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OUR VIEW: POLICE VIOLENCE

Heightened, urgent responses necessary

A second tragic police killing in a year should make police reform even more urgent. It also demands more direct action by officials who can make changes to police personnel and policy without the courts or the Legislature.

We saw municipal governments, directed by elected officials, react quickly to the deaths of George Floyd and now Daunte Wright at the hands of police officers. Officers involved in the deaths were fired or resigned because they would be fired shortly after the incident.

Why it matters:

A prolonged court case can't solve institutional racism and predisposition to gun use in police departments.

That's as it should be. Both incidents were captured on camera and leave little doubt that the officers were at fault. They were at fault for the death of other human beings. While our messy legal system calls for a long drawn-out process to adhere to the doctrine of "innocent before proven guilty", other actions can be taken without judge and jury.

Municipalities can fire officers. The Peace Officer Standards and Training Board can remove or suspend licenses so the officers can never practice again. In Brooklyn Center, the City Council fired the city manager after the shooting and immediately gave power over the police department to the mayor.

Brooklyn Center Mayor Mike Elliott said Tuesday he didn't know if officer Kim Potter and Police Chief Tim Gannon resigned to avoid being fired. The mayor did not ask for their resignations. But he just as well could have and should have.

The mayor also said he had not "accepted" the resignations. But he should.

The Floyd and Wright cases were horrific incidents of incompetent police work that is all too often backed by a system that allows use of force for minor offenses.

We shouldn't divert our attention from that bigger systemic problem of racism that allows maximum punishment for minimum crimes. Every municipality in the state can set a standard that officers will not use weapons in misdemeanor crimes unless it's clear their life is in danger.

Courtroom standards, like innocent before proven guilty or due process, are not needed to run competent, fair and just police departments. That can come about through leadership, integrity and changing of the guard.

Let's remember, when defense lawyers and other supporters of accused officers call for "due process," that is something George Floyd and Daunte Wright never received.

OTHER VIEW

Climate change in Florida threatens national security

By Norm Seip
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Florida is home to three combatant commands and over 20 bases, representing each branch of the military. Florida's geography and location provide a unique and valuable training ground for our forces and are ideally suited for supporting our country's military and national security operations.

Unfortunately, the benefits to national security provided by its geography are being countered by ever increasing climate change threats, such as worsening storms and hurricanes.

In 2019, Congress commissioned a Department of Defense report of the bases most threatened by climate change, and eight Florida bases made the list. The climate threats cited in the report included sea level rise and recurrent flooding, hurricanes and extreme

weather, as well as extreme heat and drought.

But the military didn't need a report to tell them climate change threatens national security. In 2014, torrential rains caused historic flooding, which disrupted operations at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field.

In 2018, Hurricane Michael severely damaged 95% of the infrastructure at Tyndall Air Force Base, which disrupted critical training and maintenance for almost a month. It cost roughly \$2 billion to repair 17 of 55 F-22s housed at Tyndall, and experts expect it will take years to rebuild the base, at a cost of over \$3 billion.

In part due to the damage, the Air Force had to consider grounding combat aircraft and cutting the flying hours for non-deploying squadrons.

