Temporary Federal Spending Law Averts Government Shutdown

By Jesse Hathaway

Postponing a looming legislative battle over spending, Congress and the president agreed on a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through November 21. President Donald Trump signed H.R. 4378, a CR titled Continuing Appropriations Act, 2020, and Health Extenders Act of 2019 into law on September 27. The bill contains a CR that gives Congress more time to reach an agreement on federal spending for fiscal year 2020, which began October 1.
Individual liberty is coming under new threats every day. It may appear there is no hope, but we know different.

Come to LibertyCon and meet the next generation of freedom fighters, impart your knowledge, learn from our speakers, and leave refreshed with a new hope for the future.

As a young professional or a seasoned veteran, LibertyCon is the place to connect and engage.

Let's change the world together! Register for LibertyCon 2020 today.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

JOHN MACKEY
Whole Foods Co-Founder & CEO

MIRIAM ISA
Media Personality

NASSIM TALEB
Author

VERNON SMITH
Nobel Prize Recipient

& MANY MORE TO COME...

REGISTER TODAY FOR THE EARLY BIRD PRICE OF $59!

www.LIBERTYCON.com
Facing Enrollment Declines, Penn. Freezes State University Tuition

By Brandon Best and Cassidy Syftestad

For the first time in 20 years, the Board of Governors of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) is keeping tuition at 14 state-owned universities for the 2019–20 academic year at the same level as the previous year.

The tuition freeze is only the second in the 36-year history of the PASSHE. Basic undergraduate tuition at state universities remains $7,716 a year, the same as in 2018–2019.

“Students and parents of students are looking for us to lead, and on their behalf, we’ve made the right choice,” Cindy Shapira, chairman of the PASSHE board, stated in a press release on July 10.

Pennsylvania state colleges produce more than 26,000 graduates each year, 95 percent of whom are employed within two years, the PASSHE board stated.

“Our mission is clear,” Shapira said. “These universities exist so that Pennsylvanians across all income levels can access quality higher education, and by holding the line on tuition, we are living up to that mission.”

Enrollment at Pennsylvania’s state-owned universities declined from 112,000 students in 2011 to 100,000 in 2018, an 18 percent decrease.

Affordability Problems

Several factors are pressuring state institutions to put a hold on price increases, says Jenna Robinson, president of the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal.

“There are a few things going on,” Robinson said. “Low public support for universities, national attention on the ever-increasing costs of college, and increasing student debt. A tuition freeze addresses all these concerns.

“It forces universities to do what they should have been doing all along: looking for ways to be more efficient,” Robinson said. “Pennsylvania’s tuition for in-state students is unusually high, and it probably contributes to lower enrollment.”

Enrollment at Pennsylvania’s state-owned universities declined from 112,000 students in 2011 to 100,000 in 2018, an 18 percent decrease.

Declining Enrollment, Youth

“Colleges and universities face a demographic challenge: there are fewer college-aged students than there were just a few years ago,” said Rachelle Peterson, policy director at the National Association of Scholars and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“Nationally, college enrollment in the United States has decreased for eight consecutive years.”

Between the spring semester of 2018 and spring 2019, the national enrollment decline was 1.7 percent, or about 300,000 students.

To improve efficiency in the face of declining enrollment, a RAND Corporation report for the Pennsylvania state Senate published in 2018 recommended closing or merging some of the government universities.

Awakening to Other Options

In addition to debt accrual, high tuition rates, and demographic shifts, many college-age workers are opting for jobs that do not require a four-year degree.

“A strong economy and good job prospects draw students away from higher education,” Peterson said. “Many young adults are realizing they don’t need to go to college to get a good job. And many are waking up to the high tuition and debt burden that college poses.

“For years, colleges have increased tuition well above the rate of inflation, packing on highly paid administrators and wooing students with noneducation incentives like luxury dorms, climbing walls and recreational activities, and gourmet dining,” Peterson said. “Pennsylvania is starting to wake up to the fact that college is too expensive to justify its price tag.”

Brandon Best (bbest@cedarville.edu) writes from Cedarville, Ohio. Cassidy Syftestad (cassidysyftestad@gmail.com) writes from Washington, D.C.
Temporary Federal Spending Law Averts Government Shutdown

Continued from page 1

The CR allows federal agencies to make discretionary expenditures. Mandatory spending on government entitlement programs such as Medicare or Social Security is automatic and does not require further congressional approval. Some federal agencies cannot operate or provide services unless Congress specifically authorizes the spending.

‘Essentially Wasting It’

Today’s deficit spending will become tomorrow’s taxes, says Jonathan Bydlak, president of the Coalition to Reduce Spending and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“That money has to come from somewhere,” Bydlak said. “Either that money is coming from taxpayers today to fund various federal priorities, or it’s being borrowed and put on the credit card from people down the road.

“Most people recognize that there are things the federal government needs to do, national defense being the example people typically give,” Bydlak said. “But to the degree that the government is not spending those funds efficiently, then one of two things is happening. Either you’re taking funds from people who may be struggling or not doing as well and essentially wasting it at the federal level, or you’re harming those same people or maybe our proverbial children or grandchildren down the road. That’s the biggest harm.”

The federal government doesn’t spend our money wisely, Bydlak says.

“If you set aside concerns about the debt crisis or all these sorts of issues—which are also existential threats—there’s a more pernicious, under-the-radar, immediate cost,” Bydlak said. “We’re using limited resources for things that may not be the best use of funds.”

Free Rainbows, Unicorns

Deficit spending tempts the public to see government funding as free money, says Edward Hudgins, research director for The Heartland Institute.

“The first consequence of the profligate deficit spending that we’ve seen with this administration, and the Obama administration before it, is the notion that we can have something for nothing,” Hudgins said. “It is a delusion that we need not worry about actually producing wealth, that we can just conjure it up out of thin air, and that we can simply ignore the consequences of this delusion.

“A second consequence is seen on the debate stage as Democratic presidential candidates trip over one another to bribe voters with free everything, from rainbows to unicorns,” Hudgins said. “Such pandering politicians want to make productive citizens into spoiled brats screaming, ‘Gimme, gimme!’ so these politicians can virtue-signal and feel themselves benevolent even as they’re undermining not only America’s economy but the morality of a responsible citizenry.

“A third consequence will be seen in the long term when the country becomes less competitive internationally,” Hudgins said.

Debt Ceiling Increase

Congress passed and Trump signed into law on August 2 the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, a measure to allow the increased spending and borrowing authorized by the CR. That bill suspended budget caps on defense and nondefense spending through the end of FY 2021, well into the next Congress and presidential term, and suspended the ceiling on the federal debt through July 31, 2021.

Suscending the debt ceiling enables lawmakers to put off hard choices, Hudgins says.

“Frankly, the decision to suspend the debt ceiling ‘temporarily’ has become meaningless,” Hudgins said. “The purpose should be to allow time to come up with a fiscally responsible budget plan. But for years, such suspensions have led to more skyrocketing spending because of a lack of political leadership, skill, and will. We have seen no ‘art of the deal’ that has resulted in a responsible budget for a long time.”

Lawmakers from both major political parties have failed the public, Hudgins says.

“Congress, for the past decade, has been a disgraceful fiscal joke,” Hudgins said. “The Tea Party movement that arose after the election of President Obama was, in part, a reaction to out-of-control spending. With the election of President Trump and with both houses of Congress controlled by the GOP, it was hoped that responsible adults would take charge and get spending under control. That didn’t happen.”

Shutdown or Spend?

Spending more or shutting down government operations should not be the only options, Bydlak says.

“If your choice is basically to vote for increases in spending or otherwise the government is going to shut down, that’s really not the tradeoff we should be making,” Bydlak said. “There should be an alternative, which is, ‘Hey, I object to this level of spending or this level of federal involvement but also would rather not have the government shut down.’

“We’ve gotten to this point where the entire budgeting process is generally broken and doesn’t operate in the way it should,” Bydlak said. “We basically have a situation where we roll all these bills together into one and it’s an up-or-down vote. The problem is far bigger than that, and it should never get to the point where that is the trade or the decision our lawmakers are having to make.”

JONATHAN BYDLAK
PRESIDENT
COALITION TO REDUCE SPENDING

President Trump and with both houses of Congress controlled by the GOP, it was hoped that responsible adults would take charge and get spending under control. That didn’t happen.”

Shut down vote. The problem is far bigger than that, and it should never get to the point where that is the trade or the decision our lawmakers are having to make.”

Jesse Hathaway (think@heartland.org) is a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute.
Labor Dept. Proposes Industry-Led Apprenticeship Programs

By Ashley Bateman

A proposed U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) regulation would amend registration standards for federally funded apprenticeship programs providing on-the-job training in skilled trades.

The draft rule would increase the role of businesses and nonprofit organizations in federal apprenticeship programs. Currently, the private sector is largely excluded from creating certified apprenticeship programs, which are led by unions and local and state government entities. The proposed rule would allow businesses and nonprofit groups to create “Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs” in addition to the existing certified programs.

