



Vol. I No. XV October 31, 2011

MEETING NOTICE

The next regular meeting of the South Shore Democratic Club will be held on Thursday, November 10, 1:30 p.m. at the South Shore Regional Library, 15816 Beth Shields Way, Ruskin. Refreshments will be available at 1:00 p.m.

Our speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Harold M. Brockus, president of the Pinellas County Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and a retired Presbyterian and United Church of Christ minister. Rev. Brockus has joined the Florida Education Association and other clergy members in [seeking to remove Amendment 7 from the 2012 Florida ballot](#). The [amendment](#) would strike state constitutional provisions that bar the use of state tax revenue for religious institutions. (See "[The Judge May Step In](#)" below)

LEGACY OF THE GIPPER

It's now "official." We've know for years that the so-called "supply side" economic theory conjured up by the Reagan administration was just so much hogwash, now the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has released the results of a comprehensive study of changes in household income during the last four decades that proves it. It should be required reading for all Republican politicians who will, of course, continue to ignore it.

Even the father of Supply Side, David Stockman, Reagan's budget director, has admitted that he actually **made it all up!**

Stockman's genius and mastery of numbers was matched only by his relatively young age, which earned him the title of "whiz kid." Soon after Ronald Reagan took office, Stockman and his staff came up with a massively optimistic forecast for the economy, which today Stockman derisively refers to as the "Rosy Scenario." The Rosy Scenario predicted that the proposed - and later enacted -1981 tax cuts would produce 5 percent growth in 1982. (In fact, 1982 was the worst year since World War II, with negative growth of 2.2 percent.) Many budget-watchers pointed out that the tax cuts would only increase the deficit, but Stockman silenced all his critics with a blizzard of statistics and information. "He was like a child prodigy chess champion playing fifty matches at once." Congress was mesmerized ([The Rise of Supply Side Economics](#)).

[The Stockman of today says](#) (at the Wall St. Journal owned Marketwatch), "*If there were such a thing*

as Chapter 11 for politicians, the Republican push to extend the unaffordable Bush tax cuts would amount to a bankruptcy filing. The nation's public debt ... will soon reach \$18 trillion." It screams "out for austerity and sacrifice." But instead, the GOP insists "that the nation's wealthiest taxpayers be spared even a three-percentage-point rate increase."

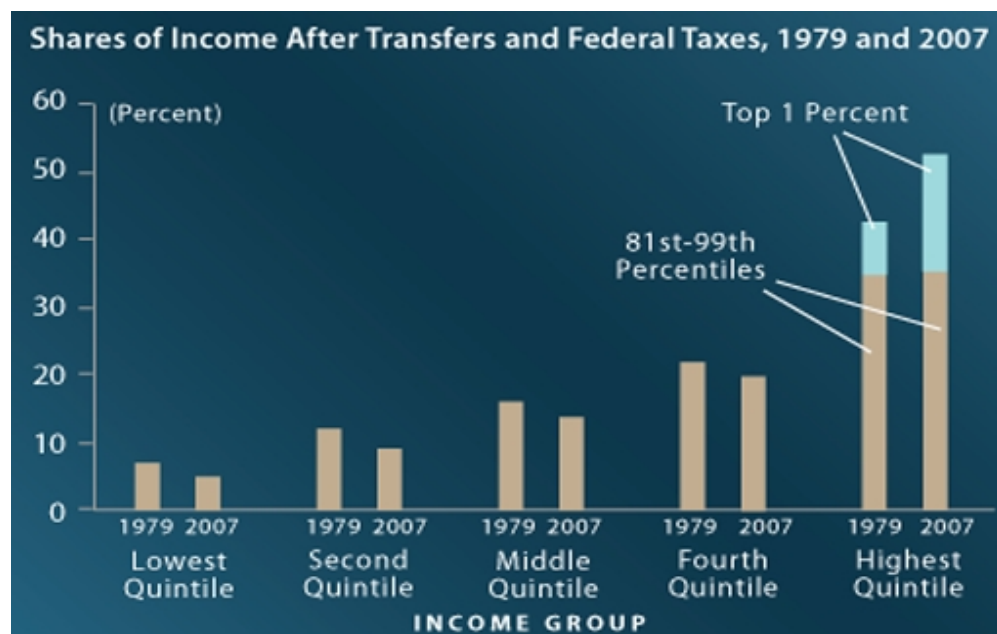
Here is what the CBO found:

After-Tax Income Grew More for Highest-Income Households

After-tax income for the highest-income households grew more than it did for any other group. (After-tax income is income after federal taxes have been deducted and government transfers—which are payments to people through such programs as Social Security and Unemployment Insurance—have been added.)

