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EDITORIAL

Death of DREAM a GOP nightmare

BY ROGER E. HERNANDEZ

If you don't know whether to laugh or cry about the absurdities of anti-immigrant hysterics, the recent antics of anti-immigrant hysteric Tom Tancredo will have you doing both.

Last month, three college students whose parents came to the United States illegally went to Capitol Hill at the invitation of Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin to show support for the DREAM Act, which makes children of illegal immigrants eligible for permanent residency if they keep out of trouble and are enrolled in a college.

Tancredo, the Colorado congressman occasionally spotted among Republican presidential candidates, tried to sic the cops on them.

"I call on the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to detain any illegal aliens at this press conference. Just because these illegal aliens are being used for political gain doesn't mean they get immunity from the law," he said in a press release. "If we can't enforce our laws inside the building where American laws are made, where can we enforce them?"

Problem was, the three college kids all had legal immigration status. It's on a temporary basis, to be sure, which is why they stand to gain from the DREAM Act. Still, when they entered the U.S. Capitol, they were not illegal aliens subject to arrest and deportation. What would have been illegal would have been for ICE to harass them like Tancredo demanded.

Of course, nobody really expects *la migra* to raid a congressional press conference, which is why Tancredo's outburst comes off like little more than a clownish tantrum. But the defeat of the DREAM Act on a cloture motion later was no laughing matter. Sadly, hardworking college kids who are here illegally through no fault of their own got the heave-ho from the Republican Party (only 10 Republicans voted in favor), even though many are culturally American because the only life they know is in the United States.

So yes, Republicans gave kids the heave-ho. And you can bet Hispanic voters are going to give Republicans the heave-ho too. Even Cubans in Miami, who once voted 80 percent-plus for Republicans, are turning away.

There are conservatives who realize the Republican Party will not win the White House if in 2008 Hispanic voters again turn away as dramatically as they did between 2004 and 2006. These conservatives realize that even Hispanics who want much tougher enforcement at the border are appalled at the incendiary rhetoric coming from the likes of Tom Tancredo, and at the quieter fears of Republicans who voted against giving college kids a chance.

But we have been down this road before. "No nation in human history ever undertook to deal with such masses of alien population," said an article written by one Francis A. Walker that appeared in the June 1896 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. "The problems which so sternly confront us today are serious enough without being complicated and aggravated by the addition of some millions of Hungarians, Bohemians, Poles, south Italians, and Russian Jews."

It was a road Tancredo's own ancestors knew too well. ■

— Roger Hernandez is a syndicated columnist and writer-in-residence at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

GUEST OPINION

Hospice is about living

BY SAMIRA K. BECKWITH

President and CEO,
 Hope Hospice and Community Services

Members of the Hope Hospice staff recently participated in a beautiful wedding. They knew the groom well - he was in our care, and the wedding was conducted in our Hope Hospice House chapel. We have been sharing memories of the past 100 years with a centenarian, enjoying her stories from "way back then." One of our art therapists is making colorful imprints of a baby's tiny hands and feet, to be treasured by Mommy and Daddy. These are our "Moments of Hope," and they are happening every day.

The time at which someone is nearing the end of life does not mean their life has already ended. Hospice is about living. All attention is focused on the individual, not

on their illness. The hospice care team - physician, nurse, social worker, chaplain, therapists and volunteers, work to meet the person's physical, emotional and spiritual needs. What we do every day is more than traditional health care, it's about dignity, respect and compassion.

In fact, in proclaiming November 2007 as National Hospice Month, President Bush said, "One of America's greatest values is compassion, and our country is blessed by all those who dedicate themselves to caring for others."

Many of the families who chose hospice for their loved one have told us, "We wish we had known about Hope Hospice sooner." By this they mean that had they known that their loved one could have received such comprehensive and com-

passionate care sooner rather than later, it would have been better for the loved one and it would have given the family greater peace of mind.

We endeavor to make the transition to hospice care as comfortable and easy as possible. Early referrals enable the patient and family to immediately begin receiving all of the benefits of our care. A person is eligible for hospice care after being certified by a physician as having a life-limiting illness of any kind. Anyone - family member, friend, physician, can refer someone to us. ■

As we observe National Hospice Month, I want to encourage you to learn more about how we can help by visiting our Web site at www.hopehospice.org or by calling Hope at (239) 482-4673 or (800) 835-1673.

LETTER to the EDITOR

Letter to the Editor:

I read with interest your recent front page story about Florida's agricultural assessment (Lee County property owners that milk it, Oct. 25). Greenbelt, as the law is also known, is a really good deal for all of us. It is not an exemption. It helps keep agriculture profitable, so farmers can provide the wholesome products we all depend on. Agriculture is second only to tourism in terms of overall economic impact to the state. Farms also provide water recharge, wildlife habitat and green space while holding development at bay - all at no cost to taxpayers. Cows and groves don't require sidewalks and schools. Several studies indicate that landowners who

hold agricultural assessments use only 25 cents in public services for every dollar they contribute in property taxes.

Greenbelt helps ensure agricultural producers are treated equitably and helps sustain agricultural producers. As constitutional officers, property appraisers are vested with adequate authority to police and curb abuse. I agree wholeheartedly with your property appraiser that only bona fide agricultural producers should have the classification.

In 1959 state lawmakers saw fit to pass the Greenbelt Law to help keep land in production agriculture. Greenbelt allows property used for bona fide agricultural purposes to be taxed on the basis of the

"use" value of farming operations rather than the market value of the property. Generally this means the tax assessments for qualifying land are lower than those for other uses. Greenbelt is not an exemption. It is a tax formula applied by county property appraisers that takes many factors into account. One factor is the value of the goods produced. For example, the higher dollar amount of the goods produced, the higher the tax assessment.

Agricultural assessment of land used in production of food, fiber and fuel remains a good investment in Florida's future. ■

Kathy Richardson
 Gainesville