“The Department believes its industry-led, market-driven approach provides the flexibility necessary to scale the apprenticeship model where it is needed most and helps address America’s skills gap and expand the apprenticeship model to new industries,” stated the DOL’s notice of proposed rulemaking.

Nearly 45 Democrat Senators and 150 Democrat members of the U.S. House of Representatives signed two letters to DOL officials expressing opposition to expanding the role of businesses in apprenticeship programs.

Shortage of Skilled Workers

September marked the 19th consecutive month of American unemployment at or below 4 percent and brought a 50-year low in the unemployment rate. The record-low unemployment is making it increasingly difficult to find skilled workers, says Edward Timmons, an associate professor of economics at St. Francis University and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“This proposal makes sense,” Timmons said. “Employers continue to face challenges finding skilled workers to fill vacancies in the labor market. This proposal is a smart way to fill in this gap and also make sure that the training aligns with industry needs.”

‘Disconnect’ Between School, Work

The proposed rule is a significant attempt to bridge the growing skills gap, says economist Edward Hudgins, research director at The Heartland Institute.

“The administration’s plan to allow Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs set up by businesses and nonprofits is an important reform to address the disconnect between schools, higher education, and the very limited, government-approved apprenticeship programs, and the crucial needs of the labor markets,” Hudgins said.

There is plenty of room for growth of apprenticeships, which are used extensively in some European countries, Hudgins says.

“In the United States, there are some 1.6 million more job openings than there are unemployed individuals, because those individuals lack the requisite skills,” Hudgins said. “Only about one-half of one percent of Americans are in apprenticeship programs at any given time. In Switzerland, by contrast, some 70 percent of young people go through ‘learn-and-earn’ apprenticeship programs while in school, which could be a model for reforms here.”

Unions vs. Workers

Some labor unions have announced opposition to the proposed rule change, claiming the private-sector programs would provide lower-quality training. The industry-recognized programs would not replace existing programs but could lead to apprenticeships in new sectors, such as finance and technology, Hudgins says.

“Objections from unions are strange in one sense, because many unions employ and train apprentices,” Hudgins said. “Perhaps the real concern is that giving nonunion entities wider freedom to set up apprenticeship programs will mean more individuals go into careers that do not require union membership.”

Organized labor should embrace programs that would, in effect, train more potential members, Hudgins says.

“The apprenticeship reforms will serve employers, students seeking high-paying careers, and the economy overall,” Hudgins said. “Those reforms could even further serve unions if they would act as entrepreneurs, offering expanded apprenticeship opportunities for prospective workers rather than trying to keep markets restrained.”

Excludes Construction Industry

The business community generally supports the proposed rule, but some contractors have complained because the proposal does not allow industry-sponsored apprenticeship programs in the construction industry, where the majority of apprenticeships are.

Former Labor Department Secretary Alexander Acosta reportedly supported the proposal to include apprenticeship programs for the construction trades.

The U.S. Department of Labor is reviewing 325,766 comments it received during the public comment period, which closed August 26. Later this fall, Scalia could amend or enact the rule as published in the Federal Register on June 25.

Ashley Bateman (bateman.ae@googlemail.com) writes from Alexandria, Virginia.

INTERNET INFO

AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE UNION

CPAC 2020

SAVE THE DATE

FEBRUARY 26-29, 2020

LEARN MORE AT CPAC.ORG
North Carolina has loosened some of its strict regulations on the sale, consumption, and pricing of alcoholic beverages.

The ABC Regulatory Reform Act grants distilleries the same right as breweries and wineries to sell beer, wine, and mixed drinks for on-site consumption if they receive a permit from their local Alcoholic Beverage Control board. The law also removes the limit on liquor sales to an individual customer at a distillery, which was five bottles per year.

Bartenders may now serve each patron two mugs of beer or glasses of wine at a time. Retailers are now allowed to sell malt beverages and wine at discounts of up to 35 percent of the retail price, up from a previous maximum discount of 25 percent.

The law also allows spiritous liquor tastings in ABC stores, malt beverage tastings at Farmers' Markets, and the sale and consumption of alcohol at bingo games.

The law took effect on September 1.

Long History of Controls
North Carolina has long had excessive controls on alcohol, says Jon Sanders, director of regulatory studies at the John Locke Foundation.

“North Carolina has historically maintained extensive regulations on alcohol, even passing state prohibition in 1908, well before the 18th Amendment was even introduced,” Sanders said.

State regulation was originally intended to discourage alcohol consumption, but it is now a source of income for the state government, says Sanders.

“Already there is a tension between the ABC system’s original design to control liquor sales and a later justification of maximizing government revenues from liquor,” Sanders said.

Monopoly, Market Distortions
North Carolina is one of 17 “control” states that strictly regulate the distribution of alcohol, and one of the seven ABC states where government-owned package liquor stores have a monopoly on retail sales of bottled spirits. Grocers and other retailers in the Tar Heel state may sell beer and wine.

“These restrictions, like other regulations, have market distortions that create winners and losers, and the winners have a lobbying interest in maintaining the status quo,” Sanders said.

“The North Carolina Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association has been a powerful lobby against reform not only regarding liquor but in freeing up smaller craft brewers from onerous state rules,” Sanders said.

Government Price Markups
North Carolina and some other states control what brands of alcohol are sold and determine markups for customers, says Jarret Dieterle, a senior fellow at the R Street Institute.

“When control states implement high markups on the alcohol that they sell, this operates as a stealth tax on people that often goes simply to fund general government operations at the expense of people’s choice and pocketbooks,” Dieterle said.

Leveling the Playing Field
The new laws will allow local establishments to serve their communities better, says Dieterle.

“It’s important to allow craft brewers to serve directly to their customers,” Dieterle said. “People visit them, buy samples, and spread the word to their friends.

“In many ways, breweries and distilleries are becoming cultural centers,” Dieterle said. “Instead of the taverns of yesteryear, social clubs, charities, religious groups, and bands meet at distilleries. Where these places become civic institutions, these laws have not just immediate economic but cultural impacts on their communities.”

Brandon Best (bbest@cedarville.edu) writes from Cedarville, Ohio.
California Reclassifies Contractors as Employees, Targeting the Sharing Economy

Continued from page 1

Big Effects Expected
Analysts estimate the law could add an extra 15 percent to 20 percent to the affected companies’ operating expenses.

A.B. 5 is expected to affect up to one million contract workers statewide and upend the business models of ridesharing platforms such as Uber and Lyft. The new law, which will take effect on January 1, 2020, could extend to other contract workers such as interpreters and translators, who provide their services in hospitals, courtrooms, and technical laboratories, and freelance writers.

Also affected are trucking firms that rely heavily on independent truckers who own or lease their equipment to supplement their operations. The California Trucking Association tried unsuccessfully to carve out an exemp-

tion from the bill. Some groups were exempted, including doctors, lawyers, and insurance brokers. Newspaper publishers got a one-year delay, after which newspaper carriers will be reclassified as employees.

Musicians are also caught up in the new law. “This could have a big impact on the California recording industry,” said Richard Burgess, who heads the American Association of Independent Music, the Los Angeles Times reported on September 22.

Strict ‘ABC Test’
The new law lays out strict criteria, known as the ABC test, for classification as a contract worker. To avoid having to treat a worker as an employee, a company must be able to prove (A) the worker is independent and free to perform the services provided without company control, (B) the work is “outside the usual course of hiring entity’s business,” and (C) the worker is established in a trade similar to the work being performed.

Many questions remain, including the status of business-to-business contracting relationships, common in franchise businesses such as fast-food restaurants.

“The lack of clear language in AB 5 carving out the franchise business model is likely to be exploited by the California plaintiffs’ bar,” stated the law firm Greenberg Trauig, LLP in The National Law Review on September 24. “In addition, whether a California-based franchisee is actually an employee of the franchisor under the ABC test as codified in AB 5 will undoubtedly become a hotly litigated issue.”

Confusion over exactly who will be covered under the new law, together with concerns over its impact on the business community, have prompted Newsom to say he will seek changes to the statute.

Intense Fight Expected
The new law is aimed directly at ridesharing services, says Stanley Greer, a senior research associate at the National Institute for Labor Relations Research.

“The clear aim of A.B. 5 is to pave the way for Big Labor to gain monopoly-bargaining and forced-union-dues-privileges over Uber and Lyft drivers and an array of other independent contractors (ICs),” Greer said. “But at this time, it appears that many of the targeted ICs and Uber and Lyft plan to fight back intensely rather than knuckle under. It’s still possible this scheme won’t play out the way union-label poli-

Get your copy of Climate Change Reconsidered II: Fossil Fuels

Climate Change Reconsidered II: Fossil Fuels is the latest volume in the Climate Change Reconsidered series – now 5,000 pages of peer-reviewed science that shows humans are NOT causing a climate crisis.

“Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bochen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
Ann Arbor Agrees to Limit Scope of Anti-Discrimination Ordinance

By Juliana Knot

A city in Michigan has agreed not to use its expansive anti-discrimination law against two political strategists who argued the ordinance would require them to work for candidates with whom they vehemently disagree.