CBO finds that, between 1979 and 2007, income grew by:

- 275 percent for the top 1 percent of households,
- 65 percent for the next 19 percent,
- Just under 40 percent for the next 60 percent, and
- 18 percent for the bottom 20 percent.



The share of income going to higher-income households rose, while the share going to lower-income households fell.

- The **top fifth** of the population saw a **10-percentage-point increase** in their share of after-tax income.
- **Most of that growth** went to the top 1 percent of the population.
- All other groups saw their shares **decline** by 2 to 3 percentage points.

Market Income Shifted Toward Higher-Income Households

Shifts in the distribution of market income underlie most of the changes in the distribution of after-tax income. (Market income—or income before taxes and transfers—includes labor income, business income, capital income, capital gains, and income from other sources such as pensions.)

- Each source of market income was **less evenly distributed** in 2007 than in 1979.
- More concentrated sources of income (such as business income and capital gains) grew faster than less concentrated sources (such as labor income).

Government Transfers and Federal Taxes Became Less Redistributive

Government transfers and federal taxes both help to even out the income distribution. Transfers boost income the most for lower-income households, while taxes claim a larger share of income as people's income rises.

In 2007, federal taxes and transfers reduced the dispersion of income by 20 percent, but that equalizing effect **was larger** in 1979.

- The share of transfer payments to the lowest-income households declined.
- The overall average federal tax rate fell.

[You can read the full report here.](#)

THE JUDGE STEPS IN

A federal judge has temporarily blocked Florida's new law that requires welfare applicants to pass a drug test before receiving benefits, saying it may violate the Constitution's ban on unreasonable searches and seizures.

Judge Mary Scriven ruled in response to a lawsuit filed on behalf of a 35-year-old Navy veteran and single father who sought the benefits while finishing his college degree, but refused to take the test. The judge said there was a good chance plaintiff Luis Lebron would succeed in his challenge to the law based on the Fourth Amendment, which protects individuals from being unfairly searched.

The drug test can reveal a host of private medical facts about the individual, Scriven wrote, adding that she found it "troubling" that the drug tests are not kept confidential like medical records. The results can also be shared with law enforcement officers and a drug abuse hotline.

Although it is preliminary, the judge's ruling comes as no surprise to legal observers, who point out that the Supreme Court has already ruled that blanket drug test laws like Florida's are unconstitutional. [Read more here.](#)

THE JUDGE MAY STEP IN

It flew mostly under the radar during the last legislative session, but a proposed constitutional amendment placed on the ballot by the Republican legislature has the potential for completely **eliminating** Florida's current ban on public financial aid to religious schools and organizations. The Florida Education Association (FEA) has filed suit asking the courts to strip the proposal from the November 2012 ballot. **Amendment 7's** title, "**Religious Freedom**," and ballot summary are **misleading**, Florida Education Association attorney Ron Meyer told Circuit Judge Terry Lewis during a court hearing.

"They fail to sufficiently warn voters that the Republican-controlled Legislature's ballot proposal also

would turn the existing prohibition upside down by requiring state and local government agencies, instead, to provide funding for churches and other religious entities," Meyer said.

Meyer was also arguing for some public school officials and clergy who are part of the challenge. He focused on the summary's statement that the changes would be "*consistent with the U.S. Constitution.*"

"This affirmatively misleads the voter into believing all we're voting on is a proposal that will make the Florida Constitution consistent with the federal constitution when in fact nothing could be further from the truth," Meyer added. [More information here.](#)

ELECTION MESS "CREATED BY GOVERNOR"

A dispute over Florida's new election law apparently won't be resolved before the state's Jan. 31 presidential primary." A federal court in Washington, D.C. on Friday denied a request by Gov. Rick Scott's administration to expedite the case that involves four sections of the law and **blamed Scott's administration** itself for the delay.

