

Opinions

Important adjustments coming

By Leo Chappelle

There is an 8-mill property tax coming up for renewal on the ballot on April 30, 2022. Voting for it won't change how much tax you're paying. If you vote against it, then it will pretty much shut down the parish government. As attractive as that may seem sometimes, it's a temptation best to be resisted. Voting against it wouldn't make any of our needs go away; it would just mean we couldn't pay for them anymore.

This 8-mill tax supports mostly functions of our local criminal justice system, for which the Police Jury is responsible to provide, and not so much the usual Police Jury activities. It goes for, among other things, "courthouse utilities, maintenance and supplies, prisoner care, partial expenses for 7th Judicial District Attorney and Judge's offices, Registrar of Voters and Clerk of Court; mailing of Criminal Jury summons; Coroner Fees (including autopsies and coroner emergency certificates)."

A complaint I have that is both semantic and political is the trope that a tax renewal is not a new tax. Actually, it is. The old tax has died and

the tax you're voting for amounts to a new social-political contract. But be that as it may, it usually, as in this case, changes nothing to vote for the tax renewal. The terms of the new tax are the same as the old tax now expiring. I suppose it's a distinction without a difference. It only means our necessary government services will continue and there won't be a collapse of civilization. Without this 8-mill tax, though, we don't have another source from which to pay for these vital functions of our self-government.

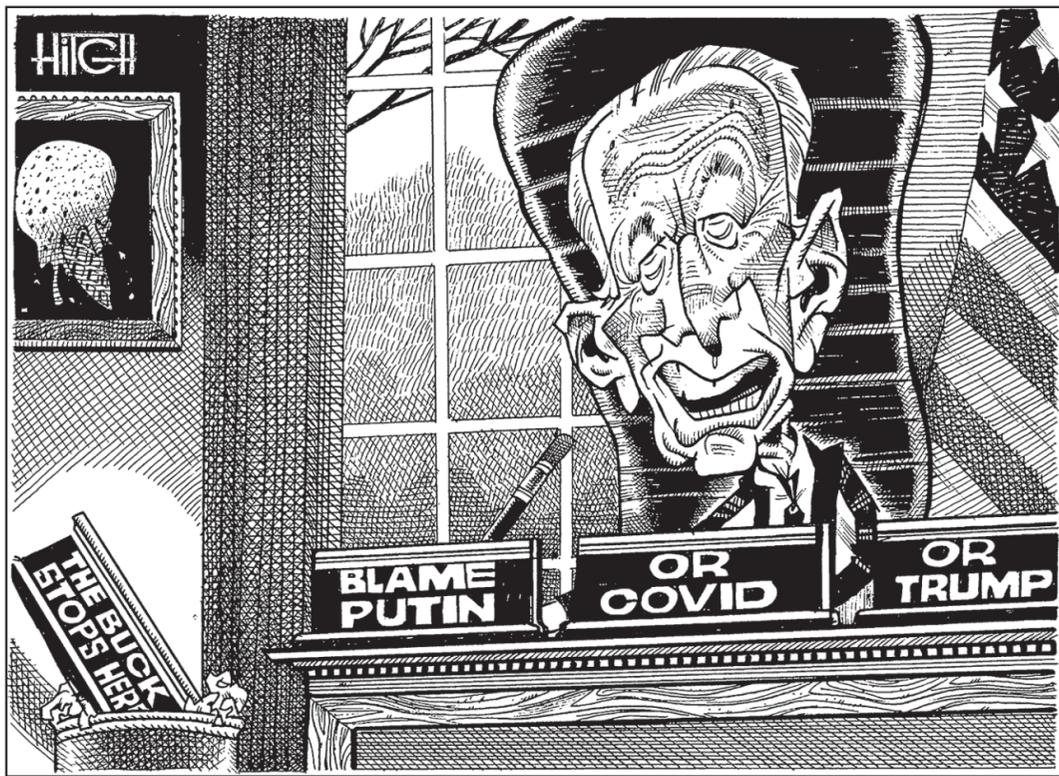
In other business, the Police Jury voted to amend Ordinance 2958, a burn ban ordinance, by providing that those found guilty of violating the ban could, on conviction, be fined up to \$500 by the parish and sentenced to 30 days' vacation at the taxpayers' expense in the Catahoula Hilton. There's an important consequence of this change that no one mentioned.

