

COMMENTARY

AG's 'sanctuary' directive should be overturned

By Ted Costa

So, you're confused about "sanctuary states"? Join the club. It seems that many of the so-called blue states have adopted varying degrees of "sanctuary" for illegal aliens.

There are about 475,000 illegal aliens in our state of 9 million residents. New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal recently created an Immigrant Trust Directive granting certain protections to illegal aliens. So what's wrong with that?

Many lawyers believe — and the Constitution requires — that immigration policy is best left exclusively to the federal government, since it is not logical for each state to have its own policy. Fifty shades of gray is simply inconsistent with a national immigration policy. Now, the details:

First, the directive provides a "don't ask, don't tell" policy for illegals. This policy would prevent police from needlessly

asking people on the street for "your papers, please" should an illegal seek assistance. The policy would encourage illegals to speak to the police without fear of deportation.

In reality, our local police rarely caused deportation anyway, so as a practical matter that part of the directive has little consequence. Had the attorney general stopped the directive at that noncontroversial point, all would be fine. But he did not.

Unfortunately, the directive goes further to protect criminal aliens from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. How? With only limited exceptions, our police/prison officials will no longer provide ICE with helpful "personally identifying information" of an illegal arrested for an offense, including names, photographs, fingerprints, phone numbers, etc.

In addition, the directive stops New Jersey from holding such criminal alien beyond

the time that a legal resident would be held, even if ICE has submitted an official detainer request. Nor will the state inform ICE of said person's upcoming release date, just to make sure ICE's mission is stymied. Nor can we question an illegal alien about anything, unless the alien signs a written consent form.

Finally, even for violent offenses (rape, assault, etc.), New Jersey may detain an illegal upon ICE's request only until midnight that day; if ICE agents arrive beyond that, the illegal alien skates freely away. The directive is clearly designed to thwart information-gathering that would otherwise be shared among all levels of law enforcement, and to otherwise protect criminal illegals from ICE.

I am reminded of events leading to 9/11, whereby some FBI officials learned that Middle Eastern men were training to take off and fly airplanes, but not to land. Had this information

been communicated to other appropriate authorities, our government would have been better able to connect the dots and prevent the worst attack in our nation's history.

Law enforcement is often a multipronged, coordinated effort by many agencies, constructed upon a foundation of shared information. This allows trained professionals to identify perpetrators and trends to thwart criminal activity. Yet this is precisely what the directive is preventing.

Instead, New Jersey is fast becoming a safe harbor for illegal aliens committing crime, including the notorious MS-13 gang. They are given the right to freely enter our state, gain protection from ICE, obtain benefits and commit further crime, while law enforcement's arms are tied behind its back. This will only cause innocent citizens to suffer in an all-too-predictable fashion. At a minimum, our

legislators should demand that our officials share all identifying information of incarcerated aliens, and otherwise cooperate with ICE, so that ICE may do its job to deter crime. This will not only offer greater protection to those lawfully in the country, but also to those who are unlawfully here.

I would add, as a final note, that it's not just South Americans coming up from the border unvetted, but also aliens of the world that hate our civilization — creating yet another risk. Unfortunately, the word is out about "catch and release," which only encourages illegal entry, because they know they can remain here even after being caught.

I would urge our state legislators to do their job, overturn the directive, and keep our residents safe.

Ted Costa is a member of the Hainesport Township Committee.

Biden right where he belongs in middle lane

By Carl Golden

"Finding a lane" has become this election cycle's shorthand advice to candidates attempting to separate themselves from the competition and focus on a predetermined course that will lead to the ultimate prize.

For the 21 candidates seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, finding a lane has meant throwing sharp elbows, cutting one another off in the best tradition of congested freeway driving, and knocking them permanently off stride.

Former Vice President Joe Biden is currently occupying the least-crowded lane of all, right in the middle, where history instructs us the majority of the American people are.

The other 20 have chosen the left lane and, in a version of the carnival amusement ride bumper cars, are clanging off one another on an increasingly narrow path, marked by each outplugging his or her competitors in support of a breathtaking array of government-provided services and multi-trillion-dollar spending.

Biden, who risked becoming a caricature of Hamlet as he agonized over whether to enter the race, leads the field by a margin ranging from single digits to nearly 30 points, depending on which poll findings one accepts.

While instant name recognition built up over some 40 years in public life and his perch at the right hand of President Barack Obama for eight years undoubtedly played a role in Biden's poll standings, his philosophy of moderation, embrace of the bipartisan politics of the possible and man-of-the-people demeanor have placed him apart from the headlong stampede to the left and the promises of a fantasy, utopian America overseen by a benevolent federal government that will — in the words of one cynic — "fix everybody's leaky faucet."