An Ann Arbor municipal ordinance outlaws discrimination “because of actual or perceived age, arrest record, color, disability, educational association, familial status, family responsibilities, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, height, HIV status, marital status, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, veteran status, victim of domestic violence or stalking, or weight.”

The law carries a $500-a-day fine for violations. ThinkRight Strategies, a conservative political firm in Ann Arbor, hired the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) to challenge the statute in federal district court.

ThinkRight Strategies agreed to dismissal of its request for an injunction after the city stipulated the law does not apply to the firm because it isn’t a “public accommodation,” on September 5.

Political Snare

The founders of ThinkRight Strategies, Grant Strobl and Jacob Chludzinski, are consultants for conservative political campaigns, causes, and lawmakers. They offer a variety of services such as website design, event promotion, and speechwriting.

The city ordinance could have made the government the decision-maker for ThinkRight Strategies, says Strobl.

“Jacob Chludzinski and I have been involved in politics for years, and we formed ThinkRight Strategies to have a greater impact in that arena by providing a variety of advocacy services,” Strobl said. “But as written, Ann Arbor’s law makes it illegal for us to decide which political beliefs to advocate for.”

Preventive Action

To challenge the ordinance, the ADF, a legal organization that primarily advocates for religious liberty, brought a motion in federal district court to enjoin Ann Arbor from enforcing it, arguing the law violates ThinkRight’s First Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution.

The law could be interpreted as forcing ThinkRight Strategies to promote a candidate whose beliefs directly contradict its mission, says Samuel Green, an ADF attorney who was part of the team representing ThinkRight in the case.

“The government cannot force people to promote beliefs that are not their own,” Green said.

Although the law had not been used against ThinkRight, it put the firm at risk, says Green.

“This lawsuit follows in a long line of civil rights cases,” Green said. “Instead of waiting to be punished, we file a lawsuit to prevent it.”

Constitutional Arguments

The lawsuit argued the government must not decide what people can and cannot say.

“Citizens should be free to choose for themselves what they say and what they celebrate—not the government,” the complaint stated.

The Ann Arbor law conflicts with the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, ADF states. Requiring individuals to promote any speech violates their rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press, and due process, the complaint stated.

There are several constitutional problems with the ordinance, says Lackland Bloom, a professor at Southern Methodist University’s Dedman School of Law and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“The particular ordinance would seem to violate two significant First Amendment doctrines: The government may not compel a speaker to say something he chooses not to say, nor may the government discriminate against speech based on its viewpoint. The ordinance clearly violates both principles,” Bloom said.

Speech Takeover

The ADF is pursuing other cases against public accommodation laws that force business owners to express speech contrary to their own opinions. Ann Arbor’s agreement that the law doesn’t apply to ThinkRight is unusual because many city governments consider businesses to be public accommodations, says Green.

“We are pleased that Ann Arbor respects their decisions about which messages to convey,” Green said.

A category like “political beliefs” can result in threats to everyone’s First Amendment rights, says Green.

“[This law] could force a Democratic speechwriter to write a speech for President Trump,” Green said. “Or it could be a pro-life filmmaker who is forced to make an ad for Planned Parenthood.”

Such ordinances jeopardize freedom, says Strobl.

“If the government can hijack our speech, everyone’s freedom is at risk,” Strobl said.

“The particular ordinance would seem to violate two significant First Amendment doctrines: The government may not compel a speaker to say something he chooses not to say, nor may the government discriminate against speech based on its viewpoint. The ordinance clearly violates both principles.”

LACKLAND BLOOM
PROFESSOR
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

History of Constitutional Violence

Bloom says it doesn’t surprise him that Ann Arbor’s progressive city council would pass such a measure. When he was a law student there in the 1970s, the city government enacted an ordinance banning discrimination based on “lifestyle,” says Bloom.

“That provision was intended to allow students to enter restaurants without wearing shirts or shoes,” Bloom said.

The current law has less to do with concern for the Constitution and more to do with politics, says Bloom.

“I don’t think they care at all about the constitutionality of their laws,” Bloom said. “They simply want to make a radical political statement.”

Government vs. Conscience

The point of this case is that the government cannot compel speech, says Green. In this and many other cases, ADF’s clients are not discriminating based on identity and are only refusing to voice a belief that would violate their consciences, says Green.

“ThinkRight will gladly serve people of all backgrounds,” Green said. “But they will not promote a message against their convictions.”

Juliana Knot (jjknot322@gmail.com) writes from Grand Rapids, Michigan.
Cracking Big Green is a stunning expose of Big Green — the modern environmental movement and its hidden financial masters.

Cracking Big Green tracks the money machine of wealthy foundations and individuals that give instructions along with their money and explores how donors manipulate eco-ideology, attack selected industries and influence government regulations by supporting agreeable experts as advisors to powerful agencies.

Here are sound ideas to crack open the barriers that hide Big Green and its dangers to America’s free society, our continuing achievements, and a desirable future.

Buy Cracking Big Green as an eBook for $9.99 on

Amazon.com

Michigan Road Fix Could Require Gas-Tax Hike ‘Close to 80 Cents,’ Says DOT Director

By Bonner R. Cohen

Michigan’s transportation director says fixing the state’s roads and bridges could require a gas tax hike closer to 80 cents a gallon than to the 45-cent increase sought by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, highlighting a struggle to pay for needed transportation infrastructure improvements.

“We’ve dug ourselves such a huge hole that if you really want to take care of the problem, you’re almost going to be talking close to 80 cents a gallon. And that’s just not realistic,” Michigan Department of Transportation Director Paul Ajegba said at a town hall in East Lansing on September 24. The Detroit News reported on October 18.

The newspaper states it reviewed an audio recording of the event, which was first reported by the Spartan Newsroom, a publication of Michigan State University’s School of Journalism, on October 2.

‘Fix the Damn Roads’

Whitmer has struggled to find the $2.5 billion annually she has said is necessary to “fix the damn roads”—the pledge she made in the campaign that led to her election in November 2018.

Whitmer initially proposed raising the state’s gas tax by 45 cents per gallon, from 26 cents to 71 cents, which would have saddled Michigan drivers with the highest such tax in the country. The Democrat governor’s highly unpopular proposal has gotten nowhere in the Republican-controlled legislature, forcing her to look for other ways to raise the money.

Whitmer has voiced support for a progressive income tax, The Detroit Free Press reported July 24. “That’s something that certainly I’ve supported in the past and something that I would take a close look at,” Whitmer said.

Voters would have to approve a change in the state constitution to institute a graduated tax, says James Hohman, director of fiscal policy at the Mackinaw Center for Public Policy

“This is not the first time progressives have wanted to change the state constitution to allow for a graduated income tax, and all previous attempts have failed,” Hohman said. “I don’t see the kind of support from voters they would need to get a different result this time.”

“The underlying assumption of the hike in the fuel tax and the introduction of a graduated income tax is the revenues raised will actually go to fix roads, bridges, and other vital transportation infrastructure. But we already know money would be diverted under both schemes.”

CRAIG RUCKER PRESIDENT COMMITTEE FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE TOMORROW

Diverting from Roads

Much of the $2.5 billion per year sought by the governor would not be spent on upgrading roads. Under her 45-cents-per-gallon fuel tax hike proposal, $600 million of the new revenue would be diverted to schools and the environment, and 22.7 percent would be allocated to the state’s School Aid Fund.

“The underlying assumption of the hike in the fuel tax and the introduction of a graduated income tax is the revenues raised will actually go to fix roads, bridges, and other vital transportation infrastructure,” said Craig Rucker, president of the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow. “But we already know money would be diverted under both schemes.

“And how much of the money that does go to roads will wind up financing bike lanes, bike paths, and other politically fashionable projects?” Rucker said. “Michigan’s taxpayers deserve a full accounting on how their money is going to be spent.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
By Ashley Bateman

A New Orleans lawyer is suing the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) in federal district court, calling for an end to mandatory membership in and payments to the LSBA.

*Boudreaux v. LSBA* is one of several cases challenging mandatory state bar membership and dues, says Dane Ciolino, a Loyola University law professor who is representing Boudreaux.

“In Louisiana and 29 other states, those who practice law are being denied their First Amendment rights not to speak, not to associate with a group against their will, and not to pay for others’ political advocacy,” Ciolino said. “The government forces lawyers in these states to join and pay dues to bar associations just to practice their profession.”

**Paying for Political Activism**

Forced membership in and payment of dues to the LSBA violate an individual’s First Amendment rights to free speech and association, says Jacob Huebert, a senior attorney at the Goldwater Institute, which is assisting in Boudreaux’s case and similar suits.

“These bar associations don’t just regulate lawyers and help them act ethically,” said Huebert. “They act as advocacy groups. They might support or oppose ballot initiatives, publish articles in their periodicals promoting one side or the other of an issue, and use mandatory dues to promote certain causes.”

The LSBA openly engages in political advocacy, says Ciolino.

“Louisiana’s mandatory bar association has taken positions on a range of controversial issues, including removal of ‘free enterprise’ education from the state’s high school curriculum requirements, the death penalty, drug policy, and social issues,” Ciolino said. “Louisiana lawyers are forced to pay to promote the bar’s views even if they disagree, to continue practicing law.”

