

Editorial Opinion

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Inland oil drilling legislation

Collier should seize 2nd shot to be heard

Florida's inland oil drilling laws weren't overhauled during the short-circuited 2015 legislative session, so there's a renewed opportunity for Collier County commissioners to weigh in regarding what they support for 2016.

One decision lawmakers made before the House shut down early on April 28 and the Senate halted floor votes was that the 2016 session will begin in January, not March. This means lawmakers will be back in the capital not only for a June session to adopt a 2015-16 budget, but also likely in the fall to begin committee meetings before next year's session.

So there's some urgency to hear from commissioners soon on how this fits their 2016 legislative wish list.

Commissioners had an opportunity April 14 to publicly spell out what they liked and didn't in the legislation, but an agenda item advocated by Commissioner Penny Taylor for further discussion of drilling was rejected. The next day, April 15, a letter from Commission Chairman Tim Nance to state Sen. Garrett Richter, R-Naples, says the following:

"On behalf of the Collier County Board of Commissioners, I would like to once again express my appreciation for your leadership in sponsoring legislation that significantly improves regulation of the state's oil and gas industry. ... In our view, Senate Bill 1468 provides the regulatory authority and legal framework necessary to safeguard the health and safety of our residents and protect the precious natural resources of Collier County."

Nance said Friday this was a thank-you letter to Richter for the hard work he and others put in on a difficult issue, that "it's not an advocacy letter."

The legislation was still evolving at the time he wrote the letter, Nance noted, cautioning: "Don't read anything into it (the letter) that it's not."

Try, try again

Richter says he intends to bring the same bill forward in the next session.

We supported the bills he and Rep. Ray Rodrigues, R-Estero, got to the floors of their chambers as significantly improving an outdated law. Primarily, we pointed to the legislation calling for a Department of Environmental Protection-led study of Florida's geology and hydrology as it relates to inland drilling. The study could help determine whether to allow fracturing or acid dissolving of the rock layer, along with high-pressure injection of chemicals at a drilling site, to increase well productivity. The bills called for a moratorium on these modern drilling procedures while the study is in progress for up to two years.

When commissioners advocated for drilling reforms in November 2014, a study and moratorium weren't among 18 recommendations listed in the consultant's report. The Conservancy of Southwest Florida suggested the study and moratorium.

Drilling in Collier County won't stop in the meantime. A DEP subscription service provided notification this past week of several applications for permits in the Raccoon Point field at Big Cypress National Preserve. Various permits are pending action.

