

## The estate tax is based on a robber mentality Series: LETTERS

[SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Date: Jun 14, 2002

Start Page: 21.A

Section: EDITORIAL

Text Word Count: 1987

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### Document Text

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Re: What's wrong with estate tax, editorial, June 11.

Once again, the editors of the St. Petersburg Times have proclaimed from the mountaintop:

"The concept that the very wealthiest Americans should pay taxes on a portion of their estates is an easy one. Of course they should."

The editors firmly state what they want, but they fail to explain why. The best they come up with is, "not many Americans will have to pay the tax, and those who do can afford it."

So that's the premise then, huh? The rich have it; they can afford it; let's take it from them. Gimme, gimme, gimme.

How pathetic! And how immoral!

Never mind that tax on the value of the estate was paid at the time the income was derived. Never mind that the enormous estate tax serves as a huge disincentive to capital investment and activity that creates economic growth. Congress has never understood that. All Congress understands is gimme, gimme, gimme.

Why does Congress think it has the moral right to take money from people simply because they transfer wealth from one entity to another? Why is that any business of Congress?

Because it wants money, that's why. Congress goes after estates for the same reason Willie Sutton robbed banks: because that's where the money is.

Congress' justification is no more valid than Willie Sutton's. At least Willie Sutton went to jail; Congress expands its empire with its ill-gotten gains.

It is this very attitude that leads the Congress to believe it can invade any part of our lives and take whatever it wants. That attitude is immoral, unjust, and dangerous. Would that the St. Petersburg Times could understand that, rather than merely "they can afford it."

John J. Thornton, Tampa

Don't overlook rate of estate tax

Re: What's wrong with estate tax, June 11.

Here's another classic example of how the Times' liberal slant conveniently leaves out the critical elements at hand. Clearly, the writer's gripe has not much to do with the death tax, but with the Bush administration's propensity to allow those who rightfully earn their income to keep it.

Entirely left out of the picture is the fact that under the old tax laws, assets subject to the estate tax were taxed at a rate up to 55 percent. After a lifetime of building assets to pass on to heirs, the government has a right to more than half that nest egg, even the dollars that were already taxed as ordinary income? Incredible!

Not once does the writer acknowledge the exorbitant percentage taken from an estate. Only referred to is the size of the tax cut, being \$1.35-trillion, and that "fairness seems to be an alien concept to Congress and the Bush administration." How mature.

I wonder when Democrats in Congress (and liberals throughout the media) will understand that the government doesn't need more tax dollars to run more efficiently, it needs to be more efficient with fewer tax dollars.

Thomas Bonafede, Tampa

Learn to take responsibility

Re: In the middle of a nightmare, June 7.

I find the current trend in society to "sue somebody" disturbing. Why does it take 20 years after being in Straight to begin talking about these issues? Is it perhaps the idea of some settlement to help with the post-traumatic stress disorder?

I, too, was in the St. Petersburg Straight Inc. drug program from 1982 to 1984, where I graduated and then worked for one year as a staffer. My experience in Straight was by no means easy, as I ran away two times from the program. As with thousands of other teenagers who entered Straight, there was a good reason we ended up there: drug and alcohol abuse, trouble with the law, failing in school, just to name a few. I was headed down the wrong path in life and needed to accept the consequences of my own actions and take responsibility to change my life.

Is it wrong to take away some privileges, wants and comforts from a rebellious, troubled teenager who thinks the world revolves around him and is dangerous to himself and society? I know I will be forever grateful to my parents and my experiences at Straight for helping me turn my life around.

As for Samantha Monroe, I cannot speak for the Sarasota Program in 1980, but I never witnessed anything close to what she describes. Richard Bradbury was in the program when I was and I find it sad that 20 years later, he still does not take responsibility for his own actions, blaming Straight for his not ever being married or having children, just as Chris Tyler blames Straight for his being a workaholic.

Perhaps we can help our young people today best by teaching them to not blame others for their problems, to accept the consequences for their own actions and take responsibility to better their own lives.

David Laird, St. Petersburg

Straight made a difference

Re: In the middle of a nightmare, June 7.

Straight was not intended for nor did it work for everyone, because the regimen was quite similar to basic training or boot camp. Quite frankly, it was both a "court of last resort" and "the only (viable) game in town" for some of us dysfunctional families.

Our son was not doing very well in school, was looking like something that had crawled out from under a rock and was smoking pot. His mother and I decided to have him admitted into Straight.

In retrospect, this program was rougher on his mother, his sister and me than it was on him.

Initially, he was definitely not cooperative. We worked closely with other families and with Straight personnel, but it still took 18 months to get his act straightened out! Afterward, he attended junior college, got good grades and was holding down a part-time job at the same time.

Unfortunately, fate then entered into the picture and dealt us an almost crushing blow: He was rear ended and killed by a speeding, drunken driver!

I firmly believe to this day that without the Straight program, he could easily have been the speeding, drugged driver.