**From Powerlessness to Overpowering**

Organized labor has strayed from the original purpose of worker associations, says Daniel Erspamer, CEO of the Pelican Institute, which is assisting in Boudreaux’s case.

“Unions began as most ideas do, with good intentions in mind,” Erspamer said. “They served as a mechanism for workers to come together to collectively negotiate and ensure their rights are being protected by employers. Over time, however, unions have become exactly what they initially fought against.”

**Janus Precedent**

Boudreaux’s complaint cites the 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of Illinois government employee Mark Janus, who wanted the freedom to opt out of all union dues.

“The great power they have accrued over the decades has corrupted many unions across the country, and this has led to rights violations such as those detailed in Mark Janus’ and Randy Boudreaux’s cases,” Erspamer said.

**Political Involvement Barred**

The U.S. Supreme Court directly addressed the use of mandatory bar dues in a 1990 case, *Keller v. State Bar of California*.

“The logic of Janus extends beyond government employees, Huebert says. “Certainly, based on the Janus decision, it should be unconstitutional to require lawyers to join and pay a bar association,” Huebert said. “Janus said that forcing money to pay for someone else’s political advocacy is subject to rigorous First Amendment scrutiny, which mandatory bar membership and dues can’t survive.”

**Challenge ‘Should Prevail’**

Boudreaux’s case, filed on August 1 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana in New Orleans, has not been scheduled for trial.

“I’m sure whoever loses in the trial court in this case will appeal and take it up as high as necessary,” Huebert said.

Other cases are also working their way through state and federal courts, says Erspamer.

“Boudreaux and the other lawyers challenging bar associations’ forced fees should prevail,” Erspamer said. “We hope the Supreme Court will ultimately hear one of their cases and declare that lawyers have the same First Amendment rights as everyone else.”

Ashley Bateman (bateman ae@ gogolemail.com) writes from Alexandria, Virginia.
Robust Economy Is Lifting People Out of Poverty, Census Bureau Reports

By Juliana Knot

Americans’ incomes rose again last year, and poverty rates are now the lowest on record for households headed by single mothers, particularly among blacks and Hispanics, the U.S. Census Bureau reports.

From 2017 to 2018, the median income of U.S. households with a female earner and no spouse present increased by 5.8 percent, states a Census Bureau report released on September 10. In female-householder black and Hispanic families, the poverty rate decreased by 2.7 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Child poverty was reduced by 2.5 percent.

Overall, more people are employed, and they are working more hours on the job, the Census Bureau reports.

Strong Economy Reduces Poverty

The poverty rate is at its lowest in more than a decade, the Census Bureau reports.

“The official poverty rate in 2018 was 11.8%, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 2017,” the bureau states. “This is the fourth consecutive annual decline in the national poverty rate. In 2018, for the first time in 11 years, the official poverty rate was significantly lower than 2007, the year before the most recent recession. The number of people in poverty in 2018 was 38.1 million, 1.4 million fewer people than 2017.”

These numbers are primarily the results of a strong economy, says Sam Adolphsen, policy director at the Foundation for Government Accountability.

“There is no doubt that the incredible economy President Trump has helped to spur is largely responsible for this,” Adolphsen said. “Tax cuts and a business-friendly approach to regulations are helping employers grow and offer a record number of new jobs.”

Benefits of Welfare Reform

Reform policies that encourage work began with the 1996 welfare reform bill. The legislation passed during the Clinton administration replaced federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children with time-limited benefits under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.

Time limits and work requirements implemented by the states using federal block grants are encouraging beneficiaries to work, says Angela Rachidi, a research fellow in poverty studies at the American Enterprise Institute and founder of Rachidi Consulting.

“Very quickly, single mothers entered the workforce,” Rachidi said.

The criticism of work requirements used today against current welfare reforms were leveled against the 1996 bill, Adolphsen says.

“This absurd line of prediction, that people get tossed off welfare and end up in the streets, is just plain wrong,” Adolphsen said. “We know from our recent, comprehensive studies—where we tracked hundreds of thousands of able-bodied adults who left welfare after work requirements—that welfare reform helps people get back to work, earn more income, and move out of poverty,” Adolphsen said.

‘Next Phase’ of Reform

Those who remain in poverty are people who have difficulty making the transition to independence, Rachidi says.

“The next phase of welfare is how to address those situations,” Rachidi said.

Juliana Knot (jjknot322@gmail.com) writes from Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Wyoming Lawmakers Consider Imposing a Corporate Tax

By Bonner R. Cohen

Wyoming legislators are taking a second look at a proposal to impose a corporate income tax on companies with more than 100 shareholders.

The state legislature declined to pass a proposed corporate income tax bill limited to retailers, restaurants, and hotels during the session earlier this year. However, the Joint Revenue Interim Committee, which meets between sessions of the legislature, approved a draft bill for a broader corporate tax called the National Corporate Tax Recapture Act, at a meeting in Pinedale, Wyoming on September 19.

The new bill would tax every corporation with more than 100 shareholders operating in the state. The bill could be considered during the next session of the legislature beginning in February 2020.

‘It Is a Real Increase’

It is unlikely the “recapture” tax would work as proposed, says Sven Larsen, a senior fellow at the Wyoming Liberty Group.

“Contrary to what is often being said, the corporate tax you are looking at is not a simple transfer of revenue from one state to another,” Larsen wrote in a September 17 open letter to the state legislature’s Revenue Committee. “It is a real increase in the tax burden on corporations.”

Corporations look at the cost of doing business before entering a new market, Larsen told the committee.

“For example, home improvement retail giant Lowe’s, domiciled in North Carolina where the corporate income tax is 2.5 percent, would be looking at a substantial increase in the cost of operations in our state.”

Small Differences, Large Effects

States should not impose corporate income taxes, says Chris Edwards, director of tax policy at the Cato Institute.

“In today’s competitive global economy, businesses have to choose where to locate, and small differences in tax rates can have a large effect on investment,” Edwards said.

Raising the tax burden on corporations would make things worse for workers in the state, Edwards says.

“With a higher corporate tax and lower investment, Wyoming’s workers would lose,” Edwards said. “Less investment would mean less demand for workers, and thus lower wages and fewer job prospects. Corporate taxes are also undemocratic in the sense that they are a hidden burden that politicians ultimately foist on workers, who may be unaware of them.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

INTERNET INFO

Education Report Card Ranks Arizona, Florida, Indiana Highest

By Ashley Bateman

A new report evaluating states on their K–12 performance and school choice options ranks Arizona, Florida, and Indiana as the states with the best education policies.

The 23rd annual edition of the Report Card on American Education by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia on six factors: state academic standards, charter schools, homeschool regulation burden, private school choice, teacher quality, and digital learning.

This year’s top five states, ranked first through fifth, are Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Georgia, and the District of Columbia. The five lowest-ranked states, beginning with the fifty-first, are Nebraska, North Dakota, Hawaii, South Dakota, and Alaska.

There was virtually no change among this year’s overall top- and bottom-five states compared to previous years, across a variety of measures.

Grade ‘A’ School Choice
In addition to ranking the states, ALEC also assigned letter grades for states’ school choice programs. Three states earned “A” grades: Arizona, Florida, and Wisconsin. The factors considered include which students qualify and the amount of financial support given to parents for private school expenses, says Vicki Alger, a policy advisor at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“These states stand out because of their expansive student eligibility policies as well as program purchasing power so lower- and middle-income families can afford to participate,” Alger said. “Also, private-school parental choice programs in these states are not overly regulated, so participating schools can preserve their autonomy and uniqueness.”

‘Most Inclusive Program’: Arizona
Arizona’s five established school choice programs, especially a program allowing parents to use a per-pupil share of government funds to pay for tuition at private schools or for other education expenses, make it a good choice for first place, says Scott Kaufman, ALEC’s Education and Workforce Development Task Force director.

“Arizona, by our measure, ranks first because of the sheer number of programs of choice they offer and the types of programs, particularly their Education Savings Account,” or ESA, Kaufman said.

“It was the first and most inclusive program in the country, with 22 percent of students eligible statewide,” Kaufman said. “Our model policy on ESAs is based on Arizona’s legislation, so we think pretty highly of it.”

ESAs a ‘Game Changer’
ESAs are currently available in only five states: Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Implementation of Nevada’s ESA program has been delayed by litigation. Parents with access to ESAs receive a grant of a percentage of per-pupil spending from the state to educate their child in an alternative environment instead of sending their children to the local government school.

“In my opinion, ESAs are the most exciting thing going on in education reform right now,” Kaufman said. “I often compare it to a health savings account but for education. Government puts the money it would have otherwise spent on a child’s schooling into a restricted-use bank account, giving parents flexibility beyond just tuition. I think it is an educational game changer.”

Grading Charter School Policies
ALEC also graded the states on their charter school policies. Charters are public schools that are independently run and free of some of the regulations on traditional public schools. Four jurisdictions earned an “A” for their charter school programs: Arizona, Indiana, the District of Columbia, and Minnesota.

