

# Editorial Opinion

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## Human trafficking can happen to anyone, anywhere



**Your Turn**  
Linda Oberhaus  
Guest columnist

Having worked with victims of domestic violence and human trafficking for the past 23 years, it is rare that a case surprises me, but a recent news report out of Texas did raise an eyebrow this week.

On Jan. 2, an eighth-grade public school reading teacher was arrested for attempting to sell a female minor to multiple men in Morocco. According to reports, she had been under surveillance by authorities and was arrested and charged with trafficking when she tried to take the girl to Morocco.

The case certainly underscores the fact that there is no clear description of a trafficker and trafficking can happen to anyone, anywhere.

During January's National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, The Shelter for Abused Women & Children strives to raise public awareness of this crime against humanity. As you read this, human trafficking is the fastest-growing

and third-largest organized criminal activity in the world, just behind the drug and arms trades. Florida ranks third in the nation for calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Collier County is not exempt. In the last two years, The Shelter for Abused Women & Children has served 16 victims of sex trafficking.

A common myth regarding human trafficking is that victims are brought in from other countries. However, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, in 2018, over half of the victims identified were U.S. citizens.

Another myth is that trafficking always involves violence and physical bondage. U.S. law defines human trafficking as the use of force, fraud or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or service against his or her will. If the victim is a minor, it is always considered human trafficking regardless of the presence of force, fraud or coercion.

While we all agree that traffickers must be brought to justice, it is equally important that we hold the "consumers," those who purchase people for sex, accountable. These perpetrators are creat-

### Guest commentaries

A guest commentary can be 600 words or less on a topical subject. Authors must have considerable experience, public involvement or expertise in the subject matter. Due to the large number of guest commentaries we receive, these may be returned to the author with a recommendation to resubmit it as a letter to the editor within the guidelines for letters. Submit to [letters@naplesnews.com](mailto:letters@naplesnews.com).

ing the demand for the exploitation of women and children, oftentimes deluding themselves that the victim is somehow a willing participant.

Currently, in the state of Florida, the charge for a first-time offense of soliciting sex is a first-degree misdemeanor. That means the crime of buying a human being has the same criminal onus as the theft of a \$100 watch.

Despite the inequity of criminal charges, there has been some legislative progress regarding fines. In 2012, Florida passed the Safe Harbor Act, increasing the cost of the fine for soliciting sex from \$500 to \$5,000, with the funds to be

used to create safe houses for juvenile victims.

Headway in the fight against trafficking can only be accomplished through education, intervention and availability of long-term recovery services. The shelter is committed to providing these services through our newest facility, the Shelly Stayer Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking & Domestic Violence, a 32-bed, 21,000-square-foot facility to be located on 5.6 acres in Immokalee. This new shelter will feature a wing specifically designed to meet the needs of human trafficking victims, as well as a separate wing for survivors of domestic violence.

Human beings are not a commodity. If you agree and want more information on the signs of human trafficking and how you can become part of the solution, go to [naplesshelter.org](http://naplesshelter.org).

If you know or suspect that someone is a victim of human trafficking or domestic violence, call The Shelter for Abused Women & Children's 24-hour crisis hotline at 239-775-1101 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711).

*Oberhaus is CEO of The Shelter for Abused Women & Children.*

### TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Jan. 13, the 13th day of 2019. There are 352 days left in the year.

On this date in:

**1941:** A new law went into effect granting Puerto Ricans U.S. birthright citizenship.

**1982:** An Air Florida 737 crashed into Washington, D.C.'s 14th Street Bridge and fell into the Potomac River while trying to take off during a snowstorm, killing a total of 78 people; four passengers and a flight attendant survived.

**1990:** L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the nation's first elected black governor as he took the oath of office in Richmond.

### TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actress **Frances Sternhagen** is 89. Comedian **Rip Taylor** is 85. Actor **Billy Gray** is 81. Actor **Richard Moll** is 76. Actress **Julia Louis-Dreyfus** is 58. Country singer **Trace Adkins** is 57. Actor **Patrick Dempsey** is 53. Actor **Orlando Bloom** is 42. Actor **Liam Hemsworth** is 29.

### TODAY'S QUOTE

"If you don't love it, you can't suffer through all the despair that comes with it. Keep doing it because you love it."  
— Robert Stack

### BIBLE QUOTE

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. — Romans 15:13

### LETTERS

#### Unacceptable behavior in comic strips

Let's digress and get away from political and hospital policy letters for a moment and talk about comic strips.

Did you ever wonder why Dagwood and Alexander have black holes in their heads for eyes, while Blondie and Cookie have normal-looking human eyes? Odd family.

Is it time to remove "Beetle Bailey" from the comics? Sarge has been bullying and assaulting poor Beetle for decades and getting away with it. Little wonder Beetle lacks motivation and is still a private. Sarge's conduct should not be glamorized in a comic strip.

