with a complex system of development review and growth management since the 1970s. Although the state has been very successful in protecting many endangered species and habitats, some of its largest ecosystems have experienced much harm, including the Kissimmee River/Lake Okeechobee/Everglades system, the Ocklawaha River, and the Florida Keys. Ecosystem management is intended to foster a permitting system that considers the forest in addition to the trees. Unfortunately, the permitting methodology for ecosystem management has not yet been fully

worked out, and some bureaucrats have been able to subvert it.


This experience has demonstrated that reforming Florida’s environmental protection and growth management policies requires unambiguous direction from the legislature and indefatigable oversight by the governor.

The Failure of Growth Management

Urban sprawl is a bigger problem in Florida than in other states because of two factors. One is that the state has several large, water-dependent ecosystems that are disrupted by nearby urbanization. The other factor is the state’s large number of retirees, who frequently choose to reside on the fringes of the major



Florida's system of growth management has actually contributed to urban sprawl rather than reducing it.



employment centers.

Unfortunately, Florida's system of growth management has actually *contributed to* urban sprawl rather than reducing it. Because of complex regulations and concurrency requirements in the metropolitan centers, developers find it much easier to operate at the urban fringe.

Environmentalists know that aspects of Florida's growth management laws are counterproductive, but they have blocked needed reforms for fear of what might happen in the legislative process if the laws are opened up. This may work in the short run, but in the long run Florida's growth management and environmental protection policies may be like the twig that eventually breaks because it does not bend. Pressure for change has been building for a decade. Politically speaking, the environmental movement must find common ground with the property rights movement in Florida or it will jeopardize its own efforts to protect the long-term needs of the state's environment. Florida must focus its environmental protection efforts on the state's most

important environmental resources, and it must compensate landowners for their losses when these resources are protected through land use regulation.

A Simple Prescription

The local planning component of Florida's growth management system should be dismantled or greatly simplified. At the same time, the Area of Critical State Concern program* should be expanded and coupled with the state's land acquisition programs to protect the Everglades, the Tampa Bay watershed, Florida Bay, the state's largest rivers, and similar, large-scale, water-dependent environmental resources. This is what would truly save Florida forever and guarantee its future. ☞

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* The Area of Critical State Concern (ACSC) program was enacted in 1972 to protect areas of the state in which unsuitable land development will endanger resources of regional or statewide significance. Areas can be considered for ACSC designation if they have environmental, natural, historical, or archaeological resources of regional or state significance or if they are threatened by major public facilities.



This article greatly condenses a large body of writing and research. Call The James Madison Institute at (850) 386-3131 for a list of references.

people with impact: frances Stavros

by brett organ



**Scholarships for
Adult Vocational
Education is one of
the top dropout
retrieval programs
in the nation.**

We are all familiar with the saying “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” Nowhere is that sentiment truer than in the realm of public policy. It seems that certain political and societal problems are never really solved, just pushed along to succeeding generations.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century in America, it can be very difficult to discern the real problems from the media-driven hype that is produced for public consumption. It is increasingly popular to couch each new “crisis” in terms of its impact on our children. Unfortunately, rhetoric can be dangerous because it can serve to divert our attention from the authentic cultural and social challenges that face us.

One perennially intractable problem is children who don’t finish their education. High school dropouts are as common today as at any time in this nation’s history. Florida is not immune from this social ill, but at least one community is addressing the problem with remarkable success.

In 1986, while a member of the Pinellas County Senior High School Curriculum Committee, Frances Stavros read a report stating that over 3,000 students had dropped out of high school during the 1985-86 school year. After speaking to her husband Gus, the concerned couple, who are prominent civic leaders in

their community, decided to offer scholarships for dropouts between 16 and 19 years of age. The Scholarships for Adults in Vocational Education, or SAVE program, was created with the funds provided by the Stavroses, other individuals and businesses in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area, the Pinellas County School System, and grants. The program began operation in 1987 with two mentors provided by the school system.

What Is SAVE?

The goal of the SAVE program is quite simple. Students who, for various reasons, have dropped out of the traditional public school system are mentored through a process that gets them back on the path to productivity and self-sufficiency. The first step is to help the student obtain a general equivalency degree (GED). Then SAVE provides vocational counseling, job training and placement, or assists with enrollment in a college degree program.

SAVE is one of more than 20 programs managed by the Pinellas County Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization that raises money for Pinellas County schools, children, and educators. The organization is not part of the school district and has its own directors and bylaws. The foundation acts as a middleman to bring the community and schools together to solve educational problems. Approximately 80


percent of the funding for its programs comes from the business community. "This is atypical for nonprofits. Most get their funding from private individuals," said Frances Neu, who is president of the Pinellas County Education Foundation.