“What sets these states apart are policies encouraging a variety of independent charter-school authorities besides government entities, school autonomy uninflicted by burdensome regulations, and policies not restricting the number of charter schools that can open or the number of students who can enroll,” Alger said.

Homeschooling, Digital Learning
States were also graded on access to homeschooling, another fast-growing form of choice.

“Eleven states earned an ‘A’ in this category for not imposing a regulatory burden on parents, including not requiring them to notify state officials of their decision to homeschool their children,” Alger said.


States were also graded on digital options that allow students to learn from home. Florida and Utah each received an “A-”, the highest grade awarded in that category this year.

“Digital learning empowers parents to choose self-paced educational options beyond those offered during a typical school year at brick-and-mortar schools,” Alger said.

Disappointed at Slow Progress
Progress has been slow in broadening eligibility for choice programs, says Alger.

“Focusing specifically on parental choice programs, top-performing states should be commended,” Alger said. “However, given that parental choice programs have been operating for decades, it is disappointing there aren’t more grade ‘A’ states, particularly since the scientific research overwhelmingly demonstrates positive effects of parental choice programs. These include higher standardized test scores for program participants, as well as higher high-school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college completion rates.”

Most research also finds higher parental satisfaction rates, that competition for student raises public-school student test scores, and the vast majority of choice programs generate net fiscal savings for local school districts, states, and taxpayers,” Alger said.

School choice programs expand the choices available to children, allowing families to find the option that fits them best, says Mike McShane, director of national research for EdChoice.

“Research has shown that giving families more options helps kids do better in life,” McShane said. “It has also been shown to improve the performance of public schools. Private school choice is a win-win.”

Ashley Bateman (bateman.ae@googlemail.com) writes from Alexandria, Virginia.

INTERNET INFO
Trump Administration Considers Indexing Capital Gains for Inflation

By Ashley Herzog

The Trump administration is considering lowering taxes on capital gains by using its authority to write Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations.

National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow has publicly supported indexing capital gains for inflation for many years. Indexing would lower the effective tax rates on sales of long-term investments such as stocks, mutual funds, and residences. President Donald Trump has the authority to issue an executive order requiring the Treasury Department, which oversees the IRS, to change its method of calculation.

Currently, capital-gains tax rates on investments held for more than one year range from 0 percent for low-income individuals to 20 percent for those with taxable income above $434,550 for single persons or $488,850 for married couples. Most federal income-tax filers pay 15 percent on capital gains. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act did not change those rates.

Senate Opposition

There are various Democrat proposals to raise capital gains tax rates on higher-income earners, and some Republicans oppose the Trump administration’s plan.

“Indexing the cost basis for capital gains to inflation would mark a dramatic change in U.S. tax policy,” Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) stated in a letter to Mnuchin opposing implementation of indexing through executive order, on September 13.

“Not only would such a change stand on dubious constitutional and legal ground, it would primarily benefit wealthy investors without supporting American workers,” Romney said.

Senate Support

Many Senate Republicans have come out in support of the plan.

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and 20 other Republican members of the U.S. Senate sent U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin a letter urging him to use his regulatory authority to eliminate inflationary gains from the Treasury’s calculation of capital gains tax liability, on July 29.

“The United States economy has experienced historic levels of growth as a result of Congress and the current administration’s policies such as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,” the letter states. “Implementing a policy of indexing capital gains to inflation will help to perpetuate these successes by encouraging savings, investment, and innovation so that everyday Americans can continue to enjoy better lives and livelihoods.”

Fairness Concerns

The inflation tax is “unfair,” and recalculating capital gains taxes would encourage economic growth, the letter states.

“Currently, the methodology Treasury employs to calculate capital gains ignores gains resulting from inflation and ultimately hampers economic growth,” Cruz wrote. “When a taxpayer sells a capital asset, they pay taxes on their gains—the difference between the basis and the sale price. Under current rules, Treasury determines the basis by looking at the sticker price at the time of purchase without consideration of the inflation-adjusted cost of the asset in today’s dollars.”

The current method of calculating capital gains taxes is flawed, says Kyle Pomerlau, chief economist and vice president of economic analysis at the Tax Foundation.

“If an asset appreciates only due to inflation, the current method overstates real gains and taxes income that an individual didn’t really earn,” Pomerlau said.

Taxing Capital Losses

Cruz is right to note the current rules make taxpayers face a tax liability even if they have suffered an actual loss, Pomerlau says.

“Under current law, an individual is subject to capital gains tax if they sell an asset that has appreciated in value,” Pomerlau said. “Sometimes, however, an asset may appreciate in value simply because the general price level has increased, not because the asset has increased in value in any real sense. If this happens, the current tax code could place a positive tax burden on an asset that didn’t really generate any income.”

An Inflation Tax

The value of an asset can be inflated by government’s devaluation of the dollar to stimulate the economy, says economist Edward Hudgins, research director of The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“Indexing capital gains taxes to inflation is a minimum that should be in any tax reform package,” Hudgins said. “Indexing blocks the possibility of governments making illicit gains by inflating the currency. Indeed, the irresponsible deficit spending by politicians today is worse than at any time in the country’s history, with the federal debt as high as annual GNP. Indexing will protect the wealth of citizens if and when inflation returns.”

The burden of government at all levels is too high, says Hudgins.

“In spite of the very welcome tax cuts of 2017, Americans are still overtaxed: income taxes, corporate taxes, Social Security taxes, local sales and property taxes, and yes, capital gains taxes,” Hudgins said.

“If the capital gains tax were eliminated entirely, it could keep wealth in the hands of individuals and give them strong incentives to invest in productive activities and assets, keeping that wealth out of the hands of irresponsible, profligate politicians,” Hudgins said.

Calls for More

Lowering effective tax rates on capital gains wouldn’t have much effect on the economy, says Pomerlau.

“I do not think indexing would be significantly pro-growth,” Pomerlau said. “Capital gains already receive pretty good tax treatment under current law. As a result, the effective tax rate on gains is already pretty low. Adding indexing, which isn’t a significant tax cut, would do little to further reduce the effective tax rate.”

Congress and the Trump administration should focus on additional tax reforms, Pomerlau said.

“Mainly, they should focus on expanding tax-preferred savings vehicles like 401ks, IRAs, and Roth IRAs,” Pomerlau said. “These savings vehicles provide an even larger benefit than indexing does and are much less complex to administer than indexing.”

Ashley Herzog (aebristow85@gmail.com) writes from Avon Lake, Ohio.
Report: Project Labor Agreements Have Cost New Jersey Taxpayers Half a Billion Dollars Since 2002

By Bonner R. Cohen

Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for government infrastructure construction have cost New Jersey taxpayers more than half a billion dollars by inflating the cost of government construction projects, a new report states.

PLAs are pre-hire collective bargaining agreements that establish the terms of employment for a certain construction project. New Jersey’s Project Labor Agreement Act, enacted in 2002, requires contractors to adhere to specified work rules and hiring procedures for certain public works projects with total costs of $5 million or more—which must be covered by a PLA.

“New Jersey taxpayers would have saved $565.1 million, or more than $7.1 million per project, in 2018 prices, if PLAs had not been used,” states the study released on August 26 by The Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research (BHI). Based on a statistical analysis of 107 schools constructed in New Jersey since 2002, the study found PLAs drove up the price of construction projects by 12 percent to 18 percent.

Twenty-five states have enacted legislation restricting government-mandated PLAs, and eight states have passed measures encouraging their use on taxpayer-funded construction sites, the BHI report states.

‘End Fair and Local Competition’

The New Jersey findings are similar to results for other states, says David G. Tuerck, president of BHI and coauthor of the report.

“This study echoes previous BHI analyses of the impact of PLA mandates on school construction in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Ohio, which found PLA requirements increased the cost of construction compared to projects without PLA mandates,” Tuerck stated in a BHI press release on September 23.

“Opponents of government-mandated PLAs argue these controversial agreements end fair and local competition and discourage local nonunion contractors from working on projects in their own communities, which effectively limits competition during the bidding process and drives up construction costs,” Tuerck said.

PLAs typically require all contractors to hire most or all workers through union halls or apprenticeship programs, and nonunion workers must join a union and/or pay union dues for the length of the project. In addition, a PLA ensures that union work rules, job classifications, and dispute resolution processes apply to the project.

Requires Union Pension Contributions

PLAs require contractors to contribute to union benefit plans on behalf of employees, but those contributions are forfeited unless the workers join a union and become vested.

Thus, PLAs limit competition for government contracts to construction workers who are unionized, says Stan Greer, a senior research associate at the National Institute for Labor Relations Research and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“Under union-only PLAs, independent construction workers who already have their own retirement accounts are nevertheless forced to contribute to Big Labor-managed pension funds,” Greer said. “Rather than compromise the freedom of their employees and the efficiency of their operations, most independent construction firms simply refuse to submit bids on PLA projects.”

In 2018, 87.2 percent of U.S. construction workers and 77.9 percent of New Jersey construction workers chose not to join a union, the BHI study states.

