LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsibility at every turn

Which is the most irresponsible sector of American society today?

Is it the business/financial sector, with its endlessly happy-go-lucky Pollyanna TV advertisements deliberately masking the country's economic, social, educational and political problems and turning people away from real solutions?

Might it be the political and government realm, with its new-agey type philosophy that elected officials and hired minions can solve every problem without any democratic participation by the people?

Is it the religious domain, which despite America's founding as perhaps the brightest child of the great Reformation of religion, insists upon emphasizing economic glitz and glam in its buildings, a dazzling array of sacraments, holy people and holy fashion, and maintaining a deliberate distance from what researchers have learned about the Bible?

Is it the media, who have junked their once-fine reputation for objective reporting and critical analysis in favor of a death-spiral commitment to "breaking news," partisanship and celebrity noise?

Could it be the educational sphere, which has taken the highest curriculum priorities in a democracy — civics and history — and made them into the lowest on the instructional totem pole?

I'm at a loss to decide.

Kimball Shinkoskey,
Woods Cross, Utah

Saudis invested in Kushner, bigly

Just six months after Jared Kushner left the White House, as reported by The New York Times, he secured an investment of $2 billion from Saudi Arabia for his new investment firm, Affinity Partners. According to the Times, even though the committee of advisers for the Saudi investment group advised against the investment, they were overruled by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the investment was granted.

It is also noteworthy that the Saudi government will not produce any additional barrels of oil to help drive down the price of oil, yet on several occasions, it increased or decreased oil production of oil at the request of former President Donald Trump. Could it have anything to do with Trump refusing to release the intelligence report that pointed the finger at the crown prince for approving the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi? Or maybe because President Joe Biden did release the report? Are the Saudis really our friends?

The amount of money Kushner received from the Saudis, makes the amount Hunter Biden was paid by several foreign entities look like chump change.

David Skelton, *Las Vegas*

Resort pool not fit for dolphins

In reading about the tragic death of another Mirage dolphin, I realized that her life was tragic also. These highly intelligent, social animals live like goldfish.

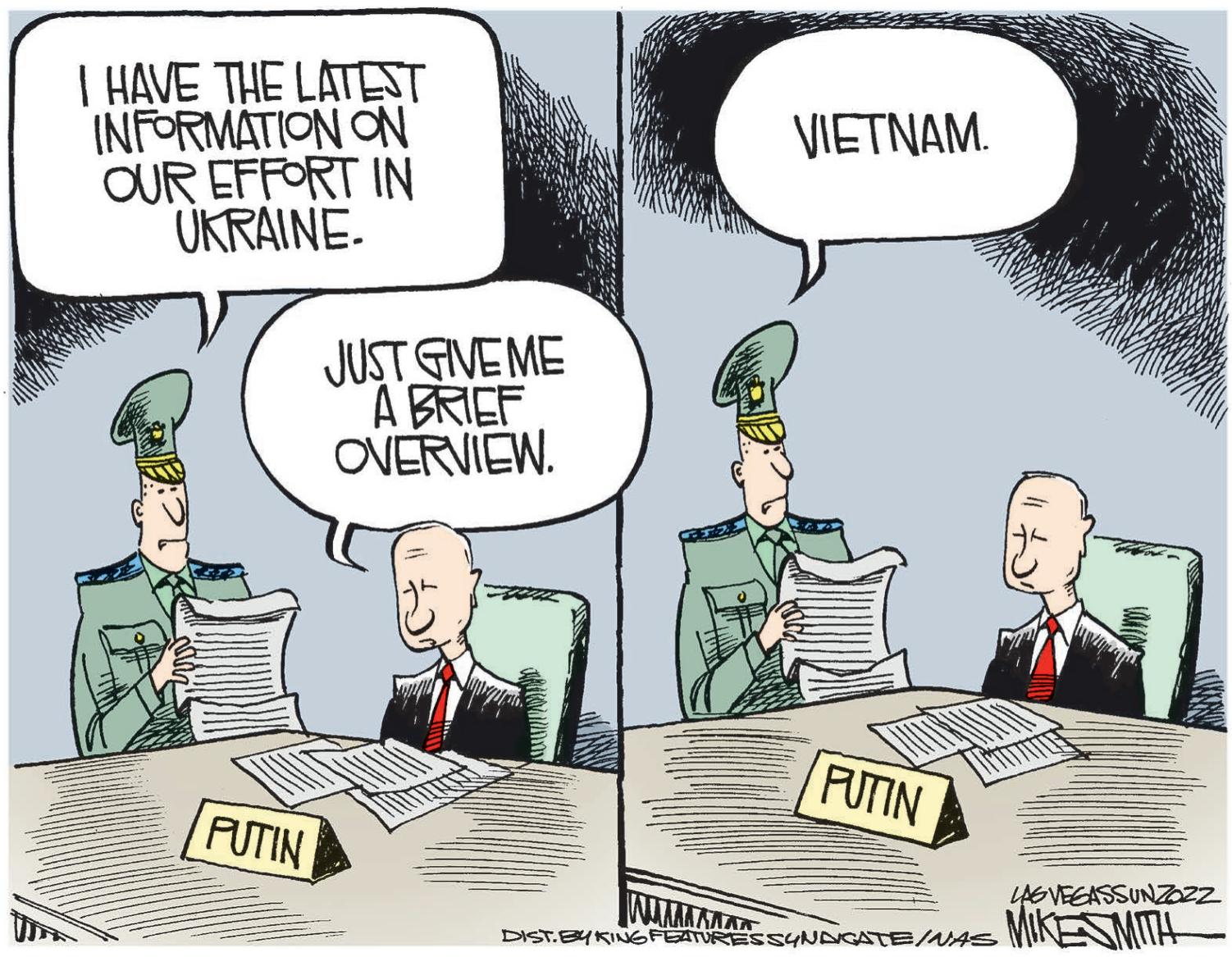
Hopefully when the Hard Rock Hotel takes over, it will make the ethical decision to help relocate the dolphins to a sea pen, where they can begin to heal.

