

# OPINION

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2003

THE POST

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## LETTERS

### Time to tame tax monster

There is much to criticize in the elitist editorial entitled "California, here we come," which attacks the proposal to place all Hamilton County special levies on the ballot at the same time. Unfortunately, we have for some time been on the road to the Golden State, with higher taxes and fewer people wanting to live here and pay them.

It is strange there is a plea for a "social safety net that supports the entire region." That is exactly the point. If the safety net supports "the entire region," why, pray tell, are Hamilton County property owners the only ones paying for it?

Among the supposed evils The Post cites in the proposal is that it would engender "competition." Competition is a good thing in a non-Socialist society. The notion that voters will be too "confused" to select among "competing" levies is absurd. Why should the levies have monopoly access to the ballot? Would you also limit people to the purchase of only one item at a time in a store lest they be "confused"? Do you really have that low an opinion of the voters?

It is amazing that anyone would object to giving voters a complete picture. What is so wrong in encouraging more people to participate in deciding all county tax levies at a November presidential election instead of trotting them out, one at a time, in quiet primaries and sparsely attended special elections where poll workers often outnumber voters?

The real "scheme" is putting these levies on the ballot at contrived intervals in a sequence designed to eliminate

comparison and accountability. Would it really be so bad if one or more levies asked for less money due to concern about passage? What is wrong with encouraging service providers to work extra hard and ask only for what they absolutely need so that those in the most need will still be served? The commissioners will still decide how much each levy asks for... no "fobbing off" here.

Sadly unaddressed in the criticism is whether the unabated proliferation of these no-longer-so-special levies is crowding out other more basic needs. As each entity comes forward with its particular plea, it makes it all the harder for schools and local safety services to pass their levies.

If the goal of the The Post is to support every "special" tax, why not just say so instead of indulging in philosophical name-calling when someone tries to help tame the avaricious tax monster. If anyone is "cynical," "irresponsible" and "Machiavellian," it is those who seek to preserve the status quo.

It is "cynical" to time levies so as to deliberately depress turnout and gain passage by organizing a narrow constituency. It is "irresponsible" to ask for more and more of someone else's money when doing so may actually harm the mission. It is "Machiavellian" to vilify anyone who comes forward with a new idea rather than addressing the merits of it.

The truth is the present system is a stacked deck against the taxpayer. Those who are desperately trying to preserve it are on the way to bringing about a full-fledged, take no prisoners tax revolt (of the California

variety). That would be a lot more devastating than anything which may come from this careful, reasoned and moderate tax reform proposal. It would more fully empower the voters. That can't be bad unless you believe the public can not be trusted to decide what to do with its own money.

Most people know there are too many "special" levies as a matter of common sense. But no one wants to face up to it. We are not going to create a utopia in Hamilton County by taxing the last penny from every property owner. What we are creating is an accelerating exodus of considerable proportion.

Of course, the worse quandary for editorial writers is how can they be against the idea of more taxes and still manage to editorialize in favor of every special levy? Maybe now we've found the real source of confusion.

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