

California’s star is fading

I give credit to columnist Joel Kotkin and his buddy Charlie Sena for attempting to rationalize the political train wreck known formerly as the great state of California [“California’s choice: growth or decline,” Opinion, June 1]. Decades of progressive social experimentation has transformed the Golden State into a highly taxed, onerously regulated, union-dominated nanny state.

Our claim to fame is being home to more than 30 percent of the country’s welfare recipients, as well as the preferred destination for millions of illegal immigrants who cost the state billions of dollars each year in education and health care expenditures.

Corporations continue to flee the state, seeking safe havens like Texas with no state income tax, few regulations and a welcome sign to innovators and entrepreneurs. Environmentalists have destroyed the Central Valley, once known as the breadbasket of America, by favoring the Delta smelt and kangaroo rat over sound economic policy.

Climate alarmists and their political cronies have foisted cap-and-trade policies on us that have produced electric rates that are double those in most states and gasoline taxes that are the highest in the nation.

There is nothing that could make this state look good. Kotkin and Sena would be better served to start a re-education program for voters who continue to elect Democrats to offices that are clearly above their pay grade.

Until then, they recommend we dream of the good old days when Pat Brown was king, and the surf was awesome. As for me, I’m waiting to see how many more billions of dollars the “bullet train to nowhere” is going to cost us and where to hunker down until the adults take over the state again.

Clyde Harkins
Corona del Mar

PLAYING CHESS WITH STATE PERSONNEL

The article “Agencies play personnel shell game” [News, June 1] is yet another perfect example of the news media lambasting and vilifying civil service workers. It implies that they are, with deliberation and forethought, trying to circumvent an issue, a “bizarre and byzantine solution” to a problem, as quoted from the article, for purely “financial” gain and largess.

There is one element of truth to the article. Yes, it is a common practice to move an employee around, into and out of a position so as to not lose that position. However, it has absolutely nothing to do with



The California state Capitol building.

REGISTER FILE PHOTO

not losing money from the budget. It does, on the other hand, have everything to do with not losing the personnel position. During the past 10 years or so, due to the plethora of budgetary crises, the state has implemented numerous “hiring freezes.” This has meant that, despite the need or dire circumstances, “no one else could be hired.” No position could be filled.

Under the personnel guidelines that the state has operated under for approximately the past 10 years, once a personnel position is lost, you cannot get it back.

Despite the requisite justification or need for the position, Sacramento will not justify that position being reinstated or re-implemented or re-instituted. Once lost, a position is “gone forever.”

It is a manager’s fiduciary duty to protect and maintain buildings and facilities, which, as state-owned properties, are specifically owned by the public. To do otherwise would be to abrogate one’s responsibilities and duties. To knowingly allow the loss of a “personnel position,” which would lead to the degradation of state-owned property, would be a breach of that fiduciary responsibility.

The “shell game” was, and is, a requisite and necessary evil, needed to allow the staffing needs of departments to be re-implemented once the “hiring freeze” is lifted.

Charles Wellington
Fullerton

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The criminal and unethical behavior in Sacramento continues to amaze me. The latest scheme – of changing em-

ployee-identifying numbers to make it appear that an agency or department has more employees than it really has so it can keep its budget – is fraud.

If I padded the number of dependents on my state income tax return to keep more of my income, which is exactly the same as what these managers and supervisors are doing, I’d be fined and arrested for tax fraud and evasion.

Reportedly, this practice has been going on for a long time. Where have the state attorney general and other state law enforcement officials been? Furthermore, what other criminal and unethical activities are going on in the state’s bureaucracy that is costing California taxpayers?

California Attorney General Kamala Harris should immediately begin investigations and prosecutions to stop this criminal fraud that is costing California taxpayers millions of dollars annually.

R.L. Figard
Fountain Valley

BROWN’S HIGH-SPEED RAIL IS PROACTIVE

I am tired of reading all the criticism of Jerry Brown’s support of high-speed rail. There are two kinds of politicians: proactive and reactive. Gov. Jerry Brown observes the world’s use of high-speed trains. He foresees a problem with transportation in California’s future, and he sets out to do something about it.

Republicans would rather wait until we have a problem and then try to find a solution. If California doesn’t start working toward its future, we might as well go back to using steam locomotives. That way

we can use some of America’s precious coal.

Wayne Via
Dana Point

GOP STRONGHOLD NO MORE?

So, Democrats have gained ground on O.C. Republicans, and the trend will continue until they overtake them [“GOP loses dominance in O.C.,” Front Page, June 1]? Sounds great. That’s what happened to Detroit more than 50 years ago, and look where that once-mighty industrial city sits now. Put that fact together with California’s reputation for chasing business away to other states, and we’re all in trouble.

You know, the worst thing about being able to say “I told you so” is that there will be no real satisfaction in it. Our once-powerful economy will be a thing of the past, and Orange County will be left a ruin.

There’s no satisfaction when it comes down to living in the ruins of a formerly great state.

Dan Johanesik
Huntington Beach

CALIFORNIA BLUES

What a surprise. California is the bluest state in the country, and we’re all singing the blues. Huge debt, broken border, education system is shot, companies and taxpayers leaving the state, unions disappearing, wages declining, increasing numbers of poor people and people on the dole, gangs everywhere and a governor set on building a \$100 billion bullet train. Absolute genius.

Rodger Clarke
Santa Ana

democracy at its best.

