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SUSAN YOUNG
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

GEORGE DANBY
EDITORIAL PAGE ASSISTANT

MATTHEW STONE
OPINION PAGE EDITOR

P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, Maine 04402-1329
Tel. 990-8000, fax 433-1048, email address letters@bangordailynews.com

TWO SEPARATE ISSUES

WELFARE RESTRICTIONS AND TAX REDUCTIONS

Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap says he'll decide by next week whether a referendum proposal on taxes and welfare submitted by the Maine Republican Party should be broken into pieces. His deliberations should be pretty short, as state law makes it clear that a referendum question should focus on just one issue.

Last month, the GOP submitted a lengthy proposal to the secretary of state's office seeking to reduce and eventually end the state's income tax and to further restrict welfare benefits. Party Chairman Rick Bennett said at the time that he hoped the wording of a referendum question would be something simple like: "Do you want to reform welfare and reduce taxes?"

State law makes it clear that these two, unrelated issues require separate ballot questions.

Regarding the wording of citizen's initiatives, the law says: "The secretary of state shall advise petitioners that the proper suggested format for an initiative question is a separate question for each issue."

That is pretty straightforward, but the statute goes on to say: "In determining whether there is more than one issue, each requiring a separate question, considerations include whether: (1) A voter would reasonably have different opinions on the different issues; (2) Having more than one question would help voters to better understand the subject matter; and (3) The questions are severable and can be enacted or rejected separately without negating the intent of the petitioners."

Tax rates and welfare are clearly two separate issues. As presented in the GOP proposal, tightening the eligibility for TANF and food stamps is not contingent upon

lower income taxes and vice versa. The GOP document makes no effort to link the two issues; they are merely presented together.

Comparing the GOP proposal to Question 1 on this November's ballot, as Republican Party Executive Director Jason Savage did this week, is a nonstarter. Each item in Question 1 deals with campaign finance and disclosure, which is one issue.

Second, a voter could reasonably have different opinions on lowering the state income tax and adding new restrictions to welfare benefits. In fact, a voter could have differing opinions on the nine individual requirements and restrictions on TANF, food stamps and general assistance that the GOP has included in its proposal.

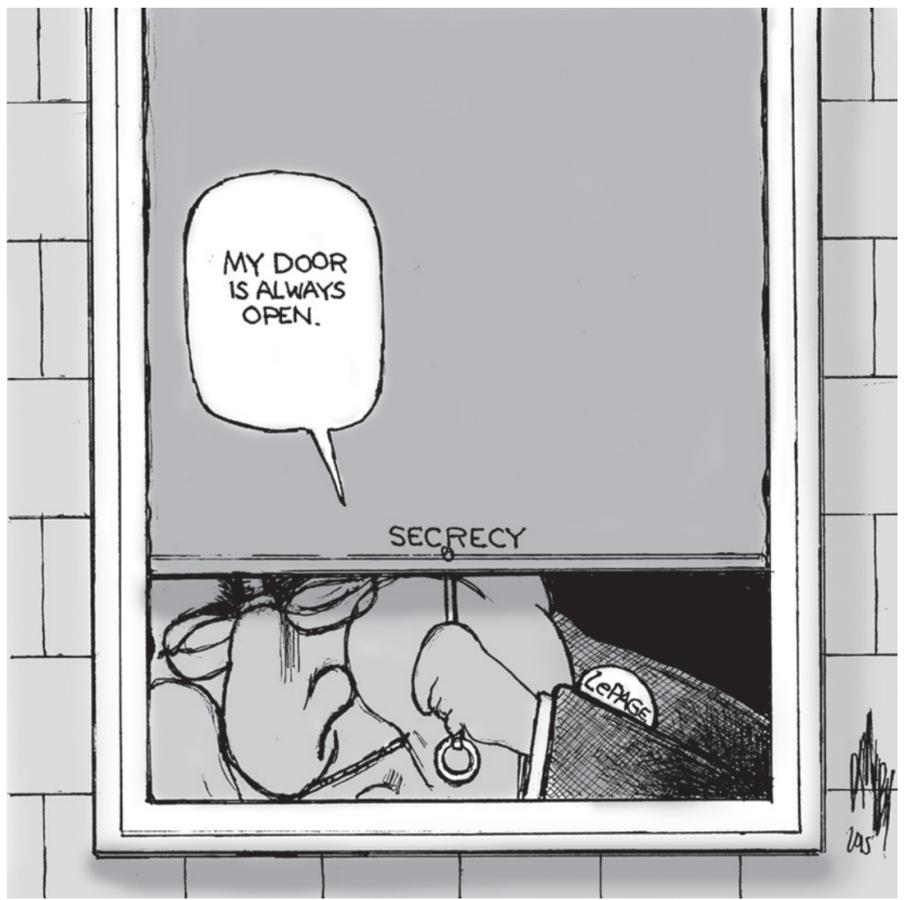
Since the issues of welfare and income tax rates can stand on their own, they are severable. And separating them does not negate the GOP's intent to take these issues directly to the voters because they have been rejected by the Legislature.

