

MIAMI HERALD | EDITORIAL

Reunite migrant kids with their relatives

Democrats in the U.S. House, now in the majority and flexing their muscle, have long denounced, rightly so, the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy, under which adults who illegally crossed the border were criminally prosecuted.

As a result of the misbegotten policy, parents were separated from their children, who could not accompany them to jail.

The policy was the center of attention Tuesday as the House Judiciary Committee held its first hearing to question the people who crafted the controversial policy and those who enforce it. The ultimate goal must be to more quickly unite the children who are in detention with parents or other relatives in this country.

So far, the process has been sluggish, with children and young teens detained indefinitely. That shouldn't be.

The issue hits home in Miami-Dade County. The Homestead Migrant Child Detention Facility houses 1,600 unaccompanied minors between the ages of 13 and 17 who have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border. Many came without their parents. Others may have been separated from them. This is another problem with what has been a process as haphazard as it has been cruel. It remains unclear just how the children got to this country, clearly making finding parents

and other relatives more difficult.

We commend rookie Miami Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, a member of the Judiciary Committee and Congressional Hispanic Caucus, for taking the lead. Last week, she brought a congressional delegation to the Homestead facility and left visibly upset at the what she saw. "It had a prison-like feeling," said Mucarsel-Powell, whose district includes Homestead.

The lawmakers held a news conference after the visit and vowed to work to get it shut down. It's a noble goal. However, their efforts must be rooted in reality. Last month, according to WLRN News, Border Patrol says that it had apprehended more than 5,000 unaccompanied children at the border. Most of them came from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. They have to be housed somewhere.

Lawmakers pledged to work to reunite them with their families already in this country. They



WILFREDO LEE AP

U.S. Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell speaks to the media after visiting the Homestead child migrant detention facility.

would be wise to make this goal their priority.

Tuesday's hearing was the committee's first opportunity to grill immigration officials on Capitol Hill over the roll-out and subsequent consequences of the bungled policy. With Democrats

in the majority, the House committee now has the teeth and, it is hoped, the bite.

Among those testifying was Scott Lloyd, the former head of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the agency tasked with caring for unaccompanied migrant children. He admitted that unlike colleagues, he did not raise concerns about the implications of zero tolerance.

The policy has come under renewed scrutiny following a Health and Human Services inspector general report that found thousands more children had been separated than previously acknowledged. Of the more than 2,000 children who have been identified, many have been reunited with their parents, according to court filings in an ongoing family-separation lawsuit.

Still, too many remain separated from any adult relatives. This administration must take seriously its moral obligation to correct this.

OPEN MIC

Smile! Dental healthcare reform is coming

The current state of dental care in Florida is a mess. Florida lawmakers are right to address it.

However, the proposed solution of mid-level providers, called dental therapists in SB 1498, misses the mark and is anything but a market solution.

Dental therapists require less training and education than dentists and can perform a fraction of dental procedures.

Thus far, the only functional dental therapist program is in Minnesota, created in 2011. But the same issues in dental care persist: Costs are high, dental professionals in rural areas are lacking, and insurance is hard to come by.

Recent polls conducted in Arizona and Wisconsin found that 68 percent and 57 percent of adults in those states, respectively, oppose dental therapists as the "be all fix all" solution to our dental woes.

Instead, we should recognize out-of-state licenses for dentists, implement debt-relief plans for enticing dental students, and empower dental hygienists, who make up roughly a third of the dental workforce in this country.

Dental therapists are not akin to hair braiders, tattoo artists, or stylists strapped with unreasonable labor restrictions and occupational licensing. Instead, they are purely a creation of government mandates and bureaucratic tinkering rather than market demand. There are no real



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IMAGINE YOU WON THE PRISON TALENT SHOW 6 YEARS STR8 & THEN YOU FIND OUT R. KELLY IS COMIN'

Mac Antoine, on Facebook

WATER MEETING

There's a lot of talk about all that's wrong with South Florida's environment: sea-level rise, red tide and the health of the Everglades, for example. But the people of Miami-Dade County need to understand that the drastic measures being proposed to "fix" environmental problems in Martin and St. Lucie counties will negatively affect Miami-Dade residents and South Dade farmers.

A proposal to drain Lake Okeechobee down to 10.5 feet to protect the St. Lucie Estuary could end up raising the water table in Miami-Dade, further harming already-saturated farms because water sent south has to go somewhere.

If Lake Okeechobee ever manages to get down to 10.5 feet and a drought kicks in, which happens every few years, the pendulum would swing the other way for Miami-Dade. In

be wise to pay attention and make sure that, just because we're at the bottom of the water system, our priorities are not at the bottom of the pile.

— Jorge Abreu,
executive director
Dade County Farm Bureau

THEATER LESSONS

Kudos to Herald reporter Linda Robertson for her Feb. 25 story describing how rude Miami audiences are.

We were in our seats at the Arsht Center for the fabulous recent production of "Les Misérables." About 20 minutes in, two women carrying drinks and speaking loudly started climbing over all of us to find their seats. I told them, as they traipsed in, that it was inconsiderate of them to arrive so late. They smirked and laughed it off.

These same two returned to their seats after intermission when the play had resumed. I was tempted to

HUMAN EXPLOITATION

Who cares about Patriots owner Robert Kraft? Enough of him already. Where is the real story, the human trafficking, the exploitation? Or is that just a story that law enforcement is creating to justify this dragnet?

— Michael Holmquist,
Miami

POLL NUMBERS

I am continually amazed at Donald Trump's 87 percent approval rating among Republicans, despite event after event that should cause some people to change their minds about him.

I was a Republican for most of my life. I changed parties the day after Donald Trump received the nomination. I am no longer there to swell the number of members who do not approve of his presidency. I know that I am not alone. I constantly run into people who agree with Barack

Latecomers should not be seated in the last row of each section, as this would still disturb everyone in that section, including disabled patrons, who are typically seated there. Seating latecomers there would not be equitable.

— Jan Potker, Coral Gables

SEX TRAFFICKING

While there might be parallels between Jeffrey Epstein's criminal activity and that of Robert Kraft, the Patriots owner has far fewer violations. Epstein was a trafficker, organizer and deliverer of forced servitude, creating imposed physical and mental damage. Kraft, with his wealth and connections, could have taken the higher road to solicit companionship.

Had Kraft chosen to employ a high-priced, independent call girl, he would have been less visible and certainly more within acceptable means

TEACHER'S LAMENT

As a teacher, I would do anything to protect my students. Bringing a weapon into my classroom would not protect them. If anything, it would create additional unnecessary risk.

At the high school level, I have many students who are larger and stronger than I am. It would be easy for one of them — if they wanted to cause harm — to wrestle a weapon away from me. I am also not a trained police officer or a skilled shooter. I will not be put in the position where the bullet I shoot can kill one of my precious students or kill the bad guy, solely based on how well I aim.

Senate Bill 7030 is an insult to teachers and a pathetic attempt to control and console us. We want gun control, stricter gun laws, increased pay and safety measures for our school. Our leaders need to

miami. There are no roving bands of therapists operating without licenses.

In Wisconsin, the governor is asking for \$1 million to fund the dental therapy program next year, and millions more will be required to fund it going forward. Is that what we want in Florida?

We need more in the toolbox than just creating a new provider level and government program that adds its own costs.

— *Yael Ossowski, deputy director, Consumer Choice Center, Arlington, VA*

way for Miami-Dade. In that case, we'll need to get ready for severe water restrictions and the potential for saltwater intrusion into our drinking-water supply. Under extreme drought conditions, the Everglades to our west could end up on fire, harming our national treasure, wildlife, tourism and our air quality.

At 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28 at the North Dade Regional Library in Miami Lakes, the Army Corps of Engineers will meet to get public input about a new Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule, known as Lake Okeechobee System Operations Manual (LO-SOM). Miami-Dade would

resumed. I was tempted to trip them, but I didn't. We've had season tickets for more than 10 years, and this remains a persistent problem.

Being on time, staying after the performance for curtain calls, respect for other people in the theater — all are lessons to be learned and practiced.

— *Annette Katz, Palmetto Bay*

HARD TO READ

The deplorable living condition of the day-spa workers was news fit to print. The graphic description of a famous spa patron's services was inappropriate and unnecessary.

— *Ferne Kalstone, Coral Gables*

who once were Republicans.

I suspect there are enough ex-Republicans to form a third party of a respectable size. I also suspect that, if such a party existed, Trump's approval rating would rise to 99 percent, because true conservatives would have a place to go, leaving behind what is effectively the Party of Trump.

— *Arnold Slotkin, Hollywood*

BETWEEN SEATS

I enjoy the performances at the Arsht Center and have never experienced the bad manners of the audience described in the Feb. 25 story.

ceptable mores.

It is better for all to have a regulated and inspected prostitution industry than our unregulated, victim-laden one. If we insist on allowing this free-for-all, then let us place first list to be held accountable and punished the organizers and traffickers who put no value on a human's right to freely exist.

There is much talk about getting the bad guys, but these dens of iniquity seem to flourish throughout the country. Would anyone in his right mind want his wife, daughter or sister to be forcibly caught in this demeaning web?

— *Michael G. Merhige, Kendall*

school. Our readers need to talk to teachers, come to our schools and ask us what we want. This is our passion and our livelihood. We know what our students need; we know what is right for our schools.

— *Janelle Alongi, Davie*

UNDER THE SEA

Those complaining about the level of construction and development going in Coral Gables, Miami, or Florida in general, are being shortsighted. One day these buildings will make beautiful artificial reefs and restore our ecosystem after our climate returns to normal.

— *Mike Crudele, South Miami*

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