Discriminating Against Nonunion Workers

PLAs put unionized workers in a privileged position, says Trey Kovacs, a policy analyst at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

“It is well-documented that PLAs drive up costs, but they also discriminate against nonunion construction workers,” Kovacs said.

“Requiring union labor on taxpayer-funded construction projects actively excludes the majority of the construction workforce,” Kovacs said. “In New Jersey, only 22.1 percent of construction workers are members of a union.”

“It is puzzling why any government would blatantly cater to such a small percentage of the state’s workforce, especially when PLAs increase the cost of construction and extend project schedules,” Kovacs said.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D., (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

INTERNET INFO

Innovative Micro-Schools Help Meet Demand for Education Alternatives

By Ashley Bateman

Micro-schools with 150 or fewer students are arising to help fill demand for lower-cost alternatives to government schools.

More than five million students in the United States—about 10 percent of children in K-12—attend private schools. That number reflects a lack of options: 40 percent of parents say they would rather have their children enrolled in a private school, states a survey published by EdChoice.

As private school costs increase and more Catholic schools—known historically for lower tuition prices than secular academies—close, the education marketplace is responding with innovative options.

There are approximately 200 micro-schools in the United States, with an average enrollment of fewer than 50 students, estimates Bellwether Education Partners, a nonprofit consultancy.

Micro-Schools ‘Relatively Undefined’

There is no comprehensive definition of a micro-school at this point, says Juliet Squire, a partner at Bellwether.

“We spoke with numerous leaders in the sector about the shared characteristics of micro-schools and found very little consensus, except that micro-schools are intentionally small schools,” Squire said. “There are other characteristics, such as multi-grade classrooms, student-directed learning, or the use of technology, that came up often in these conversations but were not universal.”

There is little data on micro-schools, making it hard to find statistics about growth and performance, says Squire. “This type of school is new and relatively undefined, so there’s a lack of information, generally, about their growth over time,” Squire said.

Promising ‘Potential for Diversity’

Commonly, micro-schools are small and instruction is tailored to the student, says Don Soifer, president of Nevada Action for School Options.

“Micro-schools are kind of like personalized learning, there is not one definitive definition that is prevalent,” Soifer said.

“Under 25 students and no administrators are characteristics that often come up,” Soifer said. “Beyond that, the potential for diversity in teaching and learning to meet the specific needs of individual learners is what makes it all so promising.”

Micro-schools range in scope from outdoor, play-based establishments to high-tech campuses. Tuition per year ranges from less than $5,000 to more than $20,000.

Acton Academy Network Model

A decade ago, Jeff and Laura Sandefør founded Acton Academy in Austin, Texas. The model of student-led learning they pioneered has become an extensive network now encompassing 165 schools, including campuses in other countries, says Squire.

“Most of our parent-entrepreneur founders choose Acton not because it’s a micro-school but because of our belief that every child is a genius who deserves to find a calling that will change the world,” said Sandefør. “Acton features learner-driven communities—more like Google than a traditional school, where young people in multi-age classes help each other learn.”

The focus at Acton is on skill-building, not meeting academic standards, Sandefør says, though students at Acton accomplish that as well.

“Our students move at multiple grade levels a year, but our parents couldn’t care less,” Sandefør said. “What really matters is that they are learning skills to be used in apprenticeships and the real world, not merely memorization and regurgitation.”

“The most important aspect isn’t size, but the ownership we give young people,” Sandefør said. “We chose to build Acton because we couldn’t imagine our two boys chained to a desk all day. ... At Acton, they are free to discover their passion and learn to do the hard work it takes to change the world. Acton turns learning upside down, which isn’t true for all micro-schools.”

Highlands ‘Niche’ Model

Highlands Micro-School opened in Denver, Colorado in 2016. The school is intentionally located in a modified house in a residential area, says founder Anne Wintemute.

“I saw the need for a truly alternative method of education that solved many of the limitations of large-scale schooling,” Wintemute said. “I picked the location because it was in my neighborhood, where I wanted to stay and serve families. People who choose Micro feel they are selecting a school that has the flexibility to adapt to the needs and interests of their child, versus the other way around. We fill a niche for families who like the small feel, the hands-on and family-like relationships between staff and learners.”

“Our students move at multiple grade levels a year, but our parents couldn’t care less.

What really matters is that they are learning skills to be used in apprenticeships and the real world, not merely memorization and regurgitation.”

JEFF AND LAURA SANDEFER
FOUNDER
ACTON ACADEMY

Highlands assesses students using frequent teacher evaluations, quarterly narrative assessments, and student portfolios, instead of standardized testing. “Learners capture their work product in portfolios, and the growth is pretty apparent,” Wintemute said.

The school has two full-time teachers and two support teachers. Wintemute says her model is replicable, but she does not intend to create a network.

“We have 26 learners and do not plan to scale our school up, but instead to stay small. We are very happy this way. I think creating a chain, so to speak, might diminish what is special about us. Each micro-school really needs to be so flexible that it can fully capitalize on the community, teachers included, that are a part of it, ... [reflecting] the special skills of its teachers.”

Lower-Cost Hybrid Model

There are lower-cost micro-schools that seek to serve middle-class and minority communities, says Squire.

“When we started the research, we thought micro-schools might be just boutique schools that were catering to the more-affluent families,” Squire said. “In fact, we found many micro-schools that have a goal of serving more disadvantaged and diverse student populations.”

For example, Parish Academy provides management services to Catholic parishes and dioceses that open cost-effective micro-schools on church grounds. A hybrid model for elementary or secondary education can cost as little as $1,500, or for a full-time school with as few as 40 students, $2,950 to $3,850.

Ashley Bateman (bateman.aa@googlemail.com) writes from Alexandria, Virginia.
Florida Attorney General Petitions Court

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody argued in a July 26 filing with the Florida Supreme Court the title and ballot summary of the proposition are misleading because they do not disclose that “the amendment would ban the possession of virtually every semiautomatic long-gun.”

Moody further argues the proposition violates the single-subject requirement for citizen initiatives because owners of “defined assault weapons” acquired before the amendment takes effect would be required to register their firearms.

Savannah Edgens (savannah.edgens@gmail.com) writes from Gainesville, Florida.

By Savannah Edgens

A group named Ban Assault Weapons Now (BAWN) is collecting petition signatures to place on the November 2020 general election ballot a proposed amendment to the Florida constitution banning semiautomatic weapons.

To qualify the proposition for the ballot, BAWN must submit 766,200 verified voter signatures to the state’s Division of Elections (DOE) by February 1, 2020.

BAWN submitted, and the elections department validated, 10 percent of the signatures required in June to meet the threshold for a mandatory review of BAWN’s proposed ballot language by the Florida Supreme Court on February 4, 2020.

If BAWN gathers enough signatures to place the measure on the ballot and it withstands legal challenges, the initiative will amend the state constitution if approved by at least 60 percent of those voting in the November 2020 election.

‘Attempting to Scare the Public’

The proposition is titled “Prohibits possession of defined assault weapons,” and the ballot summary defines an assault weapon as “any semiautomatic rifle or shotgun capable of holding more than ten (10) rounds of ammunition... in a fixed or detachable magazine.”

That definition is not correct, says Lennie Jarratt, a government relations project manager at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Budget & Tax News.

“An assault weapon is a weapon with select-fire capabilities, meaning they can be set to fire a single round per trigger pull, a burst of rounds per trigger pull, or they can be fully automatic,” Jarratt said. “Automatic weapons have been highly regulated since 1934 and banned from civilian ownership if manufactured after 1986.”

The proposition is essentially a bait-and-switch operation, says Jarratt.

“‘This ballot measure is attempting to change the definition and equate a semiautomatic weapon, which only fires a single bullet with each trigger pull, with fully automatic weapons. They are attempting to scare the public instead of inform the public.’

LENNIE JARRATT
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS PROJECT MANAGER
THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

‘Calls It Unconstitutional’

The Florida measure would effectively ban the sale of all semiautomatic rifles that accept a detachable magazine or another feeding device, says Jarratt.

“While it is possible to limit the detachable magazine to 10 rounds or fewer, it is impossible to limit a rifle from accepting a detachable magazine that can hold more than 10 rounds,” Jarratt said.

The initiative would violate the rights of Floridians guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, says Jarratt.

“With this new definition, they are attempting to circumvent the Second Amendment,” Jarratt said. “If passed, this amendment will assuredly be ruled unconstitutional. Unfortunately, it will cost tremendous amounts of money and years in courts to reach the U.S. Supreme Court.”

‘We Are Talking About Rights’

If the proposition appears on the November 2020 ballot, it will motivate people on both sides of the question to vote, says Dave Workman, senior editor of Gun Mag at the Second Amendment Foundation.

“The 2020 election is also an election for president,” Workman said. “I anticipate a very heavy turnout of voters in Florida, on both sides of the issue. So, this is not going to be a runaway election one way or the other. We are talking about a constitutionally protected right that really should not be up for a popularity vote.”