Jim Harley
Dana Point

DANGERS OF INTERVENTIONISM

In his column, “Why Benghazi really matters” [Opinion, June 1], it appears that Professor Robert G. Kaufman’s biggest complaint about President Barack Obama’s interventionist foreign policy is that it’s light on intervention.

It shouldn’t surprise anyone that an academic from a private Christian college in Malibu would write a book entitled “In Defense of the Bush Doctrine.”

What should surprise those of us here in Orange County is that the Register doesn’t devote more column space to those who are willing to point out the dangers of interventionism, regardless of who is at the helm.

Paul Marsden
Garden Grove

WAR AGAINST TERROR

Is swap a catalyst for terrorism?

President Barack Obama has released five vicious terrorists from the Guantanamo Bay Military Prison in exchange for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who reportedly walked away from his regiment without his firearm, possibly deserting his fellow soldiers.

One result of this decision by our president to negotiate with terrorists is that word will quickly spread throughout the world that capturing or kidnapping an American – in uniform or not – will reap great rewards. We now have a bull’s-eye painted on our backs.

And those five high-value terrorists will undoubtedly be released shortly from their overseas prison, only to return to positions of high command in the fanatic Islamic killing fields, as others have done before them.



Bergdahl

Upon giving up these terrorists without the required 30-day notice to Congress, President Barack Obama justified his unilateral decision by emphasizing that “We leave no man behind.”

Except in Benghazi, that is, about which we still have no cogent answers about why our ambassador, two former Navy Seals and a highly valued technical expert were abandoned by this administration to die at the hands of Islamic terrorists.

It does seem that this president has an uncanny ability to make decisions that run against this country’s best interests.

Laurella A. Cross
Irvine

COURT-MARTIAL TO COME?

When I was in the Marine Corps during World War II, a Marine who left his post without being under his superior’s orders, without his weapons, in the enemy’s terrain and who knew he would be captured, was considered a deserter. Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl did just that, according to his then-fellow soldiers and commanding officers. Bergdahl also has forgotten how to speak understandable English but speaks the language of his captors. What’s that all about? This sounds fishy to me.

I hope the military unit he left behind considers a court-martial of Bergdahl for desertion in the face of the enemy during wartime. Maybe he could spend a few years in a U.S. federal prison where he could re-learn English.

In my eyes, a deserter is lower than a snake, and should be treated as such. I know it sounds tough, but I think a lot of his fellow soldiers feel the same way.

Gil Luft
Costa Mesa

‘PRISONER EXCHANGE MAKES PERFECT SENSE’

It’s impossible to have a rational discussion about the recent prisoner exchange of Taliban detainees for a U.S. soldier because we’ve dumbed-down the definition of “terrorist.” Terrorists are people who strap bombs to their bodies or fly planes into buildings in order to terrorize a targeted population to achieve some political or ideological concessions.

Not every Muslim who is angry with the United States or the West is a terrorist. Al-Qaida is a terrorist organization, but not the Taliban, per se. The latter is a significant political faction of an area in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

There are only a handful of people ever held at Guantanamo that are al-Qaida operatives or suspected to have worked for al-Qaida in some capacity. The rest are enemy combatants captured in a war, i.e., prisoners of war. The George W. Bush administration and its neocon allies falsely portrayed the Taliban and the detainees as terrorists in order to propagandize and justify the worst foreign policy mistake in U.S. history.

It’s time to reconsider who and what constitutes terrorism so we can extricate ourselves from a perpetual war, with perpetual prisoners held without trial or protections of either the Constitution or the Geneva Convention. When viewed in that perspective, the prisoner exchange makes sense, especially since we are soon ending active involvement in Afghanistan’s conflict.

Tom Chapman
Huntington Beach

Jettison free speech, and tyranny is next

After reading “Ivory tower intolerance” [Opinion, June 1], I would like to thank Michael Bloomberg for championing the tolerance of diversity of opinion, especially during a graduation ceremony at an elitist liberal bastion such as Harvard University.

I commend him for that. In our society, the popular axiom is diversity in race, culture and religion. But heaven forbid anyone believes or expresses the virtues of a homogenous society, even one that aided in the defeat of tyranny, not once, but three times.

I have encountered opposi-

tion to my beliefs about illegal immigration, my opposition to gun control and socialized medicine, some of which turned into threats of physical violence and vandalism. I have also had associates with similar views be threatened and assaulted for their beliefs. .

If members of our nation’s academia, mainstream media and religions, who are prejudiced against beliefs that run contrary to their own, disallow the expression of arguments opposed to theirs then we, as a nation, have taken one more step toward totalitarianism.

In this day and age, tyranny will slip in silently and stealthily.

Michael Hitchens, M.A.
Santa Ana

FIXING A BROKEN 2-PARTY SYSTEM

Mark Landsbaum’s column, “How freedom slowly yields to tyranny” [Opinion, May 31], correctly points out that the

incremental expansion of government power continues from administration to administration, regardless of the party in control. The obvious, problem is the Republican and Democratic parties themselves, not any individual senator or president.

As is said in contract law, “time is of the essence.” The people have to take some action to cut back the power of the two major parties. Retention in office is the politician’s primary goal once elected. If he toes the party line, his reelection is assured.

Term limits are the only cure for this perversion of democracy. I humbly suggest that the limits be one four-year term in the House of Representatives and one six-year term in the Senate. A constitutional amendment would require a lot of public support, and the party hacks will viciously fight it to the bitter end. And that’s called

HOW TO SEND US A LETTER

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