Cooperation and participation are the keys to the success of the SAVE program. The business community realizes that it is in its best interest to participate in the education of local children, especially those who are in danger of falling through


the cracks. Many of these "problem" students will be out looking for jobs for which they are ill-prepared if they have dropped out of school. The reality is that without an education or specialized training, a dropout is destined to be stuck in a low-paying, entry-level job. Options are few and limited. But in a program like SAVE, a young person has a realistic opportunity to have a rewarding career that has real growth potential. However, as Milton Friedman once said, "There is no free lunch." The fortunate students who enter the SAVE program must bring something to the table as well.

How Does It Work?

Prospective students must interview to be accepted into the program and with a current capacity of 120, the competition is keen. Today, SAVE does not have to find students; the students come to SAVE. Many come to the program through referrals of



One perennially intractable problem is children who don't finish their education.



current and former students. As one might expect, financial assistance is a primary need. SAVE scholarships cover tuition, books, and various expenses. The annual cost for one student is \$900 to \$1200, depending on the course of study chosen. Once in the program, students must show a desire to succeed by regular class attendance. Often, the personal challenges that these students face may make regular class attendance a difficult task.

The counselors in the SAVE program make all the difference in these situations. According to Neu, the counselors take a personal interest in each of their students. "I've heard stories where a counselor has arranged for transportation so a student could keep a scheduled doctor's appointment," she said. In the public school setting, counselors typically don't have the time or are prevented by district regulations or state law from being involved in this way. The SAVE students respond in a profound way to this kind of dedication, Neu reported. "Currently in its 12th year, SAVE has a success rate of 86 percent and has graduated over 1,300 students," she said. "The program's success is based on students earning a GED, obtaining a certificate of completion and gaining

employment in their field of study. Many SAVE students continue their education beyond technical school, through their employment or by enrolling in the junior college."



SAVE has a success rate of 86 percent.



Who Benefits the Most?

The success of the SAVE program is a testament to the fact that individuals and communities do care about the problems that we all face in our society.

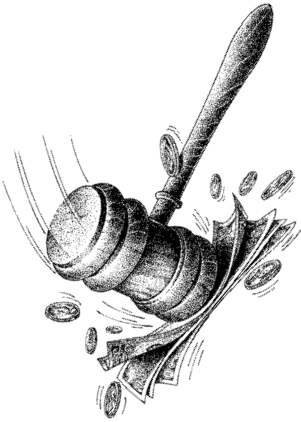
In Pinellas County, it has been proven once again that most problems can be solved best by motivated, caring people who are close to the problem. America would not be the nation that it is if this were a truly new revelation. Perhaps our real task should be to do a better job of advertising these kinds of successes wherever they occur. Society as a whole can only benefit.

At an annual SAVE breakfast, graduates from the program return to share their successes with current SAVE students. According to Stavros, the change in attitude of a graduate from dropout to self-sufficient young adult is a joy to behold. "At each breakfast," she said, "I shed tears of happiness." ∞

Brett Organ is a freelance writer who lives in Tallahassee, Fla.

florida's unethical tobacco deal

by randall g. holcombe



The tobacco Medicaid litigation and settlement undermines the principles of free choice and personal responsibility.

With Florida in the lead, state governments have reached a \$206 billion settlement with four major U.S. tobacco companies as compensation for the health-related costs states have borne as a result of tobacco-related illnesses.

There is much to dislike about the deal, but just about everyone overlooks one factor. Florida is acting unethically by pressuring tobacco companies to pay the costs that the state voluntarily chose to bear.

The facts are clear. Americans have been using tobacco since colonial times and have been suffering health-related costs ever since. Beyond a doubt, smoking causes cancer, heart disease, and a host of other medical ills. And beyond a doubt (especially as medical technology and medical care costs have advanced), smoking exacts a monetary toll in the form of higher health care costs. Prior to the 1950s most Americans had no health insurance, so they bore the costs of smoking-related health care themselves. Health insurance became more widespread in the 1950s and 1960s, but smoking still imposed no costs on the government.

All that changed when Medicaid was created in 1966 and the state of Florida voluntarily agreed to pay health care costs that formerly were the responsibility of the smokers themselves. Now Florida has demanded that tobacco companies pay the costs the state voluntarily chose to bear. If one party (the state) agrees to bear certain costs formerly borne by a

second party (smokers), it is unethical for the first party to demand that a third party (the tobacco companies) pay for costs the first party originally volunteered to cover.