Biden is on cruise control in a deserted middle lane, gliding past those bunched in a pack on his

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left who are jockeying for a favorable position while arguing over who is more progressive; i.e., who can promise more social services, no matter how expensive or unrealistic.

Of the left-lane runners, five have risen above their competition as possible threats to Biden: Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Kamala Harris of California and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts; former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke; and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Cory Booker of New Jersey are stuck at 2 to 4 percent support, struggling to remain in the conversation.

The remainder of the field is irrelevant, and it won't be long before Las Vegas bookies start taking action on whether Gillibrand, Klobuchar, Booker or O'Rourke will survive past the Iowa caucuses in January.

Biden's front-runner status and impressive fundraising are clear evidence that the surge to the left led by the more militant members of Congress is neither as powerful or as widespread as its leaders would have people believe.

As candidates align themselves more tightly with the left, they risk placing the interests of a narrow sliver of the electorate above those of the broader American public — the segment of the population that played an outsized role in sending Donald Trump to the White House in 2016.

They are bogged down in cross attempts to one-up one another, arguing over who is more ideologically pure on issues like

"Medicare for all," immigration reform, free college tuition, student loan debt forgiveness, reparations for descendants of slaves, allowing prisoners (including convicted murderers and terrorists) to vote, increasing taxes and breaking up corporate behemoths.

They've ignored polling data that reveals voters, including a majority who identify themselves as Democrats, place a higher priority on nominating a candidate capable of defeating Trump than on ideology.

Translation: Voters prefer a candidate in the middle lane.

Enter Joe Biden.

To be sure, Biden's history will be a factor as the campaigns play out, but he's demonstrated he can deal with it. He deftly responded to allegations of unwanted personal interactions with females, apologizing for creating an uncomfortable situation, pledging to be more considerate in the future, and attributing his conduct to a natural inclination toward comfort and compassion.

He has found his lane. It's the one he's occupied for the better part of his public life, the one where he is not only the most comfortable but also the one in which he's enjoyed considerable success.

America is still a centrist nation in its politics, and if it chooses Biden next year, the ideological excesses of the Democratic Party may be purged at last.

Carl Golden is a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. He served as press secretary for Gov. Tom Kean and as communications director for Gov. Christie Whitman.



Inclusion at the heart of expanding YMCA program

By Greg Keresztury

Here at YMCA of the Pines in Medford, we have long been committed to serving people of diverse backgrounds, experiences and abilities. Typically, this has been through our specialty camps, which serve targeted populations, or through our partnerships with social service agencies.

However, this is not all we do. In recent years, we have taken larger steps to create more opportunities for campers with diverse abilities. I want to explore one step, as I believe our special needs collaborative, a program we began in 2017, exemplifies our core value of inclusion at YMCA of the Pines.

During the summer of 2017, we partnered with the Shamong School District to start a "community inclusion collaborative," in which we worked with school officials to bring students from the district's extended school year program to Lake Stockwell Day Camp for four weeks. The students were enrolled in the district's summer program mostly for its additional socialization opportunities, rather than for significant behavioral issues.

By removing the students from the pressures and stressors that can come from being in a school environment, and instead bringing them to our beautiful outdoor camp facility, the campers were able to enjoy a more traditional summer experience, all while building and developing the necessary social skills to enable them to succeed in life.

Of course, being able to do so while swimming or canoeing in a lake, taking target practice at archery, or creating friendship bracelets during arts and crafts also allowed the students to develop other

skills and learn more about what they can accomplish.

During its first summer at Lake Stockwell Day Camp, we found the program to be a tremendous success. The students, their families and the district praised how smoothly the transition from school to camp went and how positive the experience was for the students.

Because of this success, we expanded the program for the following summer and partnered with the Medford School District as well.

After experiencing more positive results in 2018, we expanded the program to the Tabernacle and Southampton school districts for this coming summer. We are excited for the opportunity to serve more local students through a positive camp experience.

Furthermore, we are especially gratified by the fact that through these partnerships, we are able to live our mission in a truly inclusive manner, by incorporating students who otherwise would be in a school setting into our camp program at Lake Stockwell.

This is what inclusion means to me and our organization, and is something that gives us great pride and satisfaction.

To conclude, I would like to thank our district partners from Shamong, Medford, Tabernacle and Southampton, who work so hard on their end to support this collaborative relationship, and the families within their districts who entrust us with their precious children.

It's truly awesome to see children become the best version of themselves, and we feel privileged to have a role in the process.

Greg Keresztury is the director of operations at YMCA of the Pines in Medford.