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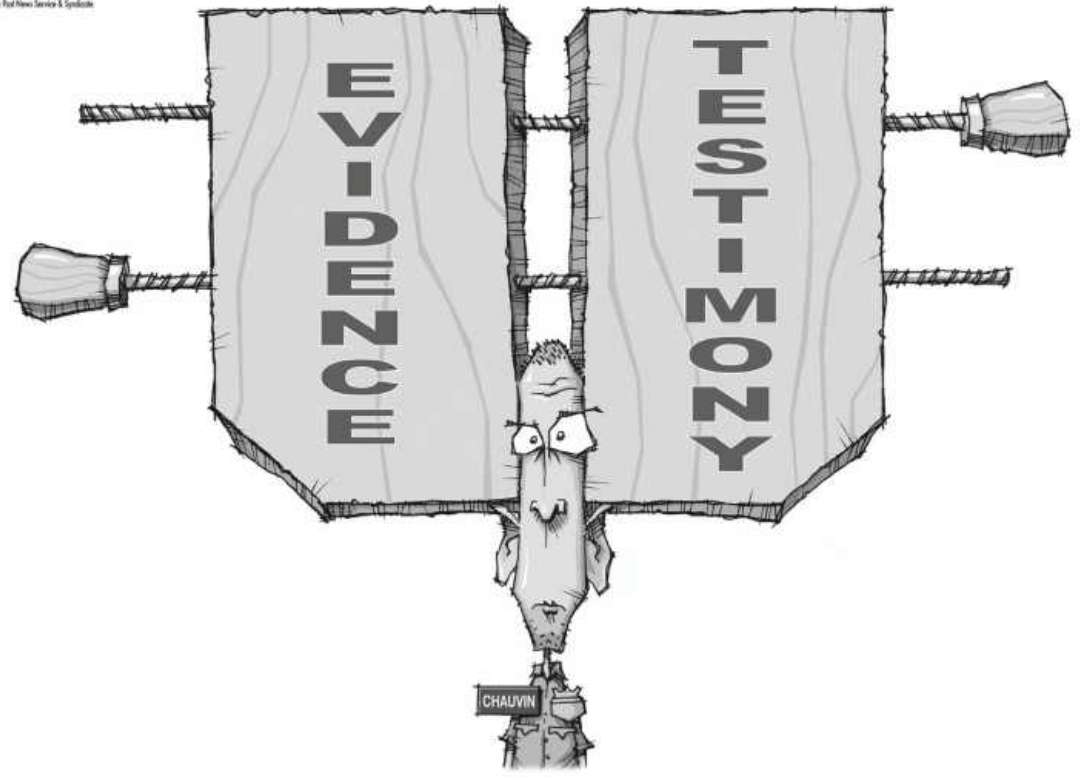
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Tim Campbell
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APPROPRIATE FORCE

Florida and the future of the GOP

You know all those "Florida Man" stories? "Florida man arrested for throwing alligator through drive-thru window," "Florida man learns the hard way he stole laxatives, not opioids," etc.?

There are several theories for why Florida men stand out so much, starting with Florida is just weird. The most interesting involves the "streetlight effect," a logical fallacy inspired by the old joke about the drunk who looks for his lost car keys only under a streetlight because that's where the light is good — something you could definitely see Florida Man doing.

The Sunshine State has robust "sunshine laws," making it easy to get arrest information quickly. Hence, according to this theory, Florida Man is no more outlandish than, say, California Man; it's just that we can see Florida man under the media's streetlight.

Interesting theory. Let's test it out. Three Florida men — former President Donald Trump, Rep. Matt Gaetz and Gov. Ron DeSantis — define the Republican Party these days. Trump, a recently minted Floridian, surely deserves outsized attention as much as he craves it. He and his enablers are determined to keep the GOP in his thrall. Just over the weekend, Trump told a group of donors at Mar-a-Lago that Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell was a "dumb son of a b---" and repeated his bogus claims about the election being stolen.

Gaetz, a leading Trump toady, is in the crosshairs of the FBI and a House ethics investigation for the alleged sex trafficking of a minor. That feels very homo floridus. That's two for

the Florida-is-weird column.

Then there's DeSantis. He has also played the role of Trump superfan and is adept at arousing media anger — a job requirement on the right these days. But unlike Gaetz (and, frankly, Trump), DeSantis actually knows how to govern effectively.

Politically, the key difference between DeSantis and Gaetz is that Gaetz garners media attention by making an ass of himself, while DeSantis makes the media look asinine when it tries to make him out to be nothing more than a Trump wannabe.

The fact is, DeSantis did better with the public than Trump during the worst times of the COVID-19 pandemic and handled the pandemic better than many Democratic governors. Before the pandemic, his governing agenda earned him a 62 percent approval rating. In this case, his critics won't gain much traction by tarring him as another Florida weirdo. In fact, outlandishly unfair attacks, like CBS's recent "60 Minutes" report on DeSantis, are likely to gain him more support.

Some conservative pundits are already focusing on DeSantis as the face of the post-Trump right. But it's early yet. Just ask former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, once hailed as a fighter who'd save the GOP.

The comparison with Wisconsin is instructive. For years, the Badger State punched well above its weight nationally, with Walker, former House Speaker Paul Ryan and former Republican National Committee Chair Reince Priebus dominating the GOP. Now it's Florida's turn.

Trump explains some of that. The yearly Conservative Political



JONAH GOLDBERG
Tribune Media Service

Unionizing Amazon won't be easy

WASHINGTON — In the end, it wasn't even close. By late Friday morning, even with roughly a thousand ballots outstanding, so many workers at an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, had voted against joining the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union that the "No" tally now represented more than half of all ballots cast.