Florida Secretary of State Kurt Browning had asked the three-judge panel this summer to decide whether the four sections meet the requirements of the federal Voting Rights Act. Under the act, Florida must get pre-clearance, or approval, in five of its counties – Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe – because of prior racial discrimination there. The sections under review reduce the number of early voting days, put new restrictions on groups that conduct voter registration drives, shorten the time frame for gathering signatures for citizens' initiatives and change Election Day rules for voters who move from one county to another.

The ACLU of Florida, one of the intervenors in the case, applauded the court's decision. *"The Court was right to say this is a mess created by the Governor and the Legislature. In denying their request for a 'drive-by hearing', the Court essentially said that the state's failure to take this issue seriously until recently is no one's fault but their own,"* ACLU Florida executive director Howard Simon said in a statement. [More here.](#)

WHOOOPS!

A \$600,000 study, partially funded by the Charles Koch Foundation, and conducted by a leading climate change skeptic, has backfired on the infamous right wing Koch brothers. Billionaires Charles and David Koch run a privately-held company with large holdings in oil and other greenhouse gas producing industries. They are prolific funders of radically conservative candidates, causes, and global warning deniers throughout the country.

The study of the world's surface temperatures by Richard Muller, a well-known physicist tool two years to complete and, while Muller's avowed intent was to prove that global warming was, in fact a hoax, Muller has turned 180 degrees and now agrees that the vast majority of scientists who have opined on this issue are absolutely correct. The earth, in fact, is getting warmer, and at an accelerating rate.

Shawn Lawrence Otto, author of the book "Fool Me Twice" that criticizes science skeptics, said Muller should now expect to be harshly treated by global warming deniers. *"Now he's considered a traitor. For the skeptic community, this isn't about data or fact. It's about team sports. He's been traded to the Indians. He's playing for the wrong team now."*

In a brief email statement, the Koch Foundation noted that Muller's team didn't examine ocean temperature or the cause of warming and said it will continue to fund such research. *"The project is ongoing and entering peer review, and we're proud to support this strong, transparent research,"* said foundation spokeswoman Tonya Mullins. She said this with a straight face. [Read the whole story here.](#)

NELSON WINS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

(From the *Miami Herald*) Sen. Bill Nelson is probably not the first guy most Florida voters would come up with if asked to name a politician who evokes the spirit of President Theodore Roosevelt.

"Teddy", after all, is a near-mythological figure who charged up San Juan Hill, carried a big stick, founded the national park system and served two terms as president. Nelson, a moderate Democrat from Melbourne, might still be best-known for being the second politician in space, joining a space shuttle crew in 1986.

But Nelson has found a real identity with environmental issues. He emerged as perhaps the most outspoken critic of BP and federal oversight of Gulf oil drilling after the epic spill and over the years has ushered many a D.C. politician into the Everglades and fought for funding.

This weekend, Audubon of Florida is giving him its Theodore Roosevelt Award, which goes to lawmakers who champion green causes. Roosevelt was a founder of the Florida Audubon Society and established the first National Wildlife Refuge at Pelican Island.

"The very name Theodore Roosevelt stands for resilience, resolve and courage in the face of fire," said Audubon Executive Director Eric Draper in a release. "No public figure in Florida embodies those values like Senator Bill Nelson." [Read more here.](#)

FLORIDA FOURTH IN THE NATION IN MASS LAYOFFS IN SEPTEMBER

(From the [Daily Koss](#)) With a nod to Ricky Ricardo, Florida's famous Governor-of-Jobs has some 'splainin to do! According to a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics summary, Florida had 69 mass layoff actions during the month of September, the fourth highest number in the nation. A "mass layoff" involves at least 50 workers from a single employer."

The Bureau also reported that Florida had the sixth largest number of initial claims for unemployment insurance in September.