One might argue that the federal government created Medicaid, not the states, but all this would imply is that the states should seek redress from the federal government, not the tobacco companies. This argument also implies that the federal government would be acting unethically to try to collect from tobacco companies the costs it voluntarily chose to accept.

Freedom versus Responsibility

In a free country, people are free to smoke if they so choose. Freedom must mean the freedom to make poor choices; indeed, the concept would be meaningless if citizens were only free to do what the government approved. The corollary of freedom is responsibility and if people are free to make poor choices, they should also bear the responsibility for the consequences of those choices. That is how things were before Florida began paying for smoking-related illnesses through Medicaid.

The tobacco companies are partly at fault, too. They were unwilling to fight for the principle that people are responsible for the consequences of their behavior. In the public's eye, this is tantamount to admitting that the companies were liable. Why else


would they have settled? Some may argue that it was a good business decision. The tobacco companies may have gotten off cheaper this way than had they gone to court, and at any rate they saved money on lawyers' fees by settling. But the image they have created in the minds of citizens and future jurors by settling may come back to haunt them.

Consider that in early 1999, a California jury awarded a woman who smoked Marlboros for 35 years a whopping

\$35 million for the damage smoking did to her. Did she deserve this award? Since the tobacco companies already agreed to pay \$206 billion to the states, they admitted in principle that \$35 million was reasonable compensation for smokers. The tobacco companies brought this verdict on themselves for settling with the states instead of fighting. Why should juries believe that tobacco companies are not liable for the health consequences to individuals when those same companies have already accepted their liability for costs imposed on the states?

Where Is Personal Responsibility?

A bad precedent has been set. This year, a number of cities sued gun manufacturers for the costs imposed by criminals using guns. Of course gun manufacturers know that their products could be used to commit crimes, just as auto companies know



Freedom must mean the freedom to make poor choices.



that their products could be used as getaway vehicles in robberies, or even in vehicular homicides. Should the Ford Motor Company be held liable if a bank robber uses a Ford as a getaway vehicle? Based on the precedent that manufacturers are liable for the harm done by the use of their products, it is too easy to imagine brewers sued for alcoholism and drunk drivers or baseball bat manufacturers sued if someone is bludgeoned with one of their products.

Similarly, if tobacco companies are held responsible for people whose health is impaired by smoking, should auto manufacturers be liable for drivers who injure themselves while speeding? The speeder's argument could be like the smoker's: "Chevrolet deliberately designed this Corvette to go well over twice the speed limit, and were it not for the dangerous design of the product, I never would have been able to reach such excessive speeds and have such a serious accident." Where will this nonsense end?

Freedom Is Compromised

The tobacco companies hurt us all by settling and struck a blow against the ideals of individual freedom and responsibility upon which our nation was founded. The tobacco industry is guilty not of selling cigarettes,

which after all consisted of voluntary transactions among consenting parties, but rather of abandoning principle when it looked like the easy way out. I have little sympathy for tobacco companies in this case, and resent the fact that they were willing to abandon principle in such a big way and compromise everyone's freedom in the process. But I am not a smoker or a tobacco company stockholder. I will let the tobacco companies decide how best to run their businesses.

I am a taxpayer and a Florida citizen, so I have an interest in the way that the state runs its business. While I am no defender of the tobacco companies, I believe it is unethical for the state to make them pay for costs that the state voluntarily and unilaterally agreed to assume. Medicaid was implemented centuries after people started smoking and by adopting the program, Florida agreed to assume costs that formerly fell on individual smokers. It is unethical for Florida now to try to make tobacco companies pay for costs the state chose to accept. ☞

Randall G. Holcombe is DeVoe Moore professor of economics at Florida State University and chairman of The James Madison Institute Research Advisory Council.



Should Ford Motor Company be held liable if a bank robber uses a Ford as a getaway vehicle?



the legacy of alec p. courtelis

by jere moore jr.



**Alec Courtelis
was a dedicated,
determined
immigrant who
achieved his
dream of
enriching the lives
of Floridians.**

The legacy of Alec P. Courtelis is all around us: from a unique cancer-treatment facility at the University of Miami to an Archaeological Conservatory and Museum at the University of West Florida in Pensacola; to the University of Florida teaching greenhouse in Fort Pierce to the sprawling south Dade County shopping mall known as The Falls.

