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Editorial

Retirees may be the group that saves the West from itself

The great Western writer and thinker Wallace Stegner once envisioned "A West both prosperous and environmentally healthy, with a civilization to match its scenery." Can we usher in such an inviting albeit elusive epoch?

A new study released this week by the Sonoran Institute, playfully titled "You've Come a Long Way, Cowboy: 10 Truths and Trends in the New American West," provides a kind of early-century update on our progress toward balancing our use of this arid, wondrous land with the never-ending migrations that have peopled it with hopefuls since the end of the Civil War. (SEE RELATED STORY PAGE A1).

Anyone who cares about where we are going and where we have been in

the West would do well to read the study at <http://www.sonoran.org/cowboy/>.

We found the study's findings on the role of retirees in the New West particularly illuminating considering the unique demographics of Green Valley and the wider Santa Cruz Valley.

The economy of the West, in concert with the nation at large, is now largely service-based and will remain so for the foreseeable future. This usually translates into low wages, and it is an old lament. As the report contends "...plenty of Westerners are working hard but not being paid well for their efforts...the population in counties with a majority of jobs that do not require a college degree grows faster than those that do. But their earnings per job, per capita in-

come, and overall personal income growth are not keeping pace."

This trend, so familiar, doesn't give much hope to young Westerners entering the work force without at least a bachelor's degree in hand.

However, for the region's growing legions of retirees—now expanding like some unstoppable sponge made of baby boomers—the West appears to be as inviting as ever.

So-called non-labor income is now the second largest source of income, after service, throughout the West, the study says. Non-labor income includes dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments (i.e., retirement benefits, health care and disability-insurance payments, government payments, etc.).

This is not a negative development. "Non-labor income can help diversify a local economy and is generally less vulnerable to local fluctuations in business cycles," the study says.

"For many communities, non-labor income is the only sizable source of income keeping a place alive; in others, non-labor sources of income have boosted per capita income well above average earnings per job."

This is certainly true locally, in a largely retirement-age community where non-labor income far outstrips the service sector.

While some might say that heavy reliance on non-labor income will inevitably create a sterile economic reality short on the kind of dynamic development that made the West

such a magnet for Easterners after World War II, we believe otherwise.

That's because every day we talk to and report on the lives of retirees, and from that we know how dynamic, how socially aware, and how energetic they can be. Because they have the time, the wisdom, and the perspective—owing in large part to their non-labor incomes—to become engaged in their communities on a level that younger workers could never hope to match, we think retirees, especially those younger, healthy, ambitious and unconventional baby boomers now on the rise, just might be the population to save Western society from itself and take us into a future that hopefully, someday, will approach Stegner's ideal.

Letters to the Editor

Prop. 106 - Yes, 105 - No

Editor:

The "Committee to Save the West Desert Preserve" supports the efforts to encourage a "yes" vote for Proposition 106 and "no" for the competing Proposition 105.

The West Desert Preserve, a 2,000-acre parcel of state land west of Green Valley, was not on the radar when Proposition 106 was prepared, so it is not included in the state land specifically identified for conservation.

However, if 106 passes, it will reform the Arizona State Land Department, requiring it to recognize local community land use plans like Green Valley's West Desert Preserve.

It will also allow local communities to negotiate purchase of open space land without open auction. Thus, Pima County could then purchase the West Desert Preserve and protect it for open space recreation.

Current state land regulations require all State Trust Land to be sold at open auction, which usually results in rampant development and loss of open space.

Supporters of both propositions make convincing arguments when comparing Proposition 106 to Proposition 105. But who do you trust?

Follow the money and look who is supporting each of these two propositions. Both are supported by various education organizations.

Proposition 106 advocates say their reforms will actually allow the State Land Office to be more efficient and flexible to sell land and provide more revenue for schools rather than holding the land until it is more attractive for development.

Many conservation organizations support Proposition 106. Proposition 105 is supported by development interests. You decide which side has your best interests in mind.

Proposition 106 is a win-win for continuing to support schools and also protecting our open space treasures needed to maintain our high quality of life here in Arizona.

Bill Adamson, Chair

Committee to Save the West Desert Preserve

Purpose served

Editor:

John Fanning's letter titled "Not so convenient truth," encouraging readers not to jump to conclusions regarding global warming based solely on Al Gore's movie, has served its purpose wonderfully.

Since its printing, there have been an additional four or five letters regarding the subject

and none, correctly, disputed global warming as a fact but debate over human's participation in it varied significantly.

It seems that for every notable scientist quoted on one side of the argument, there is another with an opposite opinion, so this debate will probably continue for years.