Because of the addition of these penalties, if you are not receiving garbage collection service from the parish and you dispose by burning of your garbage in a period during which burning is

prohibited, you may be subject to prosecution, and if convicted, then fines and incarceration.

Now, I still don't like it one bit the way the Police Jury created its \$12 monthly sanitation tax, but \$500 would pay for almost three and a half years of that \$12 monthly "fee". And remember, whether you pay the \$12 now and have your garbage picked up or not, the \$12 still accumulates as a debt against your property in the tax assessor's office.

Rural communities, whether called "counties" or "parishes", as we do here in the civilized world, are all losing population. That circumstance self-evidently entails that fewer taxpayers are supporting much the same infrastructure. There is a day of reckoning coming because of this inexorable trend. We will all have to decide what changes are necessary to keeping ourselves viable in the present and positioned for growth in the future. And at some point, we will have to grow because the alternative is to die. Nothing less than God stays unchanged forever.



THE RICH LOWRY COLUMN

Ron DeSantis and the New Republican Party

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had another moment that lit up the right, this time pushing back against Disney's critique of the so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill.

In his statement, DeSantis was absolutely stalwart, saying that the chances are "zero" that he's going to back away from his support for the law. And he didn't hesitate to go on offense against Disney. He said it had made a fortune off being family-friendly so should understand that families don't want inappropriate material injected into the curriculum at schools and smacked the company for making money in China without denouncing the brutal practices of the Chinese Communist Party.

DeSantis had been equally forthright a few days earlier, contesting the dishonest "Don't Say Gay" characterization by a reporter at a news conference. "It's why people don't trust people like you," the governor said, "because you peddle fake narratives, and so we disabuse you of those narratives."

This is the voice of the new Republican Party.

Which is not to say that the party wasn't socially conservative before (George W. Bush ran against gay marriage in 2004), or that it didn't criticize the media (one of George H.W. Bush's best moments in 1988 was slamming Dan Rather during a live interview). But there's a new combativeness that is clearly a reflection of how Trump underlined the power of cultural issues and changed the rules around how you deal with controversy -- by doubling down and hitting back harder.

Perhaps DeSantis would be just as inclined to rumble if Donald Trump had never emerged -- Chris Christie, for instance, had considerable success with a "bring it on" attitude toward criticisms

during his governorship.

What feels new, though, is the zest for combat on cultural issues, as well as a willingness to bring to bear public power to the fight where possible (government has every right to control what is and isn't taught in government schools).

There's also a complete intolerance for playing along with false media narratives.

And, lastly, there's zero hesitation to stand up to corporations siding with the left in policy disputes. It seemed several years ago in the debates over religious-freedom restoration acts at the state level that corporations held the whip hand over state officials. Not anymore. Not after Republicans have learned that the appropriate response to such pressure is, "No. Hell, no."

If this new approach draws on Trump, it should vitiate one of the arguments long made for Trump: "At least he fights." Now, the party is full of people who want to fight in a broadly similar fashion -- however, with important differences from Trump.

In the "Don't Say Gay" controversy, DeSantis isn't relitigating what happened in the last election; he is freshly litigating a defense against a cutting-edge progressive cause.

He isn't defending the indefensible; he's defending the eminently defensible, in fact the unfairly maligned.

He isn't dragging anyone through a fight occasioned by his personal failings or dubious practices; he's standing up for a well-considered conservative initiative.

And he isn't jousting with reporters who know more about the contested topic than he does; no, on this and pretty much everything else, he knows more than any of his antagonists.

So, DeSantis opens up a vista offering an important element of Trumpism without the baggage or selfishness of Trump.

The same can be said of Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton. He gave a speech the other day at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library that thoughtfully integrated Trumpian populist themes with traditional GOP thinking.

Here is another vista, of a policy vision with a strong element of Trumpism that might have broad appeal to GOP voters of all stripes without the distracting obsessions of the former president.

This gets at what could be one of the most persuasive arguments to Republican voters for Trump not running again -- not that he needs to go away so the old party can be restored, but that he's unnecessary because a new party has emerged.

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