For these reasons, bundling the issues into one question would violate the standards set out in law.

The two issues were bundled together for political reasons. Tax changes have repeatedly been defeated at the ballot box, so the proposal to cut the state's income tax likely wouldn't fare well as a standalone question.

Welfare, on the other hand, is a hot button issue for many, especially Republican, voters. A 2014 poll done by the University of New Hampshire for the Portland Press Herald found that 72 percent of Republicans said welfare did more harm than good. Only 27 percent of Democrats said this.

State law is clear: The question submitted by the GOP must be split up.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No apologies needed Gun-free zones

Last weekend I participated in The Walk To End Alzheimer's with my father in Augusta, who was diagnosed with the disease three years ago. For the first time, I didn't feel pressure to apologize for his bizarre behavior. Why? Because he was holding a blue flower, which is what the event uses to signify someone who has Alzheimer's.

It was refreshing to be in that environment. But while I was basking in his happiness, I realized something and questioned everything my family has been doing over the course of the last three years: Why does he have to be holding a blue flower for others to be at ease around him? Why is daily life cloaked in shame? How is this different from any other invisible disability, disease or disorder that impacts cognitive function and, ultimately, behavior?

I wanted to bring it to the public's attention that this disease can cause someone to dance in the middle of the grocery store, sing in the doctor's office or even come up and talk to your children. I think that when Alzheimer's takes this form in contrast to manifesting in a depressing way, it should be celebrated and met with kindness, not fear.

Many thanks to every person involved in The Walk to End Alzheimer's. I hope other family members and caretakers can find the solace I did at such an eye-opening event so we can all stop apologizing.

Laura Rivers
Old Town

The recent mass shooting at a community college in Oregon has prompted President Barack Obama and the usual anti-gun crowd to propose more laws that will do nothing to solve the problem while ignoring the one act that would stop mass murderers in their tracks.

As usual, the anti-gunners want more registration to see who owns what guns. There is little indication that registration would solve the mass murder problem, but they want more anti-gun laws regardless of their effectiveness. From a Second Amendment standpoint, the problem with universal registration is that it is a precursor to confiscation.

To solve the mass shooting problem, it would be much more effective to ban "gun-free" zones. Creating "gun-free" zones is essentially saying "there are defenseless people here," and the killers are smart enough to take advantage.

Lawrence E. Merrill
Bangor

Lack of leadership

Isn't it clear why voters generally do a good job placing candidates with qualifications into high-level government jobs? Yes, there may be a few exceptional backhoe operators, plumbers or salvage-store operators capable of unique people skills, vision,

humility and a fascination with learning every morsel of knowledge about everything. Ambition to be the best Maine can be must happen daily.

I can think of two families off the top of my head that personify the values of which we need more: the Millises and the Cianchettes. There are others. To have the governor's administration cost state taxpayers \$108,000 in legal fees in the state's Medicaid lawsuit because it refused to accept that our state attorney general, with decades of competent legal knowledge and judgment, knew better was arrogance of the highest order.

Let's get our act together, Maine. And let's learn from other states and programs elsewhere. And let's find some other ways to stop foolishness in state government — such as throw the bum out.

Pat Felton
Belfast

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

OTHER VOICES

ABENOMICS LIFTING JAPAN OUT OF GLOOM

Japan is on the threshold of a new golden age — according to no less an authority than Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Is that to be believed? Even discounting for patriotic zeal, Abe's pride is justified: The prevailing gloom about Japan is overdone.

Give Abe credit for wrenching the Japanese economy out of its long, deep rut of deflation and slow growth. The reforms he's already undertaken are largely working, and now, he says, he's pushing for "Abenomics 2.0." Even if it only partially succeeds, it will be no exaggeration to say that Abe has put Japan on a new course.

For now, to be sure, the short-term indicators are poor. Industrial production fell in August, dragged down by weak domestic consumption and faltering demand in China. Deflation is back as well. Prices fell by 0.1 percent in the year to August, despite the Bank of Japan's efforts to push inflation up. Japan may well dip back into recession — which would be a serious political setback for Abe, who's staked his reputation on restoring growth.