Jos. P. Corell, Safety Harbor

Yearbook shows new level of decadence

Re: Yearbook adds babies to its school chronicle, June 8.

Pinellas Park High School gives us yet another example of an acceptable new level of decadence in our society and a good reason for home schooling and/or private education or the much-feared "vouchers." Who would have ever thought that a high school yearbook would have a section memorializing and touting its pregnant and unwed mothers - complete with pictures? Do graduation gowns come in maternity sizes now?

This article quotes an unwed high school mother as saying "I just can't believe that I am having a baby." Well, I can't believe that Pinellas Park High School would sanction, glorify, extol and legitimize unwed parenthood by its students. This type of validation of immoral behavior only serves to perpetuate the problem of unrestrained sexual activity, illegitimate births and societal decay.

Joseph A. Schlosser, Spring Hill

Education's poor image is reinforced

Re: Yearbook adds babies to its school chronicle and The term of teen pregnancy, June 8

The principal of Pinellas Park High School defends the yearbook article as "solid journalism." Please tell me, what exactly is solid journalism? I quote the yearbook article: "Her and the baby's father . . ." and "Her and her family already are preparing . . ." Evidently grammar was not as important as using melodrama to manipulate the emotions of young readers who are already confused enough.

Unknowingly, this principal has reinforced our beliefs about the sorry state of public education. And with only four parents complaining it's not hard to deduce the source of rampant teen pregnancy. No, I don't think the article should have been censored. It's not about censorship. It's about responsibility. Do you have to tug at heartstrings? It won't take long for others to conclude that if they get pregnant they will get lots of attention. It's not a problem anymore. It's something to celebrate.

These teen parents need to lie in the bed that they've made. I'm more concerned about the babies. See, babies grow up and learn to repeat the cycle.

By the way, if you have sex and don't use birth control, just how is it an "unexpected" pregnancy?

Dawn Fazzini, St. Petersburg

State water resources should be shared

Florida has more potable water than any other place in the world. There are untold amounts of rainwater accumulated in the watershed and river systems, including the Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers to the north, and 8-billion gallons of spring water flowing into the Gulf of Mexico each day. If we captured rainwater and used a fraction of our staggering amount of water resources, we could easily solve any shortages.

We are beginning to accept that conservation must be the way of the future. Many who understand the problem agree that, along with conservation, piping water from the water rich northern counties to our drought areas is the cheapest and simplest way to ease shortages in rain-starved parts of the state. Why not capture both rainwater and river water in reservoirs, as we will be doing at the Hillsborough River, and why not judiciously tap into the springs?

Some ask about possible environmental problems resulting from the piping of water from springs. That water is currently being used for agriculture, industry, and recreation and being sold for bottled water.

In Tampa Bay Water's presentation to the annual Florida Springwater Conference, the officials discuss the growing economic uses of water from springs, including the burgeoning bottled water industry. Those experts raise no environmental objections to using some of that water for public drinking water.

So, if there is so much water in Florida, why aren't water-starved areas sharing in the natural resources of our state? Obstacles to using Florida's water resources for everyone are mainly political, and can only be solved by political courage. If our representatives corrected the unfair outcome of the "water wars," we in Pinellas County would not have the burden of having to resort to questionable and expensive technologies to provide water for our area.

Barbara Witlin, Crystal Beach

Racers rarely get hurt

Re: Hot rods' hot spot, May 19.

I am 20 years old, and live in Pinellas County. I recently read the St. Petersburg Times article about the Gandy Bridge on Saturday nights. There are some truths to it, but you left out important ones that actually make a difference in the way that the article sounds to the "gearheads" in the area. I have been going to the "races" and meeting spots for a few years now. I am a third-generation "racer."

Here is the important thing: Yes, Gov. Jeb Bush signed the new racing bill into law, but how many of these illegal races have you heard in the news to be deadly? As long as I can remember there hasn't been one. I am not saying that there haven't been any. More people are killed on average by drunken driving than racing. Most of the people that do race don't drink - it's like an unwritten law. They feel, as do I, that drinking while driving is unsafe for both their lives and the cars that we all hold so dear. If you put an \$8,000 engine into your car, would you want to risk getting into an accident and losing all the money that you put into the car, as well as the pride of knowing that that car was like that because of something that you did? Not likely.

Sarah Lyle, St. Petersburg

**[Illustration]**

Caption: A firefighter with bandaged hands, one labeled "9-11" and the other labeled "WILDFIRES," says "Frankly, I don't

think hands- on experience is all it's cracked up to be."; Photo: CARTOON, DON ADDIS

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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This article quotes an unwed high school mother as saying "I just can't believe that I am having a baby." Well, I can't believe that Pinellas Park High School would sanction, glorify, extol and legitimize unwed parenthood by its students. This type of validation of immoral behavior only serves to perpetuate the problem of unrestrained sexual activity, illegitimate births and societal decay.

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