

# SunSentinel OPINION

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SUN SENTINEL EDITORIAL

## The real reason DeSantis is targeting Broward

Ron DeSantis sure knows how to put the “bully” in bully pulpit.

The politician with the biggest platform in Florida is now using it to expose excessive local government spending.

Armed with new political weaponry, he can bully cities and counties into cooperating with his state-level DOGE operation, using the club of \$1,000-a-day fines that can't be appealed.

This crusade begins in Broward, an irresistible target with its liberal political leaders and voters who soundly rejected DeSantis twice. The mission is badly tainted because it looks nakedly partisan.

To make matters worse, DeSantis came to town Tuesday with his newly appointed Chief Financial Officer, Blaise Ingoglia, and they both already sounded convinced that Broward is wasting money, even before any research. On spending, Ingoglia called Broward “one of the worst offenders.”

As County Commissioner Steve Geller said: “They reached their conclusions before they did the audit.”

### What it's really about

Make no mistake: Broward should be held accountable for spending public money. Top county officials agree with that. Waste can be found in any \$8 billion-a-year enterprise.

The Ron DeSantis Anti-Tax Propaganda Tour is part of a broader Republican campaign to eliminate or sharply reduce property taxes.

The most radical overhaul of the tax code in our state's history would require voter approval in November 2026, and that starts by portraying local governments as cartoonishly arrogant, bloated and unaccountable.

The problem, in our opinion, is that the whole notion of DeSantis as a fiscal watchdog is a joke.



A view of the tarmac at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport with the city skyline in the background. **FILE**

Over the past five years, all on his watch, the state budget has ballooned from \$92 billion to \$117 billion, a 27% increase, a time when state demographers estimate Florida's population has grown by 7%.

**Waste?** DeSantis handed out lavish no-bid contracts at “Alligator Alcatraz.” He can go rogue with the state's checkbook because the Legislature provides so little fiscal supervision.

**Fraud?** Prosecutors are investigating the suspicious diversion of \$10 million from a Medicaid legal settlement for political ads through Hope Florida, a pet charity of DeSantis and his wife, Casey.

**Inefficiency?** Some full-time state workers earning \$200,000-plus a year can live out of state (DeSantis recently vetoed a bill that would force them to live here). Nobody who works full-time for Broward County lives in West Virginia.

### Follow the tax money

Any thorough review of how Broward

spends property taxes would immediately lead to one place: the Broward Sheriff's Office, where Dr. Gregory Tony spends more than half of all property taxes collected by the county.

That's not unusual: In virtually every city and county in Florida, public safety is a leading recipient of property taxes (along with public schools).

As this newspaper has documented, the self-promoting sheriff has been a profligate spender on everything from \$80,000 luxury Yukon Denali SUVs to personalized shower curtains at a BSO fitness complex.

We haven't heard DeSantis question that. One reason — just a hunch — could be that DeSantis appointed Tony sheriff.

County commissioners are increasingly skeptical of Tony's grandiose spending requests, as they should be. He wanted 14% more money for next year and they tentatively offered him 3%.

Any politician seeking to abolish property taxes should expect to be accused of that old GOP smear of “defunding the

police,” because without property taxes, it will be very difficult to keep sheriff's deputies on the streets of Broward.

### Promises of cooperation

So far, the county's response to DeSantis has been professional.

County Administrator Monica Cepero cited the county's strong AAA bond rating and ample cash reserves of 15.1% with no general obligation bond debt and a flat property tax rate for the past decade.

“Broward County prides itself on efficiency, transparency and fiscal responsibility,” Cepero wrote to the governor's office.

For two days next week, the CFO will send auditors to Broward, seeking access to data systems and “responsive personnel.” A letter from the governor's office seeks a vast trove of records on everything from overtime to grants to nonprofits to the cost of the county's “Green New Deal” resiliency program.

The request runs for seven full pages and gives the county nine days to respond.

The focus on spending for a climate change action plan also reveals the larger political agenda behind this fiscal fishing expedition.

If any good comes of this, it will be a deeper public understanding of why property taxes matter and what they buy.

We implore Broward commissioners to give serious thought to a “property tax primer” web page to show taxpayers how every county tax dollar is being spent. Who knows? It might even teach DeSantis a thing or two about how he spends our money.