North of the border

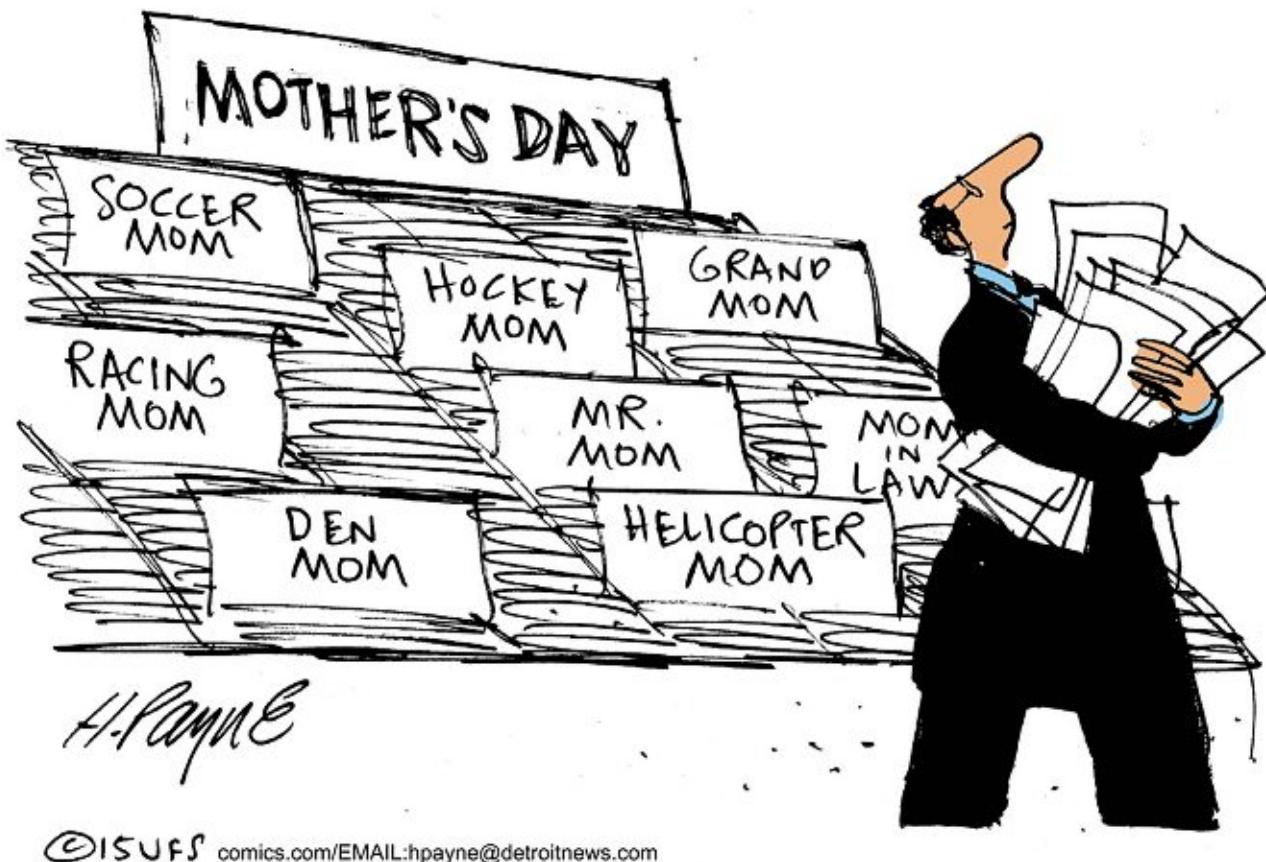
Bonita Springs isn't an oil drilling hub, as is Collier County. Yet credit goes to Bonita Springs city leaders for proactively taking steps, largely unprecedented in Florida, to have a say over any drilling permit within their jurisdiction.

The City Council and its attorney are preparing an ordinance that would require DEP to notify the city of a permit proposal, such as fracking, and get the council's permission by resolution for a well to go forward. It allows citizens to comment on the proposal at a public meeting.

The draft ordinance, presented to the council this past week, is undergoing revision. The city has a sensitive water recharge area on its east side, just north of the Collier County border.

Meanwhile, in Collier County, commissioners haven't taken a position on hydraulic fracturing. The consultant's list of 18 recommendations did call for increased notification to the county staff of various applications required to drill a well.

We would encourage Collier commissioners to confirm if, based on the 18 recommendations, all is well with the legislation going back to the Legislature for 2016.



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LETTERS

Linda Oberhaus, Naples
Executive director,
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children

Celebrating mothers

May is the month that we take time to celebrate mothers.

As I walked to my office this morning, I passed by a hallway with a collection of pretty gift bags lined up along the wall. Filled with a variety of goodies donated by supporters, these bags will be presented to moms in our emergency shelter on Sunday, with hopes of brightening their day and lifting their spirits.

Of the women served by our emergency shelter since 2008, close to half came to us with children. The decision to leave an abuser is never easy and becomes even more difficult when it involves children.

There are as many reasons why someone stays in an abusive relationship as there are victims: love; belief in the batterer's promise to change; fear of losing (or harm to) her children, pets and property; financial constraints; isolation from family and friends, among many others. Most often the question of "Why didn't she just leave?" more aptly turns into "It's a miracle they escaped."

Being a mother is never easy, and for a battered mom, the challenges are daunting. Each day, we are amazed by the strength, courage and perseverance of the women we serve. This is why the shelter exists — to protect victims, to prevent abuse among future generations and to prevail over this social ill.

Don Richmond, Naples

Speech and action

The pro and con articles on World Press Freedom Day (May 3) both fail to identify the crucial difference between speech and action.

According to Ayn Rand, "The line of demarcation between freedom of speech and freedom of action is established by the ban on the initiation of physical force."

The purpose of terms like "political correctness" and "symbolic speech" is to erase that line, effectively legitimizing the initiation of force.