As journalist and former labor movement strategist Rich Yeselson tartly suggested, unions shouldn't hold elections they're likely to lose this badly. Too, a newly opened warehouse in Alabama might not be the place to start a drive to unionize a national company.

But whatever your opinion about this election — or unions more generally — this likely won't be the last big and closely watched campaign to unionize an Amazon facility.

For unions, the company represents something they haven't had since the early 20th century: a private-sector target with the kind of scope, and profit margins, to claim some real value for the workers.

The lack of such targets has been a significant reason the union share of the workforce has been in steady decline since it peaked in the mid-1950s, at around 35%. The left tends to blame Ronald Reagan, but by the time he famously broke the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, union membership had already declined to around 20% of the workforce. Nor can Reagan alone explain why unionization rates have declined almost everywhere in the

world since 1990.

What has changed almost everywhere simultaneously is that manufacturing is a smaller share of employment in developed countries. In 1950, 3 out of every 10 American jobs were in manufacturing. In 2020, fewer than 1 in 12 jobs were. And compared with the labor-intensive industries that replaced them, manufacturing is fantastically productive.

Consider two giants: Walmart and General Motors. In 2020, General Motors generated about \$790,000 in sales, and \$41,500 in profit, for each of its 155,000 employees. Walmart had more than four times the annual revenue of General Motors, but needed almost 15 times as many employees to do so. Sales per employee were only \$240,000, and the company's profit margin on those sales is also lower, so net income per employee was actually around \$6,750.

That's not nothing, of course! But realistically, a union can't claim 100% of profits for workers, which creates a conundrum for would-be organizers. When net income per employee is that low, it's harder for unions to improve worker compensation net of the dues needed to pay for the union — especially since a retailer whose employees are flung out across thousands of locations is likely to be more expensive for the union to organize, and represent, than even huge manufacturers with dozens of plants.

Unfortunately for American union

Action Conference is essentially an arm of Trump Inc. now. Republican politicians are required to decamp for Mar-a-Lago to ask for favor or forgiveness from Trump. Trump even holds auditions for his endorsement.

But handicappers shouldn't just focus on the political Florida Man stories. The GOP's path out of the wilderness may be a long one, but it will start in Florida. Republicans can't win the Electoral College without the state. Moreover, Florida is one of America's most demographically representative battleground states. Wisconsin's hegemony brought one set of issues — Ryan's fixation on entitlements, for example — to the fore, while Florida's ascendancy could further push up issues such as school choice on the Republican agenda.

Also, not only does Florida regularly produce Republican politicians who know how to appeal to a diverse electorate, it has a diverse electorate that is open to electing Republicans.

For years, Democrats took the slogan "demography is destiny" too seriously, believing that a growing electorate of nonwhite voters would guarantee victory. Florida defies those lazy assumptions.

In 2018, running against Andrew Gillum, the African American mayor of Tallahassee, DeSantis got 44 percent of the Latino vote and 30 percent of the nonwhite vote. And Trump himself improved with Latino voters in 2020.

So, score two out of three for Florida men bringing some special weirdness to the table. Still, it remains to be seen whether DeSantis can ultimately get out of Trump's shadow and into the light, or whether the Florida Man-in-Chief will even let him.

organizers, U.S. manufacturing has increasingly been automated or outsourced, and what remains is facing fierce competition from companies abroad. Companies can't just jack up prices to compensate for higher labor costs, as their mid-century predecessors could. That's why unionization is increasingly concentrated in government jobs, which face limited competitive pressure, and which can be centrally organized.

But while unions want to organize Amazon, they face a steep climb. More than half the company's operating income comes from Amazon Web Services. That money can't simply be transferred to the warehouse workers, since business lines being subsidized by more profitable products are vulnerable to cuts.

Yet take the AWS profits away, and Amazon looks a lot closer to Walmart than GM in organizing potential, even if you assume the company could raise prices a bit — and raising prices would be complicated by the fact that an estimated 60% of sales come from the site's third-party sellers.

But an equally daunting problem might be the country that GM made. Before mass automobile ownership, workers tended to cluster conveniently close together. Today's workers might come by car from an hour away and aren't so easy to reach.

Those are structural disadvantages the union is apt to face at whichever Amazon facility it targets. So while the name of the town might be different in future organizing drives, the result might be much the same.