

# Opinion

Gulf Breeze NEWS



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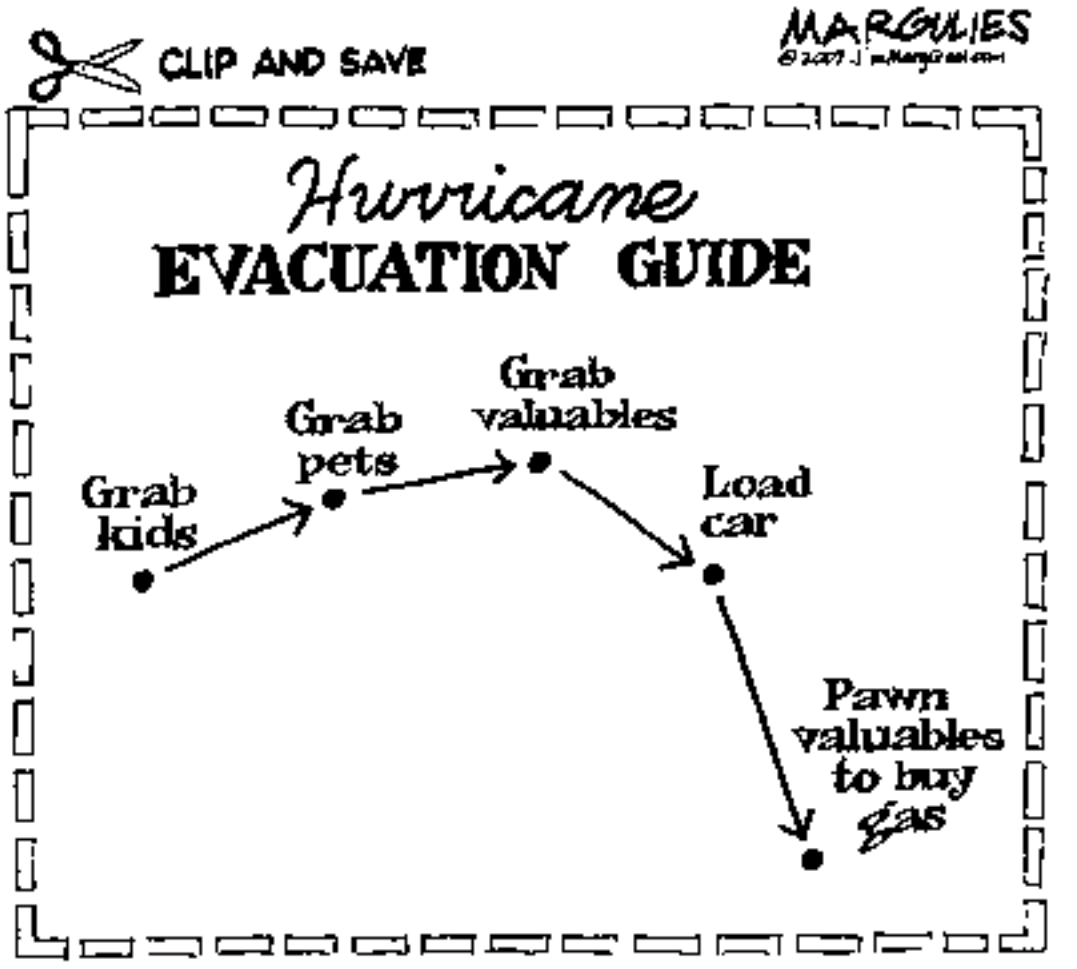
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## Georgia city shows Florida how to save

With the Florida Legislature now seemingly intent on mandating lower property taxes, some local officials are gazing north toward Tallahassee and warning of severe service cuts. They want you to imagine libraries shutting down, your 911 call going unanswered, or your local jail turning inmates loose.

Yet if those same officials would only turn their gaze a bit farther north, they could observe a Georgia city that demonstrates how Florida's local governments not only could survive but could thrive, with big savings for taxpayers.

Indeed, the experiment in Sandy Springs, Georgia, has proved that local governments don't need hundreds of public employees to function. Sandy Springs, a fast-growing town of more than 80,000 residents, has only four non-public safety employees. Except for police and fire, virtually every government function has been contracted-out.

In its two years under private management, Sandy Springs hasn't needed a tax hike or a fee increase, the government has become more responsive, the service quality has improved, and so has customer satisfaction. The residents love it.

In fact, this model has worked so well that two other Atlanta-area communities adopted it last year, and several others are considering a similar approach. Moreover, communities as far away as West



Chester, Ohio, and Castle Pines, Colorado, have announced that they are also considering the Sandy Springs model.

How could Florida's communities follow suit? First, they could take a page from management guru Peter Drucker and require that every "traditional" service or function prove that it's a proper role of government.

Second, they could apply to local government Drucker's famous test for business: "If we weren't doing this yesterday, would we do it today?" Some services may well be discontinued rather than contracted out.

Indeed, certain services that some other cities provide won't necessarily be provided by Sandy Springs — either because they've outgrown their purpose, they're no longer effective, or they're outside the proper scope of government.

Florida's local officials can determine on a case-by-case basis whether it makes more sense for their community to "make" or "buy" public services.

Moreover, criticism of the way

Florida's state government handled contracts for the outsourcing of selected government services shouldn't deter local officials from experimenting. At the state level, the problem arguably wasn't in the game plan but in the execution.

