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EDITORIAL

A sad, and saddening, field of Republicans

BY ROGER E. HERNANDEZ

It was not without humor that in the recent Spanish-language presidential debate, all but one of the Republican candidates pretended they did not know that the ongoing verbal assault on immigrants is driving Hispanics away from the GOP.

And it was actually funny that Mitt Romney, one in the pack of know-nothings, said he believes Hispanics are abandoning the GOP because the GOP has not been conservative enough lately.

Ah, yes. The main reason the gap by which Hispanic registered voters favor Democrats over Republicans has grown from 21 points two years ago to 34 points now, according to a poll last month from the Pew Hispanic Center, is that they think the Dems will do a better job of lowering the capital-gains tax, protecting the sanctity of marriage, cracking down on crime and kicking butt around the globe.

Please.

"I think some of the rhetoric that many Hispanics hear about illegal immigration makes some of them believe that we are not in favor of or seek the support of Hispanic

citizens in this country," said John McCain in the debate. He was the only one with the integrity and guts to say without ambiguity what anybody with half a political brain knows is the truth.

Still, if he gets the nomination, he will find it tough to improve on the 40 percent of the Hispanic vote that George W. Bush won in 2004. Blame his party for rhetoric that is driving away even conservative Hispanics who want to lower the capital-gains tax, protect the sanctity of marriage, crack down on crime and kick butt around the globe.

In the GOP Spanish-language debate, all of the candidates dialed down the rhetorical heat, so the debate about what to do regarding 12 million illegal immigrants became a civilized discussion of the options. Maybe Duncan Hunter didn't win a lot of Hispanic support with his opposition to a path to citizenship, but at least he did not sound offensive -- it all came off as a nice civics lesson.

Which is not the way other debates have gone. The worst was in late November, when Rudy Giuliani and Romney argued about who was most guilty of offering "sanctuary." Was it the former mayor of New York, who

made his city a "sanctuary" for illegal immigrants? Or the former governor of Massachusetts, who turned his home into a "sanctuary mansion"? They sounded like fifth-graders in the schoolyard. Sanctuary! Amnesty! Did not! Did too! Nya-nyah.

Back in that November night of embarrassment for the GOP, at least two of the Republicans got it right.

"All I've heard is people trying to out-Tancredo Tancredo," said Tom Tancredo, the no-shot, one-note anti-immigrant candidate who skipped the Spanish debate, claiming it would "Balkanize" American politics. (If there is somebody else who has done more to Balkanize American politics this campaign season, please send in your nomination.)

The other to get it right was John McCain: "You know, this whole debate saddens me a little a bit, because we do have a serious situation in America."

Well, maybe he's only half right. The "little bit" part is an understatement. ■

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

LETTER to the EDITOR

Editor:

There's nothing like the Holiday season to acquaint you with the bottom of your bank account. At the same time, Floridians are eyeing Tallahassee with increasing skepticism, wondering when property taxes will stop draining us. In the midst of these family cost concerns, Southwest Florida residents are being asked to sign petitions and put the proposed Hometown Democracy amendment on the November 2008 ballot. Know this: if the amendment passes, Florida's cost-of-living will skyrocket.

Hometown Democracy is unworkable for many reasons already discussed in the media. But no reporter has bothered to ask a local election official how much it would cost to prepare, print and distribute the ballots and voter education materials required for Floridians to vote on all amendments to community land use plans. In fact, these are astronomical costs.

Every year, printing Florida's Hometown Democracy ballots alone would probably cost about \$24 million more than normal statewide election expenses. On top of this, around 6.3 billion pages of voter material will be printed at

a likely cost of \$1 billion annually. And where will the money come from to pay for these and other related expenses, like ballot preparation, US Mail, and endless litigation? Every Floridian's property taxes will spike to pay the bills.

When the paid signature gatherers ask you to endorse Hometown Democracy this Holiday season, remember that their unworkable idea will cost far more in property tax dollars than it is worth. ■

Carole Green
Lee-Collier General Chair
Floridians for Smarter Growth

Editor:

I just don't see why people want to pick on my God. I don't tell others how they should worship. But these people just don't want our children to know who created them. You know those that come against my God have a god that they believe in or they would not have any type of religion.

You know that they tell the mothers of school children that they can not bake Christmas cup cakes for their children's classes because of the word Christ. Well

you know if you have a child you would not say Happy Holiday or Seasons Greetings for the child's birthday, you would call the child by it's name and that is exactly what Christmas is, a child's birthday day. We call him Jesus Christ. But they try to tell me that is not politically correct, well this is totally wrong.

When you do something, say it is either wrong or right — there is no in-between. I don't see why a person that is put in office just doesn't do the job that they are paid to do instead of trying to make laws that tell me I can't do this in my business or in public because it is not politically correct or that a minister or priest cannot pray the word of God and use the name of Jesus. That is going just to far.

I thank my Lord God that this country was founded on the Christian belief, so I can worship whomever I wish. Men and women are fighting the war overseas now so that we can have the freedom of speech and to worship who we choose.

I feel that it is time to speak up, this has just gone on too long. ■

Loretta Haley
Fort Myers

MOMENTS IN TIME

- On Dec. 27, 1900, prohibitionist Carry Nation smashes up the bar at the Carey Hotel in Wichita, Kan. Nation became famous for carrying a hatchet and wrecking saloons as part of her anti-alcohol crusade. After the incident at the Carey Hotel, her fame increased as she continued her saloon-smashing campaign and spoke out in favor of temperance.

- On Dec. 28, 1869, the Knights of Labor, a labor union of tailors in Philadelphia, held the first Labor Day ceremonies in American history. In 1894, Congress designated the first Monday in September a legal holiday.

- On Dec. 29, 1940, London suffers its most devastating air raid when Germans

firebomb the city. The next day, a newspaper photo of St. Paul's Cathedral standing undamaged amid the smoke and flames seemed to symbolize the capital's unconquerable spirit during the Battle of Britain.

- On Dec. 30, 1903, a fire in the Iroquois Theater in Chicago kills 591 people. There were no fire escapes or ladders, and an asbestos stage curtain that could have contained the fire to backstage turned out to be made of paper. All 30 fire exits were locked.

- On Dec. 31, 1972, Roberto Clemente, future Hall of Fame baseball player, is killed when the cargo plane in which he is traveling crashes off the coast of Puerto Rico. Clemente was on his way to deliver relief

supplies to Nicaragua following a devastating earthquake.

- On Jan 1, 1951, the Zenith Radio Corp. of Chicago demonstrates the first pay-per-view television system. The company sent movies over the airways via scrambled signals, and the 300 families who participated in the test could send telephone signals to decode the movies for \$1 each.

- On Jan. 2, 1941, the Andrews Sisters record "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" on Decca Records. The song, which became a classic World War II hit, was heard in the Abbott and Costello film "Buck Privates." The Andrews Sisters were the most popular "girl group" of their time. ■