It appears overwhelmingly that people are aware of the controversy and opinions fall almost equally on both sides of the issue, making interesting conversations.

While some offer a gloom and doom prospect for the future, others chuckle at the absurdity of it. Since this is one of these "politically correct" subjects, it will certainly attract Hollywood activists and politicians seeking a stage so this issue will be in the news until the public tires of it.

An interesting aspect when reviewing the letters is that not a single insightful person suggested that we base our conclusions on what politicians espouse.

That, as I recall, was Mr. Fanning's suggestion.

Thanks to the *Green Valley News*, we have a wonderful forum in which to participate in the arena of ideas.

Gary Meinert
Green Valley

Disgusting nonsense

Editor:

It's disgusting when I read about certain celebrities and politicians committing repulsive behavior and then, when caught, they try to weasel out of the situation by offering some ridiculous excuses.

I'm thinking of Patrick Kennedy, Mel Gibson and Rep. Mark Foley, the most recent incidents. Instead of just apologizing and saying "I'm sorry," their answer is "I'm an alcoholic and I'll be entering an alcoholic rehab."

Rep. Mark Foley was the worst; he not only used the alcoholic excuse, but announced to the world that he was gay and he was molested by a priest when he was a young teen-ager, such nonsense! These people should spend time in jail.

Rick Rogers
Green Valley

Graf and Kolbe

Editor:

Randy Graf has completed the first test in becoming our representative to replace Congressman Kolbe. I believe he would have beat Kolbe if he chose to run. The people were fed up with his

same stale ideas. He did nothing to handle our border problem and allowed Arizona and other states to be overrun with illegal aliens.

Congressman Kolbe is now showing his true colors by refusing to support Randy Graf. Randy has made a remarkable record by winning the primary with all the money supporting the other candidates. This was accomplished with Republicans, Democrats and Independents.

I see Randy's opponent Gifford as nothing more than a puppet owned and operated by the big political bosses in Washington and Arizona.

They say she is leading in the polls. I don't believe it and even if she is, we can get out the vote and elect Randy Graf by joining together with our friends who are independent thinkers and refuse to have our vote dictated by the political bosses. We can prevent another Kolbe from representing us by electing Randy Graf.

Jim Burt
Green Valley

No virtues

Editor:

I frequently see letters denigrating the administration, and members of Congress, but never see any letters extolling their virtues. The reason, I believe, is obvious, they have no virtues. This person has found no candidate for election, nor re-election worthy of my vote. I hope I have a lot of company.

Charles Davis
Green Valley

Infamy and shame

Editor:

What a day of infamy and shame in Congress hacking a limb off our Constitution. The Declaration of Independence says: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." - It doesn't say only U.S. citizens, nor does it say only good people - it says "all" men.

I talked with Jeff Chemine, Democratic candidate for the Arizona state Senate. His concern is that since the president can now designate anyone he wants to as a terrorist, and doesn't even have to prove it, he can lock up anyone.

Who will be so designated? Immigrants, gays and lesbians, anyone, like me who disagrees with him and sends out messages that

one reader of a newspaper has already labeled "seditions?" No one will be safe. Even Democrats have been labeled aiders of terrorists.

I have read that plans are already drawn up to establish civilian detention camps in our country. Will I disappear, and go into another period of internment, as I did in the Philippines during World War II, against which I will have no right to appeal to any court, see evidence against me, or even have a trial?

We are not just in danger of losing our democracy. We have lost it. You may be the next designated terrorist or terrorist assister.

A friend jokingly said she would bring me food packages. If she did, I said, she too could be designated as supporting terrorism by aiding me.

We should all send financial support to the ACLU. They will need it to appeal this.

June Wortman
Green Valley

Guest worker program

Editor:

Now that legislation providing for "The Wall" has been passed and signed into law, let's discuss a "Guest Worker" program. I suggest such a program include the following:

1. A State Labor Supervisor to administer in the field the details of the program.
2. A Labor Supervisor from Mexico to protect the rights of the guest workers.
3. A provision limiting the guest workers to adult males.
4. Guest workers sign a contract for one year, return home, and may apply for the program again.
5. Guest workers will be permitted to send monies to Mexico intermittently.
6. Housing would be provided by the employer or by the state.
7. Wages (hourly rate) would be set at the federal or state minimum wage (whichever is higher). Incentive (piece) rates could result in higher income.

Note: A Guest Worker program created by an agreement between Roosevelt and Churchill (which included the above-noted provisions) operated successfully up and down the East Coast during and following World War II. For a brief period, I was the Labor Supervisor for the Guest Worker program for the state of Connecticut.

Dick MacNabb
Green Valley