

Editorial Opinion

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Foundation's database helping fight human trafficking



Your Turn
Brenda Tate
Guest columnist

My habitual monitoring of human-trafficking news revealed a story every week or so just a few years ago. Now every day my inbox is loaded with at least three news stories about human-trafficking victims and the vile criminals who prey upon them.

Recently, I learned a Naples girl was sold for sex on the internet by a human trafficker. Don't be shocked — it's true! Websites like Backpage.com have a loophole that makes it legal for their advertisers to post ads selling underage girls for sex on the internet.

That's why I'm shaking my head that Congress, after months of investigation, deliberation, committee hearings and outrage, has failed to amend Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act.

A simple and widely supported amendment to Section 230 will close the loophole that creates a Wild West playing field for human traffickers to make

billions off internet transactions that exploit our most vulnerable citizens — especially children.

We must keep up our grass-roots efforts to encourage Congress to pass the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 (SESTA), Senate Bill 1693, which was introduced in the Senate in August and is co-sponsored by Florida Sens. Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson.

To turn your outrage into action, let your congressional representatives know that you support SESTA.

This type of internet-based human trafficking must stop. We know from the Polaris Project, one of the largest anti-trafficking organizations in the U.S., that "people in the modern anti-trafficking field have struggled to identify and disrupt human-trafficking networks in the United States. This movement to stop modern slavery has confronted many challenges, and one of the most significant has been the absence of data that shows how human trafficking operates."

We learned several years ago that the lack of accurate data and privacy issues represented major obstacles for law enforcement, victim services and legal professionals in quantifying the prob-

lem and securing adequate resources to combat human trafficking. At the request of the U.S. attorney serving this region at the time, the Southwest Florida Women's Foundation responded to the challenge and began exploring options for obtaining and developing accurate, useful data.

After several trials and errors, our foundation developed an innovative human-trafficking data program in cooperation with the Southwest Florida Human Task Force under the leadership of our 20th Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office.

The database includes information about gender, age range, type of trafficking and risk factors. This information will be centralized, analyzed and reported out by the State Attorney's Office. The resulting data will not only deepen our understanding of human trafficking but will reflect trends over time and validate the specific resources needed to bolster the professional efforts of local and statewide agencies.

We will continue to raise public awareness and advocate for policies to help our law enforcement, prosecution and victim support agencies obtain the

tools and resources they need to remain fully equipped to investigate, prosecute and punish human-trafficking crimes, as well as to support human-trafficking survivors once they are safe.

Additionally, the Southwest Florida Women's Foundation will be hosting two events in February. One is geared toward training legal and human-trafficking victim support professionals. The other is a community outreach effort to educate local leaders about the scourge of human trafficking. For further information about these events, contact Charlotte Newell at charlotte@fundwomenfl.org or go to the foundation's website, www.fundwomenfl.org/cc-events.

Armed with accurate data and sustained with ample resources, dedicated professionals of the Southwest Florida Human Trafficking Task Force will be better equipped to dismantle those criminal networks which ensnare farmworkers in labor trafficking and trap innocent children in sex trafficking. Now is the time to turn our outrage into action!

Tate is founder and CEO of the Southwest Florida Women's Foundation.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Friday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2018. There are 346 days left in the year.

On this date in:

1861: Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

1915: Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

1937: Howard Hughes set a transcontinental air record by flying his monoplane from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actress **Tippi Hedren** is 88. Actor-singer **Michael Crawford** is 76. Actress **Shelley Fabares** is 74. Country singer **Dolly Parton** is 72. TV chef **Paula Deen** is 71. Singer **Martha Davis** is 67. Actor **Desi Arnaz Jr.** is 65. Actress **Katey Sagal** is 64. Comedian **Paul Rodriguez** is 63. Actor **Shawn Wayans** is 47. Comedian **Frank Caliendo** is 44.

TODAY'S QUOTE

"From childhood's hour I have not been / As others were — I have not seen / As others saw — I could not bring / My passions from a common spring — / From the same source I have not taken / My sorrow — I could not awaken / My heart to joy at the same tone — / And all I lov'd — I lov'd alone." — Edgar Allan Poe, "Alone"

BIBLE QUOTE

For this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. — Nehemiah 8:10

LETTERS

Legislation bad for women

In a recent article, the CEO of Community Pregnancy Clinics stated that they are 100 percent privately funded. Really? So why is the Florida Legislature considering House Bill 41, Pregnancy Support and Wellness Services? Which so-called "clinics" will benefit from this legislation?

There should not be 1 cent of taxpayer money dedicated to any group that operates by deception; does not provide women with all options; has religious motives, and whose sole reason for existing is to deny women the right to choose.

Call 1-844-899-9394 and tell your legislator this bill is bad for women.