In the relatively short 47 years he spent in Florida, this dedicated, determined, devoted man more than fulfilled his dream of repaying his adopted state for the success he achieved here.

“Alec Courtelis was a great friend to all of Florida who made a significant difference not only in the lives of myself and my family, but contributed to making this state and nation a better place for others,” said Florida Governor Jeb Bush. “Alec Courtelis defined compassion as well as hard work. . . . Even though he is not with us today, we still honor his memory and know he helped us all become better people.”

At the Courtelis Center for Research and Treatment in Psychosocial Oncology at the University of Miami’s Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, 460 cancer patients a month undergo therapy to help their bodies and minds fight disease. Mr. Courtelis raised \$1.2 million to open the center during his own battle with pancreatic cancer.

The Alec P. Courtelis State University System Facility Enhancement Challenge Grant Program has

provided \$68.35 million in private donations and an equal amount of state tax matching funds for construction and renovation of buildings at the state's 10 universities since 1989. The Board of Regents told the legislature another \$21 million in donations is ready for matching money in 1999-2000. As a regent, Courtelis initiated the matching funds program to meet building shortages.

"Alec Courtelis was probably the most influential individual in our state's history in teaching political parties how to raise money," said former Florida Republican Party Chairman Tom Slade. Courtelis raised millions of dollars for the state and national GOP, the presidential candidacies of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), the gubernatorial campaigns of Bob Martinez and Jeb Bush, as well as many other political campaigns. Over the past decade, the Florida Republican Party has been winning control of the governor's office and both houses of the legislature and Mr. Courtelis raised the money by "just dogged determination," Slade said. "You did not tell Alec Courtelis no, and if you did, he did not hear you."

His Start in Florida

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, 20-year-old Alec arrived in Miami in 1948. He spoke little English and promptly frittered away the \$1,500 given him

by his father, an engineer who was born in Greece. Alec persuaded University of Miami officials to allow him to study civil engineering while he worked his way through college by parking cars.


Not content to work for others, in 1961 he formed Courtelis Company, which developed commercial and residential properties throughout the state. The company's signature project was The Falls shopping mall at U.S. Highway One and S.W. 136th Street in Miami, which featured

the area's first Bloomingdale's when it opened in 1984.


He and his wife, Louise, had a son, Pan, who joined his father's business, and a daughter, Kiki Lisa.

As a hobby, Alec and Louise Courtelis raised Arabian horses on a farm near Ocala. When Louise learned that the University of Florida Veterinary School had a problem with mold in its large animal hospital, she stepped forward to raise funds for a replacement building and prevented the school's loss of accreditation.

Courtelis moved into the political arena as a campaign fund-raiser for local races in the late 1970s, moving up to serve as the top finance chairman for presidential races. He said he chose Republicans because they represented less government and fewer taxes. He was in the forefront for both gubernatorial races of Martinez, the winning one in 1986



'You've got to . . . wash away all this partisanship and do what's right for schools.'



and the losing one in 1990. After the loss, Courtelis called Lawton Chiles to pledge support because “we have only one governor.”

His Public Service

Martinez appointed Courtelis to the board of regents in 1987. He said he chose education for his public service because of the opportunity it had given him. He promptly used his wife’s lesson with fund-raising for the University of Florida Veterinary School to develop the very successful matching funds program for capital construction when the universities needed buildings. Projects built by the program include a \$12 million Pediatric Research Building at the University of South Florida, \$10 million Fine Arts Complex at Florida Atlantic University, \$1 million Archaeological Conservatory and Museum at the University of West Florida, and a \$50,000 University of Florida teaching greenhouse.

“Alec had a vision that education be made available to as many people as possible,” said former Chancellor Charles Reed. “The University of Miami changed his life. He saw America as a land of opportunity and higher education as the pathway to opportunity.”

The matching funds program was far from Courtelis’s only contribution to the university system. He was a leader in the creation of a 10th state university, Florida Gulf Coast,

in Fort Myers.

“He was always pushing for quality, for excellence,” Reed said. “He told me, ‘Don’t give me any excuse; we need to get it done.’ ”

When he became regents chairman in 1992, his top goal was to raise university faculty salaries and end two years of wage freezes brought on by the state’s economic recession. “We have asked our employees to do more with less and they have responded,” he said. No business could survive by failing to reward its workers any longer, he added.

During Courtelis’s chairmanship, the regents asked the legislature to increase university funding by 31 percent one year and 24 percent the next. He called for a lobbying blitz to persuade legislators, business leaders, and the public that the money would be well spent. “You can’t look at education the same way you do transportation,” Courtelis said. “It’s affecting opportunity.”

