

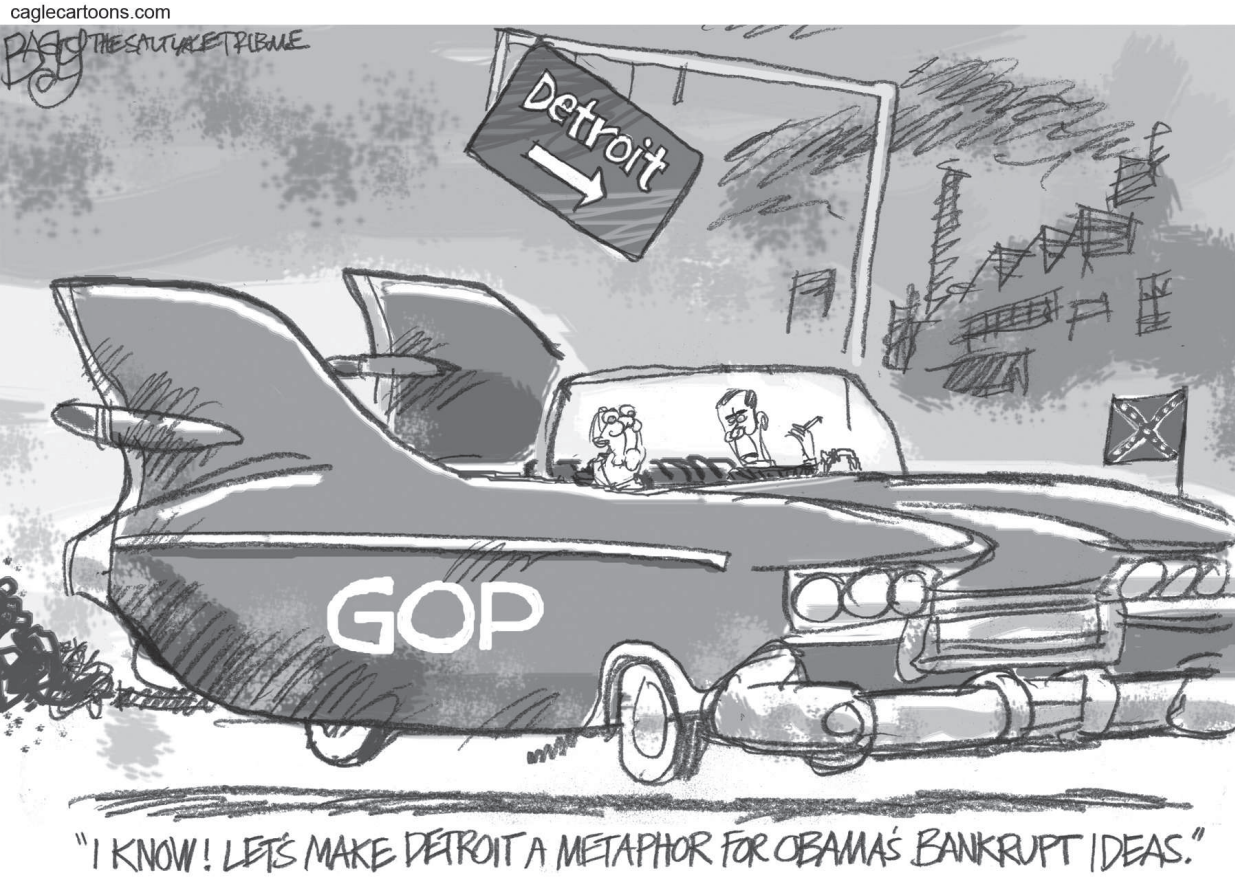
OPINION

OUR VIEW

Exercise in equality

Minnesota voters made history in November by making this the first state to reject a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage. On Thursday, our state government will no longer stand in the way of any consenting adults who want to form a family in this, the 11th state in the nation to legalize gay marriage. In a society built upon the civil and human rights of individuals, this last holdout of legal discrimination will be a part of history as our state allows all people to marry the person they love. Clearly, many people continue to oppose same-sex marriage for a variety of reasons. Some believe that marriage should be reserved for one man and one woman; others say that gay marriage is a sin under the rules of their religion. And the great United States Constitution not only allows them their views, but protects

their right to hold and voice those rules. Our state government's recognition of same sex-unions changes nothing for people who oppose it. It does not force any religion or church to accept or participate in it. But this nation provides certain benefits for people who are married, among them employment assistance, inheritance rights and decision-making authority in health care situations. It's only right that people who love one another but happen to be of the same sex enjoy these same benefits. Change can be hard to accept. We're sure that many people had difficulty accepting the prohibition of slavery and accepting the rights of women and black people to vote. It is time to accept that gay people have the same right to expect equality as their family, friends, neighbors and coworkers. On Thursday, they will finally have the opportunity to exercise that equality.



GUEST COLUMN

Honest discussion needed

Turn on the TV. This week the "big news" is the birth of a British royal. Even Drudge ran the birth of the Prince of Cambridge at the top of his page, treating it like it was the biggest event out of Europe since D-Day. Maybe the media wanted to change the subject to something pleasant — or completely unimportant — but the arrival of Kate and William's baby boy was a timely blessing.

It blew George Zimmerman, Trayvon Martin and the issue of race in America off the front pages. It even eclipsed President Obama's teleprompter-free speech about the Zimmerman verdict last Friday afternoon.

The liberal media, as usual, gave the presidential sermon a standing ovation, saying that Obama — who claimed Trayvon Martin could have been him 35 years ago — hit a home run.