Lucy has been calling Snoopy a "stupid

#### Letters policy

Letters can be 275 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity or taste, to eliminate personal attacks and to prevent libel. Letters may be edited for accuracy, rejected or returned to the writer to resubmit a new letter. The source of a statistic should be attributed within the letter. No poetry, letter-writing campaigns, or airing of a personal grievance against a business. Submissions cannot be handwritten. Publication presently is limited to one per person within a month. City of residence and a contact phone number are required. By email: Use the form at [naplesnews.com](http://naplesnews.com) to receive confirmation of receipt or send to [letters@naplesnews.com](mailto:letters@naplesnews.com).

Beagle" for years. Is this the kind of name-calling we want our children to read? Has the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals protested such language directed toward man's best friend?

"Hagar the Horrible" makes a living by stealing from others and destroying their

property. This is not acceptable conduct in a civilized society; it sends a message that crime does pay.

Hopefully, the Naples Daily News will cancel these strips because of their inherent negativity.

*Ron Townsend, Naples*

## Democrats were for a wall before opposing one



**Marc A. Thiessen**  
Columnist

WASHINGTON — Barring some miraculous breakthrough, the current government shutdown is the longest in American history. But it has already hit another historic milestone: It is, by far and away, the stupidest government shutdown in American history.

In 2019, the federal government will spend a whopping \$4.4 trillion. Yet Congress and the president are shutting down the government in a dispute between the \$1.3 billion the Democrats have approved for border security and the \$5.7 billion the president is demanding — precisely 0.0998 percent of the total federal budget. In Washington, that is considered a rounding error.

Worse, Democrats are doing it over a border wall strikingly similar to one that they almost unanimously supported just five years ago. While House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., now says that "a wall is an immorality," back in 2013, she supported a bill that required the construction of 700 miles of border fencing. (Trump has called for a wall of "anywhere from 700 to 900 miles" long.)

The bill negotiated by the Gang of Eight, which included current Democratic leaders Sens. Charles Schumer, N.Y., and Dick Durbin, Ill., declared that "not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary (of Homeland Security) shall establish ... the 'Southern Border Fencing Strategy,' to identify where 700 miles of fencing (including double-layer fencing) ... should be deployed along the Southern border."

That's not all. The bill further said that "the Secretary may not adjust the status of aliens who have been granted registered provisional immigrant status ... until 6



**Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer walk on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Wednesday. AP**

months after ... (the Secretary submits) a written certification that ... there is in place along the Southern Border no fewer than 700 miles of pedestrian fencing." In other words, Democrats agreed that no illegal immigrants could get a path to citizenship until all 700 miles of border fencing had been fully completed.

Every Senate Democrat voted for the Gang of Eight bill — including 36 Democratic senators still serving today. President Barack Obama agreed to sign it. Indeed, he praised the bill for including what he called "the most aggressive border security plan in our history" and said that "the Senate bill is consistent with the key principles for common-sense reform that I — and many others — have repeatedly laid out." That bears repeating: Obama said building a 700-mile fence on the southern border was consistent with the principles of the Democratic Party.

Pelosi supported the Gang of Eight bill, saying at the time that "every piece of this

legislation has had bipartisan support." But now we are shutting down the government over a wall much like the one that Pelosi and Senate Democrats fully supported just five years ago?

Democrats will object that the Gang of Eight bill did fund a border wall, but it was in exchange for a lot of concessions. Of course it was. As Obama said at the time, "the bipartisan bill that passed today was a compromise." But today, Democrats are refusing to compromise or lay out what concessions they would accept in exchange for wall funding. When Trump rhetorically backed off the wall and talked about "steel slats" — a fence — Democrats ignored it. When Vice President Mike Pence reportedly offered a deal for \$2.5 billion, Democrats dismissed it. In a White House meeting Wednesday, Trump asked Pelosi whether, if he agreed to end the shutdown and negotiate separately on border security, she would support wall funding. She said no.

That is ridiculous.

In their response to the president's address to the nation, Schumer and Pelosi accused Trump of "manufacturing a crisis." That is simply untrue. As The Washington Post reported this week, the United States now faces "a bona fide emergency on the border" as "record numbers of migrant families are streaming into the United States, overwhelming border agents and leaving holding cells dangerously overcrowded with children, many of whom are falling sick."

Democrats could not possibly be in a better position to demand concessions from Trump if they had manufactured a crisis. So put some demands on the table, for crying out loud. If Democrats think they have Trump cornered, then squeeze him and try get a lot out of him. But don't refuse to negotiate and tell us the wall is an "immorality" — because their voting history shows they don't believe that.

— *Washington Post Writers Group*