The verbal or written communication of an idea is not the initiation of force. One may ignore the idea, disagree with it or refute it. One may not, in a free society, physically attack the speaker, and it is a proper function of government to prevent or combat such actions. To use force against a speaker is to admit that one has no better ideas with which to refute him. A fist is not an argument.

Libel, slander and fraud are not free speech. These are all indirect initiations of force. Like physical force, their purpose is to prevent one from recognizing the truth and acting accordingly. A proper legal system penalizes libel, slander and fraud.

It is realistic to consider that, un-

Letter of the Day

Ben Ortiz, Naples

Motherhood

Just what is motherhood? At times we take for granted and/or forget that which we should always remember.

A childhood lesson, at best, should carry over into adulthood (with a mother's kiss, a gentle touch all hurt ceases.) A soothing salve is she for suffering and shattered lives. Parental concern is in evidence when gentle hands embrace the soul.

Understanding and caring are but guiding lights, for poised a mother is, always ready to defend, to attack, to strike in order to safeguard that which is dearest, and that for which she would die. What is there to motherhood, to a mother's love?

A protector, defender of inno-

cence is she, a fortress, a harbinger and giver of life from which we sprang. A teacher, chef, chauffeur and healer of wounds are but a few of the many hats she wears. A radiance ever so bright exudes from her essence — a beacon that curbs despair when depression looms.

A mother's smile, a gentle touch, a kind word would melt the coldest heart. Life is not for her. For us does she live. Some from distant and troubled lands did come seeking a better life, a new beginning. An immigrant she is on the threshold of opportunities, and for whom if not for us?

Blessed are those who both mother and father are, for struggles are many and hardships great. Tenderly do they provide, nurture, love. Regardless of who or what we are, and who they are, let us never forget, for great is their love, and ours should be much more.

der certain circumstances, one's legitimate speech might be threatened by force from those who reject reason. However, there is no "right not to be insulted." Such a "right" would necessarily eliminate free speech since no one could ever know in advance what might insult whom.

As Rand has said, "The political function of 'the right of free speech' is to protect dissenters from forcible suppression." If unpopular ideas can be suppressed by force, the way is open to suppress any ideas, and any freedoms.

John McGlue, Naples

Honored vet

I live in Collier County. I was one of three Korean War veterans who had the privilege of being on the Honor Flight of May 2.

I was amazed at the number of people who were at the airport and the greeting we received.

A combat wounded veteran of the Army, 23rd Infantry, 2nd division, I went from the Pusan Perimeter to near the Yalu River and back.

I will remember the trip and reception at the airport forever. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who made this trip possible.

Felix Krock, M.D., Naples

A House divided

State Rep. Kathleen Passidomo, the District 106 Republican who represents coastal Collier County, was taken aback by House Republican leader Steve Crisafulli's abrupt decision to adjourn the 2015 session of the House three days early because of the House-Senate impasse over expanding Medicaid to 800,000 Florida residents who do not have health insurance.

Abraham Lincoln said that "a house divided against itself cannot

stand."

In his first inaugural address in 1861, he hoped that Americans would unite "when again touched, as they surely will be by the better angels of our nature."

Passidomo is acutely aware of the medically underserved in Collier County because of the extraordinary efforts of her parents in delivering health care to the needy through their many years of volunteerism at the Senior Friendship Health Center and elsewhere.

Perhaps Passidomo was appealing to the better angels of Crisafulli's nature.

A guest commentary by R. Wayne Mullican, advisory board member to the Senior Friendship Health Center, documents the more than 4,000 patient visits for medical and dental care at the center last year. More than 60 volunteers bring health care to this drastically underserved group of low-income adults caught in the Medicaid gap.

Texas has the highest number of uninsured in the nation, and Florida is a pitiful second. Perhaps Gov. Rick Scott, who was for Medicaid expansion before he was against it, cannot abide to see Texas beat Florida for the callous indifference award. Hopefully, some legislators in Tallahassee will sprain their ankles leaping over Texas' record. In that case, we will know them by their limp.

Louise Russell, Marco Island

New me

Thank you, NCH-Marco Island Rehab Center.

I'm feeling just great. My problem: getting more blood to the brain. The remedy — good posture. Wow, what a difference!

I was the little old lady all bent over, and with better posture the neck and head discomfort are gone. Thank you, Teresa and Beth, for the new me.