

Tampa Bay Times

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Letters to the Editor

Double dipping should have Florida taxpayers up in arms

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Double dipping: Ire, but higher | Dec. 28, story

Florida's taxpayers should rebel

This article should raise the ire of all taxpayers in Florida, especially at this time of economic recession and increasing unemployment rates. With looming budget deficits, there is a high likelihood that Florida government at all levels will be forced to raise taxes, cut services or not reduce property taxes in the face of falling home values as it should.

The fact that double-dipping has only increased since the issue first came to the public's attention is of particular concern. It shows an insensitivity on the part of those who know how "to make hay while the sun shines" to the plight of taxpayers who are being squeezed by the rising cost of living and decreasing income due to the recession.

It may well be that nothing will get done when the Legislature meets in January to remedy the consequence of the law that created the double- or triple-dipping system. While it is legal in the sense that it came into effect after "the lawmakers wrote the loophole into law in 2001 to help a fellow legislator," it goes against a sense of justice and the responsibility of the Legislature, which is entrusted with passing laws in the interest of the majority of the citizens and not to benefit just government employees.

It is time for the ordinary citizen to forcibly protest and rebel against this government policy.

An ombudsman who ensures that such a practice is allowed only where it is impossible to find suitable individuals to fill the position to which the "retiree" returns must evaluate every case of double-dipping and triple-dipping.

V. Abraham Kurien, *New Port Richey*

Double dipping: Ire, but higher | Dec. 28, story

Plug this leak in state money

As a former candidate for Pasco County commissioner, one of my biggest concerns was the double- dipping and triple-dipping going on in Florida. Currently, it is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars a year, with the potential to increase rapidly to much more — all due to a loophole in the law that cannot seem to be closed.

An attempt to close this loophole by Sen. Mike Fasano and others, during the last legislative session, saw it sent to committee where it died.

Why? Could it be many of our legislators are more concerned for their own pocketbooks than for their constituents? I would like to know who was on the "committee" and how many of them were, or are going to be double- or triple-dippers.

We elect our officials thinking they are going to have our best interests at heart, but greed has taken over this great country, and something has to be done. Right now, this leak in our state finances has to be plugged, either voluntarily by those who made it law, or possibly by a referendum of the people.

Wil Nickerson, *Holiday*

Economic stimulus

Replace legislators

Apparently everyone in Florida "gets it" except the politicians. Our elected officials from every level are a joke. Their idea of work-generating, green projects are dog parks and street lights.

We need light rail. We need more park-and-ride facilities. We need buildings demolished and affordable housing built. We need all government buildings retrofitted to save energy — and the list goes on.

Further, the politicians in Tallahassee need to be frightened of more than House Speaker Ray Sansom. The ordinary taxpaying people of this state (and others) are sick of business as usual. The "we pay, they play" kind of politics is over.

I intend to work with every fiber of my being to elect a brand new slate of legislators for the 2010 elections that doesn't include a single "Bushie," local or national. Step up to the plate, folks, and demand more from those whose salaries we pay!

Kay Kelly, *Clearwater*

Sensors could save water

Here's a suggestion for using economic stimulus funds to support the environment: Fund a program that ensures all lawn sprinkling systems have a fully functioning rain sensor.

While most homes with a sprinkler system have a rain sensor, too many aren't operating properly. Imagine how much water would be saved if we did not water lawns after heavy rains. It would not take much time or money to get them working, and the environmental benefits would be significant.

Bill Sacco, *Tampa*

Lessons learned late | Dec. 26, story

Relevance is missing

In our present educational system, we promote things that are of little interest to most students, and of little use to most in the real world.

Today's English class is a fine example of this. English is the one subject that high school students are forced to take for all four years of high school. This would make a bit of sense if English class was actually structured to be of use to everyone, with something like document composition. But high school English is mostly about reading and attempting to understand the meaning of historical writings like *Beowulf*. Unless your future job has to do with the history of the English language, I would say that the majority of things taught in English class are basically worthless to many students forced to take it. For the most part, the only argument our government has for many of these required courses is that "I had to take it, and so do you." Then the

government has the nerve to ask why so many students just say "what's the point?" and drop out.

I am a computer technician, working toward a degree at St. Petersburg College. I acquired a great deal of my computer knowledge taking several semesters of microcomputer electronics in high school at the Seminole Vocational Education Center, a class that, in fact, is no longer being taught there. The high school education system should be promoting vocational education as a top priority, not setting it aside as an insignificant possibility.

Jeff McElveen, *Safety Harbor*

"Spring Awakening"

Theater at its best

As a patron of the arts and former board member of the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, I would like to express my appreciation to the center for booking the 2007 Tony winner *Spring Awakening*.

In some measure it was gutsy to bring this avant-garde pop/rock show to a conservative Tampa Bay area, but as we achieve sophistication and a reputation for launching road shows, it becomes desirable to offer the best of Broadway.

We saw *Spring Awakening* on Broadway and were profoundly moved by the forthright treatment of issues of coming of age, self-identity and authority.

Spring Awakening is perhaps not for everyone, but everyone deserves the opportunity to experience theater at its Tony-award winning best!

Suzette Berkman, *Tampa*

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