But I agree with what that old boo-bird Bill O'Reilly said on his TV show Monday night. The president didn't whiff completely, but he grounded out weakly to second base.

O'Reilly, madder than usual, praised the president in his "Talking Points Memo" for bringing up the issue.

But then he blasted Obama and other black leaders for still having "no clue" how to solve the social and moral problems that continue to rip apart black communities in our cities.

They won't dare mention the issues of drug gangs, out-of-wedlock births, fatherless families and welfare dependency, O'Reilly railed, "because race hustlers and the grievance industry have intimidated the so-called



'conversation,' turning any valid criticism of African-American culture into charges of racial bias."

O'Reilly pointed out that, yes, Martin was profiled by Zimmerman, the community watchman. But it wasn't because of his race.

It was because Martin was wearing a hoodie — the official national uniform of urban street thugs and drug gangs.

When President Obama said Martin could have been him 35 years ago, he was talking nonsense. Thirty-five years ago, Barack Obama wasn't stalking around gated communities at night wearing gangster clothes and getting in fistfights.

Trayvon Martin's death was a horrible tragedy. That cannot be said too many times.

But Martin's death should not be exploited any further by the president or anyone else as proof that white racism is the chief cause of problems in the black community.

Black communities have been breeding a criminal class for decades. Repealing stand-your-ground laws or passing stricter gun control laws will not change that. Nor will blaming the justice system.

The black community's problems begin at home. They

are not a result of slavery or discrimination or poverty. They are, as O'Reilly said, a result of the disintegration of the black family, a gangster culture that glorifies criminals, and a bunch of so-called civil rights leaders who ignore reality, preach victimhood and blame racism for everything. Young black males are dying at disproportionate rates in Chicago and other cities not because they're being shot by racist white cops, or wanna-be cops like George Zimmerman, but because they are being gunned down by other young black males, usually over drug-gang turf wars. O'Reilly said, "It's now time for the African-American leadership, including President Obama, to stop the nonsense. Walk away from the world of victimization and grievance and lead the way out of this mess." Exactly. Black leaders, including the president, need to step up and start talking about the real causes of crime and poverty in black communities. So should our gutless media. For a year the president and black leaders have cynically exploited a tragedy to "prove" that society still needs to do much more for blacks. Instead they should be using Trayvon Martin's death as an opportunity to start an honest national discussion about what the black community needs to do for itself. Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). His column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Union drive for day-care owners: Still a bad idea

The drive to organize independent home day care employers into a union that would bargain for state money is misguided and a strain on credulity.

But it's there, nonetheless, having been revived this year by the DFL-controlled Minnesota Legislature, with unanimous opposition from the Republican minority, after Gov. Mark Dayton's attempt last year to instigate an organizing drive by mere executive order failed in court.

As the Associated Press reported, "the proposed union would cover some 12,700 providers who take care of children who are subsidized by the state."

The drive was back in court this past week, the subject of a lawsuit that seeks to stop it, on the basis that it impinges on freedom of association and turns employers into unionized

employees, essentially.

Federal Judge Michael Davis said he would rule quickly on whether to halt the drive by the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees to organize the day care providers.

Supporters of the organizing drive argue that it could lead to better pay and better training for child care workers, and better results for kids whose care is subsidized by the state.

But here's why the whole push is a strain on credulity:

1. The child care providers are employers, not state employees. That they take children whose care is subsidized by the state doesn't change that fact.

2. The Legislature and governor have many other tools to effect that care besides the imposition of a third party onto busi-

ness owners who may or may not want such a relationship.

3. The notion, loose though it may be, that serving customers who receive a state subsidy puts a business owner on similar ground to state employees could lead to all kinds of manipulative mischief, particularly if the DFL, cozy as it is with public-employee unions, remains in control of state government.

The court case argued this past week may turn, for now, on whether the situation is "ripe" for judgment — whether there has at this point been any of the harm that those who oppose it say it will bring.

Whether ripe or not, the idea was a bad one when Dayton tried to impose it last year, and it still is.

St. Paul Pioneer Press, July 20

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author's city address will be published. Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifalls-journal.com.

How to contact your lawmakers

FEDERAL OFFICES

President Barack Obama
Democrat
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20500
202-456-1111
Website:
www.whitehouse.gov
E-mail:
president@whitehouse.gov

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515
202-225-6211
Website: www.nolan.house.gov
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Duluth Office of Congressman Rick Nolan (TEMPORARY)
Gerald W. Heaney Federal Building and United States Courthouse
515 West First Street, Room 235
Duluth, MN 55802
218-464-5095, 5096, 5097 and 5098

Brainerd Office of Congressman Rick Nolan
Brainerd City Hall
501 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
218-454-4078

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar
Democrat
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3244

Minnesota Office:

1200 Washington Avenue South, Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-727-5220
Website:
www.klobuchar.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Al Franken
Democrat
Senate Hart Building 320
Washington DC 20510
202-224-5641
Website:
www.alfranken.com
E-Mail:
info@franken.senate.gov

STATE OFFICES

Gov. Mark Dayton
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN, 55155
800-657-3717
E-mail:
Mark.Dayton@state.mn.us

Rep. David Dill
571 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190
800-339-0466
rep.david.dill@house.mn
Assistant: Joan Harrison

Sen. Tom Bak
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol, Room 226
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
Capitol Office phone:
(651) 296-8881
Email:
www.senate.mn/
senatorbakkemail

Share your point of view

Make a difference by writing a letter to the editor or contributing to our online discussions. The Journal's Opinion page is where meaningful community discussions take place.