He supported Gov. Chiles’s campaign for tax increases for education, which irritated some Republicans. “You’ve got to, on the way in, take a shower and wash away all this partisanship and do what’s right for schools,” Courtelis said.

His Challenges

Courtelis attacked cancer with the same focus and determination that he had approached real estate development, politics, and university



University of Miami officials allowed Alec to work his way through college by parking cars.



issues. When he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 1993 and was given three months to live, he refused to accept the prognosis. He set out on a program of chemotherapy but added an hour a day of meditation with a therapist, prayer, positive thinking, improved nutrition, and exercise.

The three months stretched to 22 before Courtelis died in December 1995. During that time, he encouraged other cancer patients as they sat in waiting rooms and wherever else he met them. He also set out to develop a facility to make the same type of mind/body medical care available to others, a type of regimen he found lacking in the medical community.

The Courtelis Center's treatment complements chemotherapy with other types of care ranging from medicine for depression to massage to pastoral counseling to acupuncture. Courtelis believed that having a

positive frame of mind extends life. The center provides tranquillity away from the chemicals and needles to help abate the helpless feeling experienced by many persons in cancer treatment. The goal is to improve the quality of the patient's life by easing fear and tension and by providing support.

Courtelis's funeral at the St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Miami in December 1995 was attended by 400 persons including former President George Bush, Barbara Bush, who delivered the eulogy, Jeb Bush, who was a pall-bearer, and Sen. Gramm.

"Who said there are no heroes any more?" said George Bush. "Just look at the life and legacy of Alec Courtelis." ❧

Jere Moore Jr. is a former reporter for the Associated Press and The Florida Times-Union. He lives in Wacissa, Fla.

teacher accountability in charter schools

by lewis solomon and mary gifford



Charter schools consider increased student performance to be the most important indicator of teacher quality.

Charter schools are public schools that operate with a great deal of autonomy, free from many of the regulations of traditional public schools. One difference is that teachers in charter schools generally have less job security—by design. They have no tenure, work under year-to-year contracts, and risk dismissal if they fail to contribute to student achievement as judged by school authorities. In return, however, they usually have more teaching flexibility, less paperwork, and participate more fully in decision making. If Arizona's charter school experience is typical, they also often earn more money than their public school counterparts.

Because of their autonomy, charter schools' personnel policies, including salary administration, differ greatly among schools and among states, and only meager information is available nationwide. More data are available about Arizona than any other state, thanks to an extensive charter school survey by the Goldwater Institute, an Arizona public policy research institute. Arizona, a stronghold of the charter school movement with 271 charter schools in operation and a sympathetic state administration, is in its fourth year of charter school experience.

Determining Teacher Quality

According to research, the single most important

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factor in student learning improvement is teacher quality. For example, William Sanders of the University of Tennessee has found that teacher quality can add as many as 50 percentile points to student test scores.

The customary public school method of measuring teacher quality has been whether or not the teacher holds a bachelor's degree in education and is state certified. But charter schools consider that increased student performance to be the most important measurement. Some hire only state-certified teachers, but overall only about 60 percent of charter school teachers in Arizona hold teaching certificates. Comparisons based on 1997 and 1998 results on the Stanford 9 tests in mathematics, reading, and language skills found that quality teachers might—or might not—be certified.

Of charter schools demonstrating gains in all three subject areas from 1997 to 1998, 73 percent hired only certified teachers. Of those experiencing losses in all three subject areas, 85 percent hired only certified teachers.

Historically, once a public school is in business, it is in business forever. Not so for charter schools. Consequently, charter school operators consider their risks when they decide whom to hire, the terms of employment, and how to evaluate each teacher's performance. Many teachers accept jobs in traditional public

schools because there are no risks. By contrast, charter school teachers often have job options other than teaching because they have subject matter expertise, are willing to take risks, and have non-teaching work


experience. For example, an engineer has a choice; he or she can work for Intel or teach physics in a charter school. But without a teaching credential, that engineer may not teach in a traditional public school.

The advantage of being able to hire professionals without teaching certificates is illustrated by a college preparatory charter school in Arizona that has teachers with graduate degrees in biology, literature, and foreign languages from Johns Hopkins, St. John's College, Notre Dame, and the University of Chicago.