Ultimately, the ballot question is about individual rights, says Workman. “That’s the unfortunate part about this,” Workman said. “We aren’t talking about guns. We are talking about individual rights. We have to zealously protect all of our rights. I think you’re going to see in 2020 that as this campaign unfolds, you’re going to see people coming out of the woodwork to protect their rights. These are people who may not vote all the time and just want to be left alone, but when you light their fire, you’ve got to be prepared to burn.”

‘HUAWEI IS THE CORNERSTONE OF A CCP INITIATIVE TO OVERTAKE THE US.’

JOSHUA PHILIPP, EDITOR, INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER, THE EPOCH TIMES

“HUAWEI plays a key role in China’s programs of mass surveillance, human right abuse, and technological dominance.”

JASPER FAKKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, THE EPOCH TIMES

The Heartland Institute is a national nonprofit organization based in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Its mission is to discover, develop, and promote free-market solutions to social and economic problems. For more information, visit our Web site at heartland.org or call 312/377-4000.

Wherever you are, wherever you go, and whatever your policy interests, Heartland’s Daily Podcasts connect you with key players!

**Budget & Tax**
Joe Barnett and other budget and tax policy experts relate news and views from the local, state, and federal arenas.
[heartland.org/topics/taxes](http://heartland.org/topics/taxes)

**Consumer Freedom Lounge**
Lindsey Stroud keeps you up to date on developments in vaping policy and the industry itself.
[heartland.org/alcohol-tobacco](http://heartland.org/alcohol-tobacco)

**Education**
Lennie Jarratt conducts interviews covering the latest in education and school choice.
[heartland.org/topics/education](http://heartland.org/topics/education)

**Environment**
H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. conducts interviews and breaks news on climate change and other environment issues.
[heartland.org/topics/environment](http://heartland.org/topics/environment)

**Health Care**
AnneMarie Schieber interviews leading health care policy analysts and relates news and views from the health policy arena.
[heartland.org/topics/health-care](http://heartland.org/topics/health-care)

**In the Tank**
DONNY KENDAL    JUSTIN HASKINS
Hosts Donny Kendal and Justin Haskins explore the world of think tanks in a weekly podcast that features interviews, debates, roundtable discussions, stories, and light-hearted segments on a variety of topics on the latest news.
[heartland.org/multimedia/podcast](http://heartland.org/multimedia/podcast)

**Subscribe to Heartland’s daily podcasts on iTunes or listen from the audio pages at heartland.org**
Michigan House Advances Constitutional Carry Legislation

By Brandon Best

A package of bills that would allow unlicensed carrying of concealed firearms—sometimes called constitutional carry—and eliminate felony penalties for minor violations of state gun regulations is advancing through the Michigan Legislature.

The bill package would allow gun owners to carry concealed firearms without a concealed pistol license (CPL) and would repeal sections of state law that penalize the possession or improper transportation of a concealed weapon without a CPL.

Michigan currently requires training, a background check with fingerprints, and a $115 application and licensing fee to obtain a CPL. A measure in the bill package would remove the requirement to get a CPL but still allow individuals to obtain one for use in states that recognize out-of-state gun permits. It would also allow unlicensed concealed carry in places where open carry is allowed.

The package of bills, H.B. 4770 through H.B. 4774, sponsored by Representatives Steven Johnson (R-Wayland), John Reilly (R-Oakland Township), Michele Hoitenga (R-Manton), Matt Maddock (R-Milford), and Pamela Hornberger (R-Chesterfield Township), respectively, was introduced on October 14.

House Bills 4771 through 4774 are tie-barred to H.B. 4770, meaning they cannot take effect unless H.B. 4770 is also enacted. H.B. 4770, the constitutional carry bill, and the related measures passed out of the House Committee on Military, Veterans, and Homeland Security and were referred to the House Judiciary Committee on October 23.

Felony for Paperwork Mistakes

State punishments for mere licensing problems are currently too severe, says Steve Dulan, a director at the Michigan Coalition for Responsible Gun Owners and an adjunct professor at Cooley Law School.

“It’s patently unreasonable to have a five-year felony for what amounts to a paperwork mistake,” Dulan said. “But if you let your license expire, there’s nothing available under the current statutory scheme except a felony offense.”

The potential for felony records poses a significant risk to CPL holders, Dulan says. “If they get a felony conviction, they lose their concealed pistol license and their right to self-defense forever,” Dulan said.

The legislation will make Michigan law consistent, says Hornberger. “It makes no sense that you can open carry in the same place where carrying a concealed weapon will land you five years behind bars,” Hornberger states on her website. “A law-abiding gun owner has the right to defend themselves and that right shouldn’t be infringed on by government-mandated licenses and fees.”

‘Far More Law-Abiding’

Michigan had 660,920 active CPLs as of August 2019, covering approximately 7 percent of the state’s adult popula-

To learn more, or to download our reports, visit taxrevolution.us.

JOIN THE TAX REVOLUTION!

The Tax Revolution Institute (TRI) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization committed to researching and developing innovative, voluntary tax solutions to promote transparency, accountability and integrity in the delivery of public services in the U.S.

TRI’s purpose is not political. Rather, it is human and it is humane.
Sanders Unveils Heavy ‘Tax on Extreme Wealth’

By Bonner R. Cohen

D emocrat presidential nomination candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) unveiled a proposed “tax on extreme wealth” that targets billionaires with the intention of cutting their wealth in half over 15 years. “Billionaires should not exist,” Sanders stated in a tweet after announcing his proposal on September 24.

The proposed wealth tax would be levied annually on well-to-do individuals’ or married couples’ net worth. The tax would have progressive rates and would be imposed on top of other taxes paid.

The annual rate for the tax on a married couple would start at 1 percent of net worth above $32 million and reach 8 percent on wealth over $10 billion.

Sanders’ plan outbids a similar proposal by another potential Democrat presidential candidate, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), for an “Ultra-Millionaire Tax.” Sanders says his plan would raise $4.35 trillion over a decade. Warren’s economic advisers project her wealth tax would raise $2.75 trillion over 10 years.

Bucking International Trend

Other countries have reduced the burden on capital in recent years, instead of raising it as the two Democrat senators propose, says Chris Edwards, director of tax policy at the Cato Institute.

“The Warren and Sanders wealth taxes run counter to the international trend of declining taxes on capital,” Edwards said.

Wealth taxes have been tried in a dozen Western European countries, and most have been repealed, Edwards says.

“The number of European countries with wealth taxes has fallen from 12 in 1990 to just three today,” Edwards said. “Even the welfare states leftist Americans most admire—such as Sweden and France—repealed their wealth taxes.”

‘Poorly Designed’ Tax

Under wealth tax plans, money that is currently being invested in the economy would instead be transferred to the federal government, says Adam Michel, a senior policy analyst at The Heritage Foundation.

“Taxes on wealth are poorly designed taxes on investment,” Michel said. “Investment is the lifeblood of our economy. It’s needed to add new jobs, update aging factories, and develop new technologies,” Michel said.

“Under a wealth tax, the world’s wealthiest investors—many of whom live in the United States—would shift their businesses elsewhere, would employ citizens of other countries, and would raise wages in the U.S. more slowly.”

‘Don’t Get Too Successful’

A wealth tax would have a corrosive effect on society, Michel says.

“Our public policy sends a message about our culture, our institutions, and what we value,” Michel said. “A wealth tax says, ‘Don’t get too successful here. We want only middling ideas. If you have a really good idea, don’t sell it to the rest of the world, or we’ll hit you with a penalty.’

“In summary, wealth taxes are a terrible idea,” Michel said.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
E-Cig, Vaping Bans Keep People Smoking, Preserving Vital Gov. Revenue Stream

By Lindsey Stroud

Being privy to the legislative process, I was appalled by the dismissive attitude U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) showed recently to a witness testifying on “vaping-related” hospitalizations.

Vicki McKenna, a beloved radio talk show host from Wisconsin, testified before the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy of the Oversight and Reform Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives in mid-September. McKenna testified electronic cigarettes helped her “quit smoking after 23 years.”

Tlaib, who hails from Detroit, displayed conceit and disdain during the testimony. Her attack wasn’t directed at a “tobacco lobbyist” but toward a constituent from another midwestern state. Making matters worse, Tlaib’s interrogation was based on blatant misinformation.

Tlaib first inquired into McKenna’s political beliefs, noting she has called herself a “converted conservative” and a “reformed Marxist,” before asking whether McKenna was a “conspiracy theorist.” McKenna accurately said her political beliefs should not discount the idea of e-cigarette harm reduction.

E-Cigarettes vs. Smoking

Tlaib’s display of arrogance quickly devolved into apparent ignorance as the congresswoman demonstrated she could not understand that vaping is not smoking.

There’s a reason traditional cigarettes are called combustible cigarettes. In case Tlaib needs a basic, fifth-grade-level science refresher: for something to be smoking, it must be combusted. In other words, “Where there’s smoke, there’s fire.”

E-cigarettes and vaping devices do not light e-liquids on fire. They heat them, which creates a vapor, not smoke. More importantly, they have helped an estimated three million Americans quit smoking combustible cigarettes.