*The Sun Sentinel Editorial Board consists of Opinion Editor Steve Bousquet, Deputy Opinion Editor Dan Sweeney, editorial writers Pat Beall and Martin Dyckman, and Executive Editor Gretchen Day-Bryant. To contact us, email at [letters@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:letters@sun-sentinel.com).*

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

## Immigration crackdown is leading to collapse in nursing-home care



By Sean C. Domnick

As the Associated Press reported July 14 in a piece that is justifiably going viral, there's a quiet catastrophe unfolding in America's nursing homes. It's not a story of medical error or corporate greed. It's a policy decision — one that may, in the most practical terms, soon render the care of our parents and grandparents impossible to sustain.

Across the country, skilled nursing facilities are losing some of their most reliable and compassionate workers. Not because these caregivers did anything wrong. Not because they're leaving for higher pay or better working conditions. But because their legal ability to work in this country is being stripped away by federal action — or inaction.

The latest shift in immigration policy by President Trump's administration is aimed at revoking or rolling back Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for thousands of immigrant workers, many of whom have been here for years — some for decades. These are the quiet and fine professionals who change bedsheets, feed patients, help them bathe and dress, and sit with them during their hardest days.

They don't make headlines. They make the system work.

The AP reported that in places like Atlanta, CEOs of nonprofit homes say their already strained staffing pipelines are “getting smaller and smaller.” Eight TPS workers at one facility are set to be forced out. That's a handful of people — yet they may prove impossible to replace. The staffing crisis in elder care isn't hypothetical anymore — it's here.

As a shareholder at a law firm that has long embraced the responsibility of representing families when they have been let down by our long-term care system, I want to make one thing absolutely clear: Our long-term care system depends on immigrants. Always has. Always will.

But even that only scratches the surface. The deeper problem is this: We are running out of people willing — and able — to do this work at all.

Understaffing isn't a new challenge in nursing homes. Even before the pandemic, elder care facilities were scrambling to find qualified, compassionate workers. Not just bodies to fill a schedule, but people who truly care. People who treat caregiving not as a gig, but as a calling. Finding them was already like hunting for unicorns. These new immigration policies don't make the search harder. They make it impossible.

One in four direct care workers in the U.S. is foreign-born. In cities like Miami,



A woman uses a walker as she heads to her room at a senior care home in Calistoga, Calif., in December 2019. **ERIC RISBERG/AP**

New York or Los Angeles, that number can be more than half. These are not fly-by-night workers. They are trained, vetted and legally authorized. Without them, the entire system teeters.

What we're witnessing now isn't a return to order or a tightening of standards — it's a slow-motion collapse of one of the most fragile corners of our health care system. When the last lifeline of staffing is cut, there won't be anyone left to show up for our seniors. Not enough hands to change dressings, to lift bodies, to listen. Not enough people who care — in both senses of the word.

When you gut the immigration pipeline, you gut the care pipeline. There's no margin left in long-term care — not after COVID, not after years of underfunding, not after burnout drove thousands from the field. What's left are the workers who stayed. And now we're telling many of them they're no longer welcome.

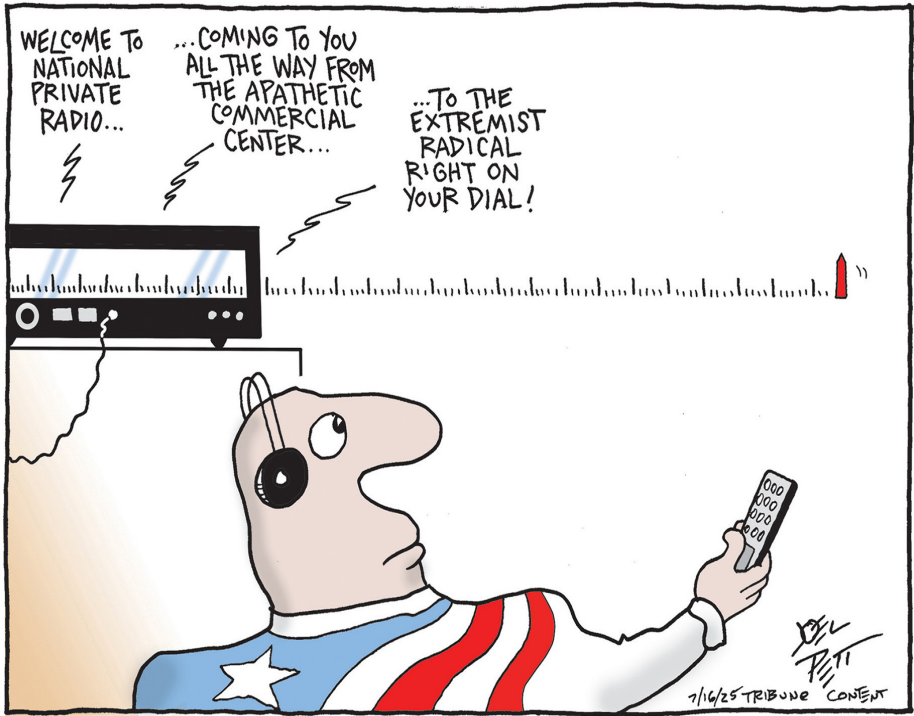
Seniors won't suffer all at once. It will be in waves: fewer staff per shift, slower response times, more neglected hygiene, more falls, more infections. And more lawsuits. The delivery of safe care will be impossible to deliver. You can't have a functioning nursing home without people to run it.