Lee Vinciguerra, Naples

Read entire report

In her Jan. 3 letter, Cathy Lopez (an obvious Trump News watcher) attempts to take the media to task for its negative reporting of President Donald Trump and cites a Harvard report to verify her claims of unjust negativity by the press.

This Harvard report was conducted by the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy and covered the reporting on Trump's first 100 days. It did rate the negativity of the reporting and Lopez has most of the numbers accurate, but The Wall Street Journal was 70 percent negative and Fox was over

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50 percent, and most foreign papers, including the Financial Times, were higher in negativity of Trump than the American papers.

What was left out of Lopez's letter was the insight of the authors of the study which was this: The Harvard study had plenty of criticism for Trump. "Never in the nation's history," the authors wrote, "has the country had a president with so little fidelity to the facts, so little appreciation for the dignity of the presidential office, and so little understanding of the underpinnings of democracy."

Considering the above statement, you can imagine why Trump would get negative press coverage. Extremist commentators on Trump TV have mentioned the report often, but not the reason for the negative press, nor

do they mention that the negative reporting was based on 80 percent Republican input, 6 percent Democratic and 3 percent anti-Trump. The report contained nothing about false reporting.

This letter appears to be the same negative and deceptive type of journalism that the writer complained about. The Harvard report is excellent and should be read in its entirety.

Mary Rogan, Naples

Name-calling not working

Liberal Democrats, absent anything substantive to offer to make our country better, have once again reverted to their predictable actions. These include foul-mouthed rants directed at President Donald Trump, blatant deception about his programs and initiatives and repeated efforts (with the help of mainstream media) to demean his character and intellect.

None of this should come as a surprise. This is what the Democratic Party has become — a perverted, mean collection of people driven by constant anger, envy and a misplaced sense of entitlement and victimization. They have made name-calling, character assassination, hypocrisy and innuendo an art.

I don't think any of this will change; it is likely to get worse. And it is not working.

Gary Tincu, Naples

Al Capone lives in Democratic Party tactics



Cal Thomas
Columnist

"You can get a lot farther with a smile and a gun than you can with just a smile."

This quote has often been attributed to the late Chicago mobster Al Capone, who with his fellow organized crime buddies used extortion as one of their tactics to get what they wanted. Today's modern congressional Democrats have clearly benefited from Capone's example.

As has occurred many times before, congressional Democrats are threatening a government shutdown on Friday, if President Donald Trump and Republicans don't cave on DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, an American immigration policy that allows eligible immigrant youth, who entered the country as minors, protection from deportation and a work permit, which is valid for two years and subject to re-approval.

As you might expect, familiar lines are being used in print and broadcast media. "The government will run out of money," they say. No, it won't. The government never runs out of money. The government can't control its spending habit and that is where the real problem lies.

Once again, Democrats see an opportuni-

ty to damage the president and the Republican brand through fear and intimidation, tactics effectively used by Capone and his gang. Their media accomplices will visit familiar places to demonstrate the "harm" caused by closing the government and they will round up the usual suspects. Expect to see crying mothers with small babies complaining about whatever they want to complain about, closed parks and stories about how only "essential" government employees must report to work. Now there's a way to shrink the size and cost of government: keep the essentials and let go of the nonessentials.

It will likely not be noted by the media that anyone who is denied a paycheck during the "shutdown" will get it all back.

Republicans have always had a terrible defense against political extortion. Instead of standing and fighting for principles (when did that last happen?) they run like cowards in warfare, afraid of the battle.

Maybe this time will be different. Maybe. One hopes the strategy has been developed and is ready to implement.

One option would be a televised address by the president, who should be joined by House Speaker Paul Ryan. They might appeal to the nation's past when personal debt was a stain on one's character and national debt was a stain on the country. They might remind people of their ancestors, many of whom believed doing for one's self was to be

preferred over dependence on government, unless one was truly needy, through no fault of their own. If the narrative is to be changed, the public's thinking must change first.

The government must not be seen as our keeper. The recent tax cut should be used to encourage Americans to invest and save for their future and to build wealth that will allow them to take care of themselves. Wealth, or at least the wealthy, is regarded as evil, while spending — even deficit spending — is thought of as good. How did that transformation occur?

We've gone from the days of our 30th president, Calvin Coolidge, whose wisdom remains for anyone wishing to considerate it, to the notion that everything government does is good, noble and righteous and the individual is to be the servant of the state.

Coolidge said "no" to new spending and to government programs that did not directly serve the people and would not undermine personal initiative. Like Trump, he cut taxes significantly and left office with a surplus.

If the government "shuts down" on Friday, it will be not only the Democrats' fault. Republicans must also share part of the blame for their past failures to inform the public about the dangers posed by big government and big spending, not only financially, but in robbing the nation and its people of their character.

— Tribune Content Agency