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Robert A. Benson Jr.: Leftist has selective memory

By Robert A. Benson Jr.

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Tom Sgouros defends Rhode Island's liberal economic policies, arguing that they are not the reason our economy is one of the worst in the country ("Conservative fails at R.I. homework," Commentary, May 7).

He says Rhode Island has cut the income tax rate and even though the Rhode Island corporate tax rate is fourth highest in the country, it is "so riddled with exemptions and credits that 94 percent of businesses pay only the minimum." He fails to mention that Rhode Island's overall state and local tax burden is eight highest in the country, according to the Tax Foundation.

Sgouros says it is "hard to think of any significant union victories in the legislature in recent years." Yet our Democratically-controlled legislature has enacted binding arbitration laws for public safety union workers that have resulted in Rhode Island having among the highest fire safety costs in the country, according to the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council. I guess that result and the new law allowing daycare workers to unionize are not union victories.

He says private sector industries were never highly unionized, but neglects to mention that Rhode Island state and local government workers are 71 percent unionized (the second highest rate in the country, according to the Cato Institute).

These are the primary reasons the cost of government and our tax burden are so high, our business climate is ranked near the bottom, and our unemployment rate is highest in the county.