This is the cost of treating immigration like a rhetorical punching bag instead of a cornerstone of America's caregiving infrastructure.

Congress can — and must — act now. It should move to protect workers with TPS from arbitrary removal and expand pathways for legal immigration in the direct care workforce. These are not theoretical policies — they are lifelines for patients, families and every frontline worker trying to hold this fragile system together.

There are some failures a system can recover from. But if we let this one unfold unchecked, there won't be a system left to fix.

*Sean C. Domnick is a shareholder at Rafferty Domnick Cunningham & Yaffa, a national boutique law firm based in Palm Beach Gardens and Pensacola.*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Already missing Stephen Colbert

At the age of 96, there are two main joys in my life. One is the Sun Sentinel at my door every morning, and the other is watching Stephen Colbert on “The Late Show.”

Owners of CBS value being billionaires more than having the extremely talented, courageous Stephen Colbert. He has the talent and guts to say, at his job peril, that the emperor has no clothes. He is special. **Diane Pomish, Boca Raton**

### It's no coincidence

CBS' billionaire owners pay Donald Trump \$16 million to settle a bogus lawsuit while trying to sell the network to Skydance.

Stephen Colbert, an extraordinary talent and the most popular late night TV host, slams the deal. Days later, Colbert gets fired. Do I think this is a coincidence? No. **Paul Bacon, Hallandale Beach**

### The rest of the story

Once again, news of complicated issues is reported without necessary context or complete facts. Articles reflect the writer's or the outlet's opinions, masquerading as a full story, yet fall short of delivering the complete facts.

On the announcement of CBS' cancellation of “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert,” while it is true that he spends a large portion of time going after the president, what's often omitted is that CBS is losing about \$40 million annually on this show.

This raises questions about the sustainability of programming that does not resonate with a significant portion of the audience. As they say, follow the money.

Story No. 2: The passage of the Trump tax bill has been presented as a measure that will result in tens of millions who will

lose their Medicaid coverage.

The bill does eliminate coverage for noncitizens here illegally and imposes a work requirement on able-bodied adults with no children. If they are between 19 and 64, they are required to complete at least 80 hours per month of work, volunteering, education or job training to maintain Medicaid eligibility. Numerous groups are exempt from the work requirement.

It does not take away coverage for citizens over 65, children or adults with minor children.

It's crucial to note that certain Democratic-led states, such as California, Illinois and Minnesota, are retracting health care benefits for illegal immigrants due to budget constraints. This reality often goes unreported and there's no public outcry against these Democratic governors. **Doug Cohen, Boynton Beach**

### Gulag in the 'Glades

Florida used to be known for its beautiful beaches. Not any more.

What dominates the headlines is a Russian-style gulag, Alligator Alcatraz. It's not the reflection of a civilized society. Locking people in cages, in a tent with inadequate air conditioning, surrounded by mosquitoes, alligators and a swamp, is truly inhumane.

Many of these immigrants have not been convicted of violent crimes. In fact, the overwhelming majority were picked up for minor offenses like an expired driver's license. They have not been before a judge, so they have had no due process.

As a Jewish woman, I am horrified that the state of Florida used taxpayer dollars to create this camp. Fresh water has to be trucked in. There's no sewage treatment plant on site, and toilets reportedly back up.

The suffering of these immigrants is the result of the cruelty and incompetence of our state and federal government. This is not justice. It's persecution, and it's un-American.

**Diane Johnson, Boca Raton**

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