“The problem with state securitization of tobacco bonds is that MSA payments are based on cigarette sales. So, essentially, Tlaib’s home state is relying on the lungs of smokers to meet future debt obligations. Even more alarming is that Michigan uses very little MSA money and tobacco taxes to help smokers quit. In 2019, the Great Lakes State received $1.2 billion in MSA payments and tobacco taxes but dedicated only $1.6 million, or 0.001 percent, to tobacco-use prevention programs.”

LINDSEY STROUD
STATE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MANAGER, THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

Tobacco Revenue Dependency

I would like to inform Tlaib that the only conspiracy in the use of tobacco products in the United States is that every form of government, from local to state to federal entities, relies on the lungs of smokers for revenue.

Michigan, Tlaib’s home state, first sued tobacco manufacturers in 1996, seeking “$14 billion in damages for medical costs incurred under the Medicaid program due to tobacco-related diseases.” In 1998, Michigan and other states reached an agreement with the tobacco companies, concluding with the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA).

Under the MSA, manufacturers agreed to pay the federal and state governments $200 billion over 25 years, after which they will make additional payments “annually and in perpetuity” to defray tobacco-related Medicaid costs. This is in addition to billions of dollars in taxes on tobacco products federal, state, and local governments receive each year.

Settlement-Funded Bonds

From 1998 to 2019, Michigan received more than $5.7 billion in MSA payments. Instead of spending that money on health care programs, the Michigan Legislature agreed in 2005 to securitize the state’s tobacco moneys in the form of a capital appreciation bond so the Wolverine State could receive upfront cash by selling future MSA payments to bondholders.

In 2005, Tlaib’s political mentor, Michigan state Rep. Steve Tobocman, voted in favor of securitizing $400 million in tobacco settlement money “to fund the starting balance of the 21st Century Jobs Fund.” In 2007, Tobocman voted in favor of securitizing another $415 million “to help balance the FY 2006-07 state budget.” In 2008, acting as Majority Floor Leader, Tobocman discharged from committee a bill that would have used already securitized tobacco money for “tourism and business promotion.”

The problem with state securitization of tobacco bonds is that MSA payments are based on cigarette sales. So, essentially, Tlaib’s home state is relying on the lungs of smokers to meet future debt obligations. Even more alarming is that Michigan uses very little MSA money and tobacco taxes to help smokers quit. In 2019, the Great Lakes State received $1.2 billion in MSA payments and tobacco taxes but dedicated only $1.6 million, or 0.001 percent, to tobacco-use prevention programs.

Tlaib should already know all about this. She got her political career started in the early 2000s in Lansing, Michigan, when she was hired by Tobocman, then a member of the state House of Representatives. She was elected to the same chamber in 2008. During her time at the state capital, Tlaib would have learned exactly how states have used smokers to meet their debt obligations.

Banning Non-Tobacco Alternatives

Michigan is not alone in bonding-out MSA payments. California, New Jersey, and New York have sold billions of dollars of future tobacco money to investors.

Like Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has used executive authority to ban flavored e-cigarettes.

California started the trend, with localities issuing similar bans. San Francisco, a city that receives its own individual MSA payments from the state government, banned the sale of all e-cigarette products earlier this year.

One must wonder whether this assault on e-cigarettes is about health or about keeping tobacco funds flowing into state coffers.

An unprovoked verbal assault by a federal legislator on a 51-year-old woman who simply wanted to share her journey of quitting smoking is appalling. Even more appalling, Tlaib worked to redirect future tobacco money away from tobacco harm reduction.

Even worse, Tlaib is now working in Congress to remove e-cigarettes, a proven tobacco harm reduction tool, from smokers in her home state—the people Michigan relies on to meet its debt obligations.

Lindsey Stroud (lstroud@heartland.org) is a state government relations manager at The Heartland Institute. An earlier version of this article appeared at Townhall.com. Reprinted and adapted with permission.
Thanks to Trump, 7 Million Americans Have Quit Food Stamps

By Chris Talgo

Exactly 36,029,506 Americans (18,230,968 households) were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), popularly known as food stamps, as of June 2019, according to the latest available government data. Although it may seem as though a rather large number of Americans receive government subsidies for their groceries, the current SNAP figure is good news.

Why? Because in 2016, the last year of the Obama administration, 42,972,692 Americans (21,232,456 households) received SNAP. That’s a decrease of roughly seven million people and four million households.

Although there are many reasons for the major drop in enrollment, one cannot dispute that the booming economy is the primary driver of the dramatic decrease. In less than three years, the Trump administration’s free-market regulatory rollback has produced a much-needed American job renaissance. According to the August and September employment snapshots from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “In August, the unemployment rate was 3.7% for the third month in a row.” This is excellent. Improving further, the unemployment rate declined to 3.5 percent in September. “The last time the rate was this low was in December 1969, when it also was 3.5 percent,” the report states. The unemployment rates for women (3.2 percent), blacks (5.5 percent), Hispanics (3.9 percent), and Asians (2.5 percent) are at or near record lows.

Even better, the report states, “The labor force participation rate edged up to 63.2% in August. ... The employment-population ratio, at 60.9%, also edged up over the month and is up by 0.6 percentage point over the year.” The labor force participation rate remained at 63.2 percent in September.

No wonder wages—especially for those at the bottom rung of the economic ladder—are finally increasing after years of stagnation.

Big Change

The current economic narrative is quite easy to grasp. President Barack Obama’s administration raised taxes and increased regulations for eight years, stifling business investment, expansion, and hiring. People had less income, and there were fewer good-paying jobs. No wonder millions of Americans relied on the government for help in buying their groceries.

Under Trump, the exact opposite has happened. In three short years, the Trump administration has cut taxes and regulations. As a result, people have more money to spend, and businesses finally have incentives to create lots of good-paying jobs.

No wonder the Left opposes tax cuts. Tax cuts negate the need for their redistributionist policies, a keystone of liberal perceptions to the contrary on “a supposed government dependency.

Lower Taxes, Less Regulation

Despite the Left and fake news media constantly decrying the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act as a “tax cut for the rich,” the truth is that low- and middle-income Americans benefited big-time from the Trump administration’s tax cut. Even The New York Times, notably not a fan of President Trump, had to admit in an article this April, “If you’re an American taxpayer, you probably got a tax cut last year,” and blamed perceptions to the contrary on “a sustained—and misleading—effort by liberal opponents of the tax law to brand it as a broad middle-class tax increase.”

Wow, did someone inject truth serum into the water supply at the New York Times offices?

No wonder wages—especially for those at the bottom rung of the economic ladder—are finally increasing after years of stagnation.

Jobs Renaissance

As the tax cuts produced larger paychecks—hence more discretionary income for individual Americans—the Trump administration’s war against pointless regulations was improving the economic situation for all Americans. According to President Donald Trump’s director of the National Economic Council, Larry Kudlow, “Deregulation started everywhere across the board … and I think that started this push and started the small business push and the blue collar hiring. ... Then comes the tax rate reduction, which adds to it on the incentive front, so they’re working very much together.”

The combination of tax cuts and regulatory rollback has produced a much-needed American job renaissance. According to the August and September employment snapshots from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “In August, the unemployment rate was 3.7% for the third month in a row.” This is excellent. Improving further, the unemployment rate declined to 3.5 percent in September. “The last time the rate was this low was in December 1969, when it also was 3.5 percent,” the report states. The unemployment rates for women (3.2 percent), blacks (5.5 percent), Hispanics (3.9 percent), and Asians (2.5 percent) are at or near record lows.

Even better, the report states, “The labor force participation rate edged up to 63.2% in August. ... The employment-population ratio, at 60.9%, also edged up over the month and is up by 0.6 percentage point over the year.” The labor force participation rate remained at 63.2 percent in September.

No wonder wages—especially for those at the bottom rung of the economic ladder—are finally increasing after years of stagnation.

Big Change

The current economic narrative is quite easy to grasp. President Barack Obama’s administration raised taxes and increased regulations for eight years, stifling business investment, expansion, and hiring. People had less income, and there were fewer good-paying jobs. No wonder millions of Americans relied on the government for help in buying their groceries.

Under Trump, the exact opposite has happened. In three short years, the Trump administration has cut taxes and regulations. As a result, people have more money to spend, and businesses finally have incentives to create lots of good-paying jobs.

It should come as no surprise that seven million fewer Americans are counting on Uncle Sam to help foot their grocery bills.

Chris Talgo (ctalgo@heartland.org) is an editor at The Heartland Institute. An earlier version of this article appeared in the Washington Examiner. Reprinted and adapted with permission.
The very fabric of America is under attack—our freedoms, our republic, and our constitutional rights have become contested terrain. The Epoch Times, a media committed to truthful and responsible journalism, is a rare bastion of hope and stability in these testing times.
Are you tired of being lectured, mocked and lied to by the mainstream media?

Join the more than 7 million readers who turn to The Washington Times.

Get 1 year of unlimited digital access to The Washington Times for just $69.95 and arm yourself with the facts.


Your subscription will also include our digital version of the daily paper delivered to your email, every weekday morning, with breaking news on the issues that affect the future of our nation.

The Washington Times

Reliable Reporting. The Right Opinion.

washingtontimes.com/heartland