These problems, though, say more about the strength of short-term cyclical pressures than about the rights and wrongs of Abenomics. Core inflation, despite the recent setback, has been responding to Abe's treatment. That's a notable achievement in an economy that stagnated for two decades. The Bank of Japan's quantitative easing is working.

Years of vacillating, ineffective fiscal policy left Abe with another huge challenge: controlling an enormous accumulated burden of public debt without unduly

squeezing demand. This isn't getting any easier. Etsuro Honda, one of Abe's main economic advisers, has proposed a new short-term stimulus package to shield low-income households from the cyclical downturn, and Abe indicated he was open to the idea. In a phrase familiar in another context, he said he'd do "whatever it takes" to keep the economy growing.

Beyond the short term, freeing up the supply side of Japan's economy — the "third arrow" of Abenomics — matters at least as much as supporting demand. And here, too, Abe has made progress, resisting powerful interests to reform agricultural practices and cut corporate taxes. Corporate-governance reforms have begun to exert pressure on boards to strive for profit and invest more productively.

In other areas, admittedly, Abe's supply-side reforms are lagging or incomplete. While a gender-equality law is boosting female participation in the workforce, Japan's labor market still badly needs modernization. More flexible work rules and more liberal immigration policies are necessary. Abe acknowledges the issue but has made little progress. Overall, though, the record to date is good by any country's standards — and by Japan's, little short of remarkable.

In a talk at a Bloomberg conference in late September, Abe rightly emphasized the importance of persistence. A golden age is not a short-term project or the work of a single leader. But a single determined leader can point the way, and that's what Abe is doing.

Bloomberg View (Oct. 7)

COMMENTS

Editorials, "If LePage did nothing wrong, why stand in the way of truth on Good Will-Hinckley":

Famous last words: "I am not a crook." Impeach this guy, please.

— *sdemetri*

LePage seems to enjoy watching our government struggle to function.

— *Albert Ross*

This man is a train wreck. Let's get rid of him. Please contact your legislators and ask them to vote for impeachment.

— *Bangorian*

Thanks to Gov. Paul LePage, the Republican Party is going to get thrashed in Maine in 2016. Watch his party members run away from him like rats jumping off a burning ship.

— *Tinserbic*

Yes, impeach LePage because he is preventing liberals from imposing their agenda.

— *Whawell*

He used a similar tactic to cause Maine Community College System President John Fitzsimmons to resign but it was just less direct. He made an off-the-cuff remark to the press, stating "they will feel the wrath," rather than taking his concerns to the board of directors.

Fitzsimmons resigned to avoid conflict between the system and the governor that could have a negative impact on the students in the form of decreased funding. The governor increased funding for the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy but flat funded the community college system through at least two budgets.

The tea partiers who wanted him in office because he's petulant and easily manipulated didn't realize he's not bright enough to hide his crimes and indeed doesn't know they are crimes.

— *Bill Stuart*

Roger Katz is the kind of Republican most of my extended family voted for over many years. LePage and his type are

why no one in the family has voted Republican in a couple of decades.

— *Oldham1*

Maine used to be known for our people and politicians working together. Now I guess they will just have to work together to put LePage in his place.

— *Clancularius*

He has refused to govern when things don't go his way and thinks he can rule by his will. He can't control and command so he incessantly casts blame on others for his own ineptness.

— *Eibhlihin*

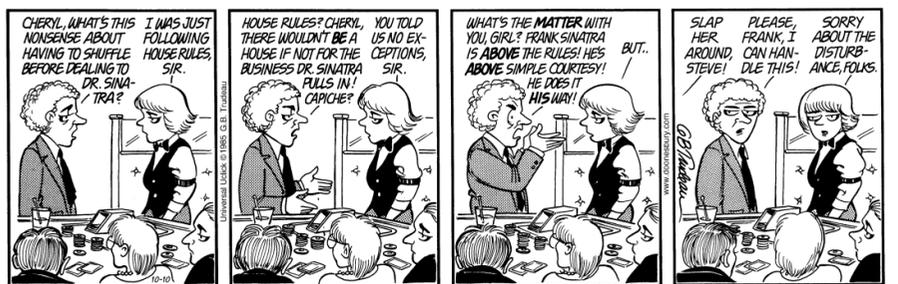
LePage's desperation is showing. I wonder who person in his administration is going to jump ship next? The LePage ship is sinking and nothing can stop it.

— *depnfree*

If people has nothing to hide, they are willing to be transparent, not blame the press and others for their lapses and worse.

— *Mary Lawson*

DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU