

BULLY PULPIT

Gardening and life

It's Tuesday morning, 3.5 plus-or-minus inches of rain are settling into the ground; dust isn't quite billowing out from behind my car – give it a couple of hours and things will be back to normal again.

I watched a Fox News special where one of their people went into El Salvador's notorious new prison, Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT, built by President Nayib Bukele; Bukele now touts that El Salvador is one of the safest countries in the world after the super prison opened.

What struck me, I believe new United States Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem was touring the prison, was the dark, hopeless look in the eyes of the prisoners. The prison supposedly can hold up to 40,000 prisoners; a place where not everyone gets a bunk, the lights never go off and they get fed minimally.

I'm not speaking to why people were in prison, right or wrong, I just saw the mostly brown, dark eyes that looked like the pits of hell were inside of the men housed in CECOT. The maximum-security prison was erected to try to make the lawless country of El Salvador a place where families, tourists, etc. would like to live and visit once again.

Now, kids to adults, with most bearing the tattoos of their favorite gang whether its MS-13, Tren de Aragua, or other organizations, living in cages where most will never see the light of day again.

I'm simply speaking on the plight of the human population there; poverty, family influence, peer pressure, safety – whatever the motivator moved those men into a place where they learned to kill, rape, maim, etc. over being decent human beings.

Society needs a place to house people that kill, etc. El Salvador made a huge investment and chose to clean their country up in a few short years. With Easter just past, the Christian holiday marking the return of Jesus from the dead after he was crucified on Good Friday, the lifeless look in the eyes of the prisoners gave a visualization of a life without Christ.

Back to rain, my garden was newly planted; in my not so infinite wisdom, I planted everything before the big rain came to give it a good spring dousing.

Well, that much rain, sometimes coming down in buckets, didn't do my lettuce too much good as it is planted barely beneath the top of the soil. Other seeds that were planted deeper seem to have made it through the deluge pretty well.

My mind brought the prison and gardening together because outside influences caused conditions to be erratic in my garden, and, apparently, erratic for the humans that joined the gangs now residing in CECOT.

Rain splattered seed all over; rows of what would have been lettuce remain to be seen if they come up or stay in neat long rows. Humans that succumbed to the sins of murder, rape, etc. are scattered from society to live lives of solitude and remorse.

Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin; rain grows crops, too much rain destroys. Sin destroys lives – but Jesus can forgive if we ask. Lifeless eyes seen in the holes on faces can become eyes with hope, hope of seeing heaven and not hell.

Meanwhile, my now unruly garden may produce food, it may have to be replanted in spots; humans can start over, they can be rehabilitated – at least spiritually inside that prison.

Spring is a wonderful time, but the dead eyes in those men's faces haunt me. They are paying for their sins; but Jesus already paid fully, they just need to recognize that.

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Scamming sophisticated scammers

BY TOM PURCELL

A few years ago, my then 70-something mom was targeted by telephone scammers.

“Grandma,” said a young man pretending to be her grandson, Jerrod, “I’m in trouble.”

He said he was in Canada, unaware he had been fishing illegally. He said he was arrested and needed bail money.

My mother immediately became aware the caller was a fraudster. In her feeblest voice, she said, “What do you need, honey?”

“They assigned me a lawyer,” said the scammer. “Can I have him call you? Please don’t tell anyone.”

“I won’t even tell Grandpa!” she said.

A moment later, “the lawyer” called.

“This is serious,” said a stern male voice. “We need to raise \$575 in two hours or the

judge will send Jerrod to jail.”

He gave her instructions to wire money to Vancouver. She told him she’d do her best.

Ninety minutes later, the scammer called back.

“I have the cash,” said my mother, “but my car won’t start!”

“Can you take a cab?”

“I don’t know how,” she said. “Maybe my neighbors can help. Can you give me 15 minutes?”

He called back.

“My neighbor’s husband will be home soon. Can you give me a half-hour?”

He called again.

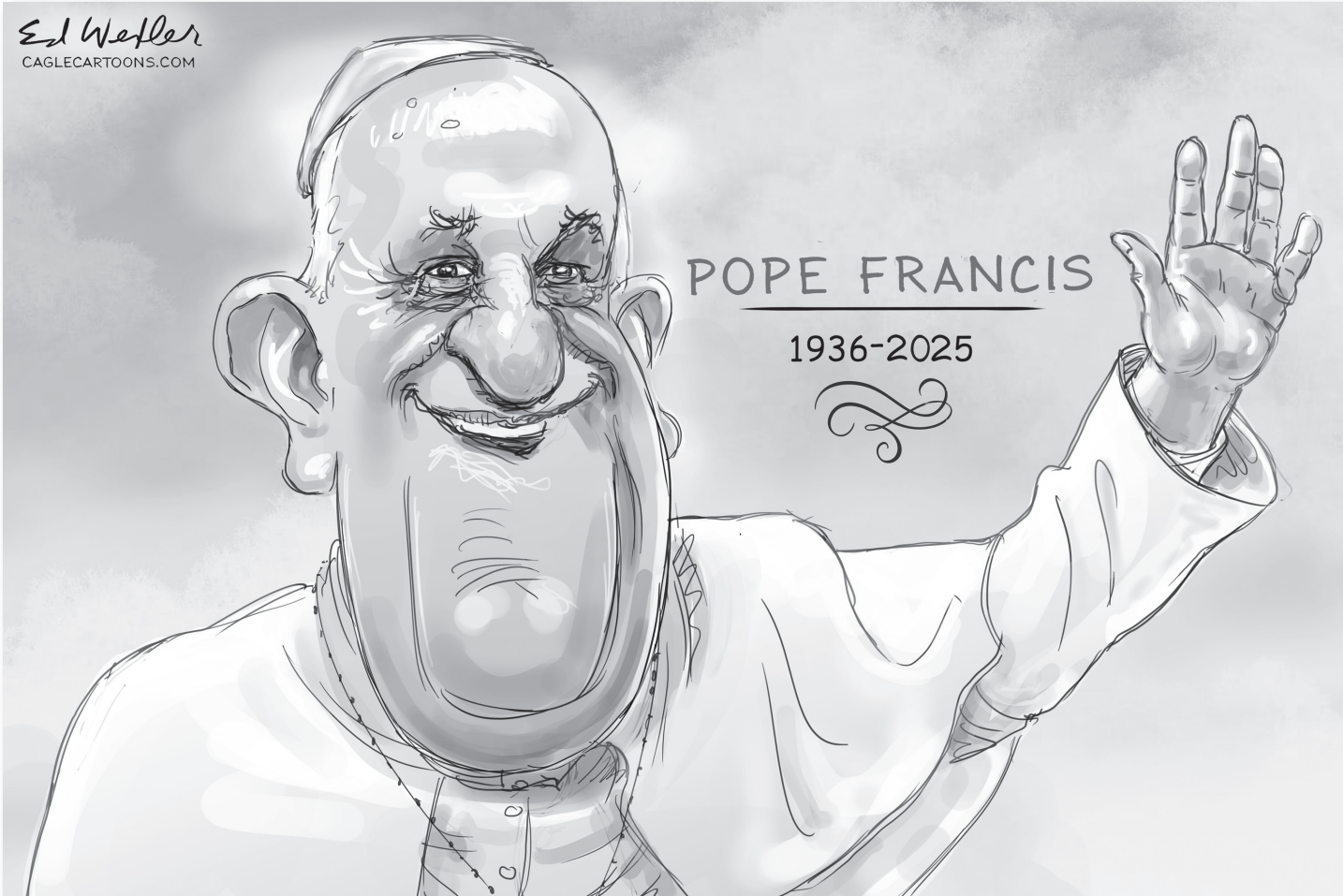
“I went to Western Union, but the lady said I didn’t have the right information. Can you give it to me again?”

Grumbling, he did.

“Can I talk to my grandson?”

“He’s with the judge,” said the scammer.

“May I have your number in



Latest immigration fight is taking place in Tennessee

BY JOE GUZZARDI

In Tennessee, controversial bills allowing Tennessee school districts to deny enrollment to illegal alien students have taken another step toward becoming law.

The bills – House Bill 793 and SB 836 – would give permission to Tennessee schools to verify children are citizens or have legal immigrant or visa status before enrolling them. Schools could then deny enrollment to the children who cannot prove their status or charge them tuition.

The two versions differ in one key respect: the House bill makes it optional to check student immigration status. In the Senate version, immigration status checks

are mandatory in Tennessee's more than 1,700 public schools and all public charter schools.

The bills' sponsors argued the legislation is needed to both quantify the number of illegal alien students attending Tennessee schools and to protect the state's limited financial resources. Opponents claim the bill violates constitutional protections, particularly the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Plyler v. Doe*, which guarantees access to public education regardless of immigration status.

On both sides of the aisle, passions ran high. State Rep. John Ray Clemmons, a Democrat, slammed the bill and repeated clichés like, “Our country has a broken immigration system” and that

the bill is about “punishing innocent children.” Republican State Rep. Monty Fritts countered, “We’re not talking about immigrants, we’re talking about illegals. There’s a distinct difference. There is no greater act of rebellion in these U.S. than illegally coming across that border.”

In June 2024, the Federation of American Immigration Reform wrote that under *Plyler v. Doe*, local schools are obligated to provide illegal alien children with a taxpayer-funded K-12 education. The cost is staggering. The nation's price tag for educating illegal aliens' children in 2022 was \$70.8 billion. The data preceded the historic illegal immigrant surge that began in 2021 when President Joe Biden took office. Using

Florida Rep. Aaron Bean's conservative estimate of 500,000 new illegal aliens in U.S. public schools, the recent influx has added at least \$9.7 billion in additional taxpayer costs.

Parents' frustration with the ever-expanding illegal aliens' enrollment is understandable. Every teacher minute spent with a non-English speaking student, some of whom come in and out of the classroom depending on their parents' work obligations, is one less moment spent with a citizen pupil. The Nation's Report Card which showed sharp declines in reading and math scores for 9-year-olds, is attributable to, at least in part, the steady arrival of non-English speaking pupils.

SEE TENNESSEE, A3

The Five Million Fix

invalid voter registrations, as validity is defined in the National Voter Registration Act Of 1993.

According to the Act, each application to register “must state each voter eligibility requirement (including citizenship), contain an attestation that the applicant

meets each requirement, state the penalties provided by law for submission of a false voter registration application and require the signature of the applicant under penalty of perjury.”

Thanks to Judicial Watch, 735,000 ineligible names have been removed from Kentucky voter rolls since 2019; 918,139 ineligible names have been removed from New York City voter rolls since 2022; and over a million ineligible names have been removed from the voter rolls of Los Angeles County.

These efforts have also led to the removal of ineligible

names from the voter rolls of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Colorado, North Carolina, and outside of LA in California.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for the organization. In Maryland, for example, the State Board of Elections promulgated a rule to criminalize the use of registration lists to investigate voter fraud. A district court ruled that the rule violated the law.

Voter fraud is a problem, and it hasn't been fixed yet. Thanks to Judicial Watch for making a big dent.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

LETTERS POLICY

Linn County News encourages letters to the editor. They may be mailed, emailed, faxed or hand-delivered. To be published, the letter must:

- Be hand signed.
- Include writer's name, city and phone number as letters will be verified for authenticity.
- Be 500 words or less.
- Be received by 5 p.m. Monday to appear in that week's edition.
- We reserve the right to print or not print reader's contributions. No malicious, slanderous or threatening letters will be allowed.
- Letters with political content will not be accepted the week preceding an election as it does not allow time for a response.

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