While the Sandy Springs model isn't necessarily a good fit for every city, it does teach us an important lesson: that "business as usual" isn't the only operational model for local governments. Moreover, local governments need not adopt the entire model; rather, they can choose some services or entire departments to outsource to achieve savings.

Granted, such a change won't necessarily be easy for local governments. Over the years some have become addicted to spending more and more of your hard earned dollars. The insatiable beast never seems to be satisfied, always wanting more and more. And public employee unions, now the largest component of the labor movement, wield a lot of clout at the local level — especially in several of Florida's largest cities

and counties. Yet with a tax revolt brewing, something needs to be done to shake things up. For too many years local governments have been on auto-pilot when it comes to budgeting. They generally tend to spend more than they did the year before, with little real consideration of how sustainable that spending trend would be over the long term. Moreover, key budgeting decisions are too often based on consuming whatever revenue is available rather than the minimum required to get the job done.

By breaking the mold and encouraging the kind of innovation and creativity that Sandy Springs exemplifies, Florida's local governments could become more efficient and effective. Rooting out waste can also allow the funding of new programs and/or the expansion of existing programs that deserve to be expanded, all without raising taxes.

When local officials make efficient government their goal — as in Sandy Springs — and are unwilling to be held hostage by outdated processes, citizens reap the dividends. In Florida, rethinking how local governments operate can be the key to providing real property-tax relief.

Geoffrey F. Segal is an adjunct scholar of The James Madison Institute and the director of government reform at Reason Foundation.

## On the Spot:

WHERE WE PUT PEOPLE "ON THE SPOT" TO ANSWER A QUESTION "ON THE SPOT."

By Hannah Bunning

What are you doing for the summer?



"I am working at the Rec Center and I went to Italy."

-Jackie Beavers  
 Gulf Breeze



"I am working at Messer Law Firm and hanging out with my friends from high school."

-Katie Haney  
 Gulf Breeze

## Observe Flag Day to honor those who serve

Flag Day, June 14, is a day for all Americans to celebrate and show respect for our flag, its designers and makers. Our flag is representative of our independence and our unity as a nation...one nation, under God, indivisible. Our flag has a proud and glorious history. It was at the lead of every battle fought by Americans. Many people have died protecting it. It even stands proudly on the surface of the moon. As Americans, we have every right to be proud of our culture, our nation, and our flag. So raise the flag today and every day with pride.

Flag Day has always been a very special day for me. Old Glory has displayed in her Red, White and Blue colors for me in war and in peace. I fly the American flag from the top of my 25-foot flagpole day and night which located in my front yard. The US Marine Corps flag is displayed under Old Glory. They are lighted during the dark hours. My dear beloved mother died, age 90, on Flag Day 1987.

You can purchase an American flag that was flown over the capital building in Washington, D.C., by requesting it through Congressman Jeff Miller. If you need a flagpole installed on your property, contact Larry Hayes at: docksidedr@cox.net

Properly Display Our Flag.

### Letters to the Editor

There is a right way and a wrong way to display the flag. The American flag should be held in the highest of regards. It represents our nation and the many people who gave their lives for our country and our flag. Here are the basics on displaying the American flag:

1. The flag is normally flown from sunrise to sunset.
2. In the morning, raise the flag briskly. At sunset, lower it slowly. Always, raise and lower it ceremoniously.
3. The flag should not be flown at night without a light on it.
4. The flag should not be flown in the rain or inclement weather.
5. After a tragedy or death, the flag is flown at half staff for 30 days. It's called "half staff" on land, and "half mast" on a ship.
6. When flown vertically on a pole, the stars and blue field, or "union", is at the top and at the end of the pole.
7. The American flag is always flown at the top of the pole. Your state flag and other flags fly below it.
8. The union is always on top. When displayed in print, the stars and blue field are always on the

9. Never let your flag touch the ground, never...period.
10. Fold your flag when storing. Don't just stuff it in a drawer or box.
11. When your flag is old and has seen better days, it is time to retire it. Old flags should be burned or buried. Please do not throw it in the trash.

Noah H. Belew  
 Gulf Breeze

### City elections were not fair

A response published last week in GB News tells us that our previous comments regarding fair elections have missed the mark. We'll try again.

First, while running for GB City Council, J.B. Schluter used his influence as Vice-President of Gulf Breeze Sports Association (GBSA) to organize a GBSA endorsement in support of his candidacy. GBSA is a community-based, non-profit, tax-exempt organization and it is forbidden by federal tax laws for any officer or board member to use activities of a

nonprofit organization for personal benefit.

Second, using funds collected from the community for sports activities, GBSA published and distributed a political endorsement of Mr. Schluter's candidacy to all residents of the City. Endorsement of any candidate in any election by a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is strictly prohibited by federal tax laws. Both of these limitations on nonprofit activities are clearly described at www.irs.gov.

Our concerns are not about sports, expanding athletic fields, good-old-boys or who would make a better city council member. We are simply concerned that Mr. Schluter and GBSA have illegally interfered in City elections and that no measures have been taken to prevent them or others from repeating these actions.

What's frustrating is that GB City Council does not seem to care about the current violations (or GBSA's conflict of interest with the City) and claim it is none of their business. With this perspective from our city leaders, should we expect fair elections in the future?

Bill and Julie Ann Fisher  
 Gulf Breeze



"I am going to Costa Rica to tell people about Jesus."

-Cody Matthews  
 Pensacola



"I am studying abroad in Jerusalem and traveling in England and Egypt."

-Aaron Shoemaker  
 Gulf Breeze