HILLSBOROUGH DEMS SUPPORT THE "OCCUPY" MOVEMENT

The Hillsborough County Democratic Party announced recently that it stands in solidarity with the "Occupy" movement and is calling on city and county officials to work constructively with protesters. At a recent Party meeting, the following resolution was adopted:

"The right to peaceably assemble to seek redress of grievances is firmly established in the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. We oppose any attempt by any government body to limit free speech and the right to assemble."

Since the "Occupy Wall Street" movement began in mid-September, it has spread to communities throughout the United States. In early October, peaceful protesters began "Occupy Tampa" demonstrations locally.

"Voters and citizens in Hillsborough County have a right to use public spaces to assemble and to air their grievances," states Chris Mitchell, Chair of the Hillsborough County Democratic Executive Committee. "We believe the protesters should be allowed to exercise their first amendment rights. It is certainly true that our elected officials have a responsibility to maintain safe and sanitary public spaces, but these things are not mutually exclusive. We call on local officials to work with the "Occupy" movement so that the rights and goals of all parties are preserved."

The Democratic Party of Hillsborough County is the local face of the National Democratic Party. Its purpose is to find, train, and support Democratic candidates for office at all levels who will represent

and uphold the core principles of the Democratic Party. It seeks individual freedom in the framework of a just society and political freedom in the framework of meaningful participation by all citizens.

Democrats recognize that our country and our economy are strongest when they provide opportunity for all Americans—when we grow our country from the bottom up.

ALABAMA FARMERS GET WHAT THE VOTERS WANT

([From The Daily Koss](#)) We can't produce hard data to prove it, but we feel quite confident that, given the political demographics of the state of Alabama, most of the state's farmers vote Republican. It is, them with a healthy sense of irony that we report that Alabama farmers are "getting killed" by the state's draconian new immigration law.

The [Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals](#) temporarily blocked part of the law, a provision requiring K-12 public schools to check the immigration status of their students. Yet much of it is still in effect, including provisions requiring police to check the immigration status of anyone they stop, detain, or arrest, and a provision that makes any contract made with an unauthorized immigrant invalid.

The predictable, and one could argue, the primary intent of the measure has been a mass exodus of Hispanic workers. And that now has Alabama farmers in the same fix as their colleagues in Arizona and Georgia. Crops are dying in the fields due to a severe shortage of workers to pick them.

Tomato farmer Wayne Smith said he has never been able to keep a staff of American workers in his 25 years of farming. "People in Alabama are not going to do this," said Smith, who grows about 75 acres of tomatoes in the northeast part of the state. "They'd work one day and then just wouldn't show up again."

At his farm, field workers get \$2 for every 25-pound box of tomatoes they fill. Skilled pickers can make anywhere from \$200 to \$300 a day, he said. Unskilled workers make much less.

A crew of four Hispanics can earn about \$150 each by picking 250-300 boxes of tomatoes in a day, said Jerry Spencer, of Grow Alabama, which purchases and sells locally owned produce. A crew of 25 Americans recently picked 200 boxes — giving them each \$24 for the day.

This is brutal work, which is why slaves were once imported to do it, and why it's work now done by the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder—immigrants. Just think about the numbers above—four Latinos picked a quarter to a third more tomatoes than a crew of 25 Americans. And sure, those Americans could learn to be more efficient and skilled at the work, but they won't, because they won't put up with that kind of abuse on their bodies (and minds, for that matter) in three-digit temperatures.

Charles Hall, director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, released figures from an upcoming industry-funded study Tuesday that says farmers lost at least \$74.9 million in unpicked crops harvested by hand last spring and summer because they didn't have enough labor. The farmers said they lacked 40 percent of the total work force they needed.

That estimate is on the low end: It's a snapshot of just a small fraction of Georgia's farmers overall. The surveyed farmers hold just short of half the state's overall acreage for those seven crops. And the seven crops examined in the study accounted for just 5 percent of Georgia's \$11.3 billion in farm products from 2009, according to the agribusiness center's last annual report.

Republicans are patting themselves on the back for forcing brown families to leave the state. What they're realizing is that our society, for better or for worse, functions on the back of those low-wage earners. Strip them out, and there will be pain. More on this from the [Florida Citrus Mutual](#).

ED. NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO NOVEMBER 15 EDITION OF *VIEWPOINT*. THE NEXT EDITION IS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 30.