Higher Pay for Teachers

One reason charter schools can hire this caliber of teacher is that, in Arizona, beginning charter school teachers earn an average of 6 percent more than beginning teachers in traditional public schools. In public schools there is a specific entry salary for every level of education attainment; in other words, there is little flexibility in pay. As the Figure shows:

- The salaries of newly hired teachers in Arizona public schools vary over a range of about \$8,000, with differences depending exclusively on years of



The most important factor in student learning improvement is teacher quality.





Performance Incentives

Contract terms differ drastically between charter and traditional schools. An examination of charter school teacher contracts in Arizona failed to find any that is longer than one year. Charter school teachers are reviewed every year, and their jobs are not

teaching experience (the Figure includes experience as a substitute teacher) and the number of credits beyond a bachelor's degree.

- By contrast, the salaries for newly hired teachers in the state's charter schools vary over a range of about \$21,000, with differences depending on such criteria as subject matter expertise, experience, education, and other opportunities.

Most established charter schools (46 are in their fourth year of operation) look at the traditional public school salary schedule and then set their salary schedules 5 percent higher. (Merit pay and pay for special skills raise the overall average to 6 percent higher.) One charter school operator summarized the policy toward teachers thus: "A teacher should be paid a professional salary, the market should determine that level, and we should be able to offer that salary. If the teacher is not performing at that salary level, the contract should not be renewed."

guaranteed from year to year (as measured by student learning advancement). By contrast, in most states teachers in traditional schools receive tenure in three to five years and have a job as long as they want one regardless of their performance or that of their students.

Performance incentives are built into many charter school teacher contracts. A survey of a majority of the Arizona schools found 16 percent with student performance incentives. This means a teacher gets a bonus only if students achieve at a certain level or gain a certain percent in test scores. In addition:

- In 58 percent of the schools, teacher contract renewal is subject to similar performance-based incentives.
- Additionally, about 10 percent base contract renewals on student attendance/recruitment and parent satisfaction.
- In a few for-profit charter schools teachers are subject to the same employee-review process as other employees.

Attracting Teachers

Are teachers motivated or frightened by accountability and performance-based incentives? Apparently the former, since amid what has been described by some as a nationwide education crisis created by a lack of certified teachers, one Arizona charter school recently received applications from 200 qualified (but not necessarily state-certified) candidates for fewer than 10 teaching jobs. This phenomenon is not uncommon in charter schools. A charter school

administrator of an international baccalaureate program, which offers advanced studies for high school students, proclaims the teaching positions at that school are “plum jobs” that represent the ultimate in accountability. ☞

Lewis Solomon is Senior Fellow at the Goldwater Institute’s Center for Market-Based Education. Mary Gifford is director of the center and vice president of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools.

high school government class *(Continued from page 10)*

Endnotes

- ¹Susan A. MacManus, *Young v. Old: Generational Combat in the 21st Century?* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996. Also see David Broder, “The Young Avoid the Polls in Drovers,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 15, 1999, p.12A; Associated Press, “Teens Come Up Short in Constitution Quiz,” *St. Petersburg Times*, September 6, 1998, p. 6A; Karen Thomas, “‘We the People’ or www?” *USA Today*, September 3, 1996, p. 6D.
- ²*The New Millennium Project, Part 1: American Youth Attitudes on Politics, Citizenship, Government, and Voting.* Lexington, KY: The National Association of Secretaries of State, 1999.
- ³ Permission to use figures granted by Voter News Service, New York, NY.
- ⁴ Florida Statutes Section 233.061.
- ⁵ Most colleges and universities split their coverage of American government into two semesters: one covering national-level politics, the second, state and local politics.
- ⁶ It may well be that these figures change as more teachers take advantage of materials offered through the Florida League of Cities’ Citizenship Education Program. For information, contact Ann Jenkins, Citizenship Education Program, Florida League of Cities, P.O. Box 1757, Tallahassee, FL 32302.
- ⁷ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median for people ages 15 or older is a move every 5.2 years. People who own their own homes stay longest in one place, 8.2 years; renters tend to

shift every 2.1 years. Associated Press, “A Nation in Transit,” *St. Petersburg Times*, November 7, 1998, p. F1.

⁸ NASS study, pps. 30-31.

⁹ See MacManus, *Young v. Old*; Susan A. MacManus, “Seniors in City Hall,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 79 (September, 1998).

¹⁰ Stanley K. Smith, *Florida and the Nation 1997.* Gainesville: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, April, 1997, p. 50.

¹¹ The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc (FLREA) implements the We the People...The Citizen and the Constitution program. It is a program for elementary, middle, and high schools and consists of a six-week curriculum with mock congressional hearings.

Acknowledgements

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