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Providence Journal-Bulletin (Rhode Island)

**December** 19, 2009 Saturday

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**SECTION:** NEWS; Commentary; Pg. 7**LENGTH:** 1082 words**Fortunate to be France**

The peevish tone of the **Cato Institute** s Michael F. Cannon in his Nov. 18 Commentary piece ( PelosiCare should come with a warning label ) is best captured in the remark, Soon we re France, a phrase intended to convey to the reader an encapsulation of the writer s abhorrence of that great and progressive nation.

To this gentleman, I can only say: We should be so fortunate, Mr. Cannon, we should be so fortunate.

Kirk Feather

Providence

**Man or woman, there s no difference**

I was married to a wonderful man for 26 years before his passing. I am now in a committed relationship with a wonderful woman. We have been together for eight years. There is no difference!

Many people reading this, including my loved ones, might not understand or agree with this statement, but it has to be said. I fell in love both times with their souls, not their physical attributes.

Having always been a defender against any kind of discrimination, I now find myself on the receiving end.

It has to do with the word marriage. It has to do with other people s belief systems mandating what my rights as a United States citizen are.

This country was founded to allow its citizens to live and believe freely, despite our differences. It was founded to prevent discriminatory laws that deprive the minority the same rights as the majority!

As an American citizen, I have the right to marry the person I am in a committed relationship with, to live and work where I choose. No one has the right to tell me no!

Erna Howarth

Coventry

**Wider distribution**

I wish there were a way to get several of Edward Achorn's articles into the hands of all Rhode Islanders. For years he has been pounding out the same message for helping Rhode Island, which, for years, the electorate seems to have ignored: Put a rein on government spending, reform the pension system, try hard to make the business climate more attractive.

Clear as it is, Rhode Islanders don't get Mr. Achorn's message. Perhaps the problem is that not enough people even read it.

How about making a few hundred thousand copies of his Dec. 8 Commentary column ( For Rhode Island, the warnings are coming fast and furious ) and distributing them door-to-door throughout the state?

Victor H. Blank

Cumberland

### **It's divisive to tie pay to teacher performance**

Julia Steiny ( Merit pay costs more and delivers less, Dec. 6 ) is exactly right: No evidence anywhere shows that merit-pay systems, aimed at individual teachers, improve education.

Having worked 57 years in education as a classroom teacher, director of special programs, principal, headmaster and, finally, a full professor of education with research responsibilities, I write with relief and gratitude that someone with experience in reading research has taken an informed position on the devilish promise of merit pay.

It does cost more in the long run, it is divisive, counter-productive with children and undermines teacher morale.

I have worked in education through at least three revolutions in education that chose merit pay for exceptional teachers as a solution to our problems in education.

With all due respect, shame on you, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and President Barack Obama for not doing your homework.

Give Julia Steiny a call. She can help you with the down-to-earth research and hundreds of important studies that might take you off the merit-pay-for-teachers bandwagon.

Sorry, there is no easy solution to our educational problems

Arthur Mark

Narragansett

### **Kudos to Dr. Marshall**

Kudos to Dr. Scott Marshall, the Rhode Island state veterinarian, who spent most of Dec. 9 cleaning the stalls and pens at Bonnedale Farm in Glocester ensuring that each animal was provided water and appropriate food.

I also applaud the two unnamed URI agriculture students. There aren't many of our state executives that would roll up their sleeves and get in there and do this job!

Certainly, they saved the day at the Bonnedale Farm from yet another disaster created by the mortgage companies.

I am proud to be a member of the same profession as Doctor Marshall.

Stan Fellenbaum, DVM

Narrragansett

### **Blame Bush policies for train station woes**

The Dec. 12 editorial Infrastructure insult was full of good and necessary ideas, all of which belong on the desks of Governor Carcieri and Mayor Cicilline. The crumbling state of the Providence train station is mirrored by buildings and roads in every town in Rhode Island.

One predictor of the decomposition of our infrastructure lay in the federal tax cut enacted nearly ten years ago. We now know it did not stimulate the economy but did result in a greatly diminished tax base, with municipalities suffering the greatest loss. Another predictor was the undertaking of a wildly expensive war in Iraq, now accepted as misguided at best.

Our physical and social landscape in this state now features decaying highways, roads and bridges; increased fees for all kinds of local services and licenses and heart-breaking cuts in the education of our children in art, music and sports. These lost employment opportunities add to our unemployment rate and subtract from our tax base.

It is not too late to obtain emergency funds for the train station and parking garage as suggested in the editorial. The mayor's and governor's offices must immediately combine forces, come up with a shovel ready repair plan, and submit it for stimulus funds.

Barbara A. Gianola

Providence

### **Fine firefighter dining in North Providence**

I read the article back on July 10 with the headline Firehouse food a hot issue twice because I couldn't believe what I was reading. The North Providence Fire Department, and probably several others in Rhode Island, send a fire truck, burning a gallon of diesel every five miles, according to the article, to the supermarket, twice a day for groceries. This is with the union's blessing.

The firefighters say that they like to all have a family-style meal together. I hope they are eating healthily, keeping their weight down and exercising to stay in top shape, although I doubt it.

This latest demand is just another example of tax-dollar abuse and unions for public employees being too strong. They think it's a big deal if they make the smallest contribution toward health care, etc.

Can you imagine an employee in the private sector telling his boss that he's going grocery shopping with the company's car? It's time for Rhode Island taxpayers to say enough is enough and start saying no to some of these union demands.

Suzanne Paquette

West Warwick

**LOAD-DATE:** December 19, 2009

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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