Elaine Lindblom, *Las Vegas*



SMITH'S WORLD

Mike Smith is the award-winning editorial cartoonist for the Las Vegas Sun. Smith's work also is distributed nationally by King Features Syndicate. See archives of his work at **lasvegassun.com/smithsworld**.



SUN EDITORIAL

'Don't Say Gay' law is a gift to rival tourism destinations, like Las Vegas

May it never be said that Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis isn't the giving type. Just one month ago, with a single stroke of his pen, DeSantis gifted Southern Nevada and other tourism destinations across the country billions of dollars in tourism revenue that are likely to flow out of Florida in the wake of the state's "Don't Say Gay" legislation.

The legislation, officially titled the "Parental Rights in Education" bill, bans classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity; creates a private right of action in which parents can sue if they feel that information provided to their child was not "age appropriate"; and encourages the "outing" of LGBTQ students, against their will, even if they are living in unsupportive or abusive households — and perhaps worse, even if their parents are the perpetrators of their bullying.

The bill does not specify what "age appropriate" means or what would qualify as "instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity," leading educators and activists alike to express concern that any mention of LGBTQ identity, even that which is relevant to historic fact, could be grounds for termination or legal liability. Thus, the nickname "Don't Say Gay." In other words, the price of DeSantis' gift to Las Vegas is the isolation, outing, bullying, suffering and potential suicide of Florida's LGBTQ youth.

This may sound overly dramatic, but years of repeated surveys and studies compiled by the Trevor Project found that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24, that LGBTQ youths are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers, and that in 2021, 94% of LGBTQ youths reported that recent politics negatively affected their mental health.

While many Republican voters remain committed to the idea of compassionate conservatism, the extremist policies of Republican leaders in states like Florida are unquestionably leading to increased suffering among our children — the kids themselves are saying so.



DeSantis

Given this reality, it was no surprise when the Walt Disney Co., facing mounting pressure from LGBTQ advocates as well as and allied staff and fans, issued a statement condemning the legislation and calling for the Florida legislature or courts to overturn the bill. But DeSantis, still experiencing the satisfaction of giving so generously to others, doubled down on the coercive legislation and declared war on Disney, stating "I don't care what Hollywood says. I don't care what big corporations say. Here I stand. I am not backing down."

Now, more than a month later, DeSantis has given yet another gift to Florida's competitors for tourism dollars — the state's largest economic sector — by eliminating the special district tax benefits that helped build Disney World into the global icon that it is today. In an almost comedic demonstration of incompetence and lack of foresight, the action, which seemed intended to penalize Disney, may turn out to be a gift from DeSantis and the Republican-controlled legislature to the House of Mouse.

According to the elected tax collector in Orange County, Fla. — the county where Disney World is located — it is likely to leave Florida taxpayers on the hook for $163 million a year in extra taxes. Those burdens are currently assumed by Disney.

In addition to those local consequences, the bill is also likely to cut into Florida's $97 billion tourism industry. According to market research conducted on behalf of Visit Florida, the state's official tourism marketing corporation, approximately 4 million LGBTQ tourists visit Florida each year, representing more than $3 billion in annual revenue. Given societal shifts in the support and perception of LGBTQ people, sympathetic individuals and companies devoted to equality may choose to join their LGBTQ friends in sending their money and their valuable conventions to places other than Florida. All of which benefits Vegas.

Moreover, as recent events in North Carolina and Georgia demonstrated, long-term tourism boycotts can grow over time, leading to canceled sports tournaments, relocated concerts and events, and even general prohibitions on the use of government funds for travel, lodging and conference fees within the boycotted states.

If large-scale events are canceled, Florida's losses will go far beyond LGBTQ people and their allies.

Fortunately, Florida's loss is our gain. While Las Vegas is one of the world's premier locations for entertainment, nightlife, food, art, culture and even outdoor recreation, there is no question that Florida is among our greatest competitors for tourism dollars. But with a welcoming, nondiscriminatory atmosphere, Las Vegas stands to gain the most in the competition for the potentially tens of billions of dollars in annual tourism revenue making its exodus from Florida and into our local and state economy. And that could be just the beginning.

A Texas judge recently sent a letter to Disney CEO Bob Chapek inviting the company to escape "authoritarian, anti-business and culture war attacks from extremists in Florida" and relocate Disney World to Fort Bend, Texas.

While the House of Mouse is unlikely to pick up roots on its 25,000-acre fantasyland and relocate its 80,000 jobs to a state like Texas — a state with its own share of problematic, privacy-invading and anti-youth legislation — it is reasonable to believe that some portion of Florida's 117 million annual tourists may be looking to visit a state that doesn't actively put politics above the lives of its children.

So, while we join with LGBTQ and youth advocates around the world in condemning Florida Republicans' "Don't Say Gay" bill and join in the global chorus of voices reminding LGBTQ children that they are not alone, we also send a whole-hearted thank-you to DeSantis and Florida Republicans for what is likely to be their multibillion-dollar gift to Las Vegas, paid for on the backs of Florida taxpayers.

We welcome your viewpoint

Letters to the editor should be no more than 250 words, cite the sources of any figures or other data, and include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. The Sun reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and length.

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