

Seeking middle ground on school safety

Safety in public schools has been much on the public's mind in the post-Newtown era. The massacre has inspired calls for getting more police officers into school buildings.

At the same time, civil rights organizations are calling for the exact opposite: getting the cops out. Critics cite horrors such as the 5-year-old who was cuffed and taken down to the police station for having a temper tantrum and a 7-year-old who was interrogated for 10 hours for allegedly stealing \$5.

Thankfully, schools across the country, reacting to public outrage over ridiculous zero-tolerance policies, are trying to find middle ground.

The Texas state Senate recently cleared a bill that would require schools to adopt a tiered system to address misbehavior with in-school consequences and remediation. More serious situations would be elevated to parent and community-based programs, while serious criminal behavior would still be handled by police



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and end up in court.

Like most other contentious issues involving the potent mix of race, education and politics, it's far too easy to pick a side based on outrageous headlines that don't take into account how thorny it is to navigate drama-drenched school hallways.

In truth, while some people abhor the idea of having police in schools, others welcome it.

A decade before the Columbine massacre kicked off the era of cops in schools, I attended a diverse Chicago public high school where police were stationed, providing a constant daily presence to keep students safe. The students

who worked hard and stayed out of trouble had no issues with the police. For those students, as well as faculty, it was a relief to have officers around on the frequent occasions when tempers flared and fights erupted in busy corridors.

Years later as a barely 5-foot-tall teacher working in high schools that served low-income, high-crime communities, I jumped into scrums of violent teenagers with some regularity. How I wished there had been police stationed in hallways to protect us.

That's not to say that we should let safety fears turn our nation's public schools into what Texas reformers describe as a massive referral system for the courts and others call the school-to-prison pipeline.

We need a national movement to define what safety means in schools and how such a lofty goal can be achieved. Similar to how the nation is finally getting school districts on board with having common standards for teaching core

subjects such as math and language arts, we need standards for keeping schools safe and orderly without creating a situation where scores of students stand little chance of graduating from high school or avoiding jail.

"We need to have a holistic approach to securing our building from common-sense things like locking the doors, requiring buzzers to get into buildings, having hall monitors — my daughter's school didn't do some of these things prior to Newtown — to having long-term supports in place for students to deal with the mistakes they will inevitably make in a school setting," said Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of the Advancement Project. The Washington, D.C.-based racial justice organization is heavily involved in trying to keep students from entering the adult criminal justice system over misbehavior that in the past would have been handled with a trip to the principal's office.

Dianis' organization believes

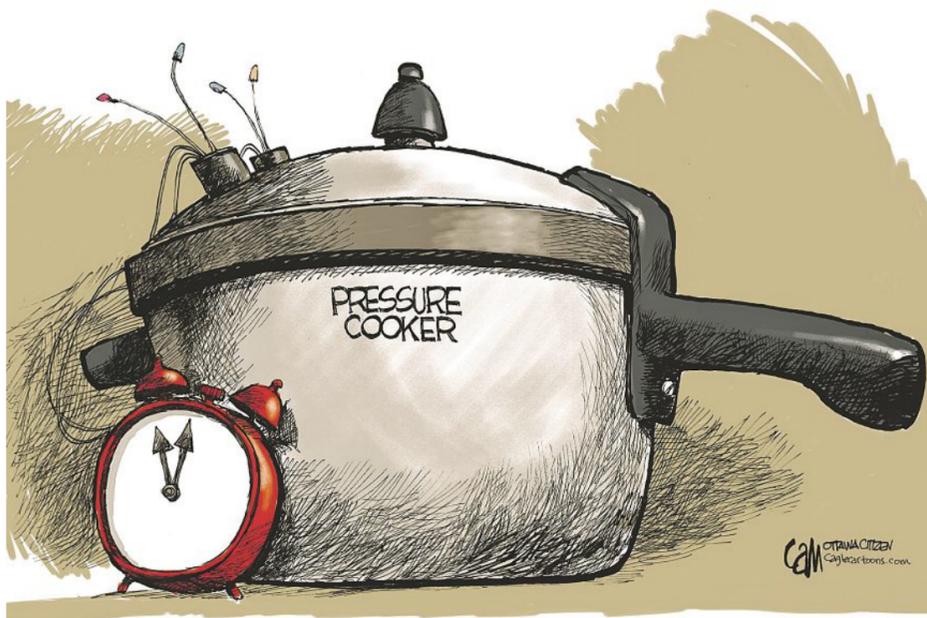
that schools, especially low-income ones in which students lack basic supports at home, should provide more school psychologists, counselors, social workers and teachers trained in conflict resolution.

"Safety has to happen but not through the short-term fix of police in schools," she said.

To be fair, police have proved to be great partners in school districts across the country, but they really shouldn't have to bear the whole responsibility of maintaining safe and positive learning environments.

Parents, school administrators and policymakers must find more ways to reach a middle ground on school safety that ensures that all students — even the ones who haven't yet figured out how to control their tempers or make good choices for themselves — have the opportunity to learn.

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THAT WAS A NICE LITTLE ASSAULT RIFLE DEBATE EVERYONE WAS HAVING...

VALLEY VOICE

Canadians should be welcomed more than 180 days a year

As a Palm Springs attorney focusing on international tax, estate and business issues, my Canadian clients often repeat to me a similar theme: We would love to stay in the U.S. longer.

Under current U.S. immigration law, Canadians can generally stay in the United States up to 180 days out of any 365-day period. As part of any new sweeping immigration legislation, Congress must permit Canadians to stay longer in the United States.

Here's why:

» Canadians saved, and continue to save, the real estate market and economies of certain U.S. states and regions

For the last five years, the real estate markets and economies of several warm weather states and regions, including our Coachella Valley, have been critically stabilized by an influx of Canadian home buyers. Some surveys suggest Canadians purchased more than 70 percent of homes in the Palm Springs area in previous years.

Further estimates have the average home sale purchase price increasing by approximately 20 percent in the Coachella Valley since the beginning of 2012. Thank you, Canadians.

And, of course, the Canadian contribution to the Canadian community frequently only begins with the purchase of a house. Restaurants, golf courses, professional services, local retail — you name it — all bolstered by Canadians living significant months in their preferred United States community. Somebody please explain to me the benefit derived by the United States in forcing its Canadian home owners to go home after 180 days.

» Canadians are starting some businesses in the U.S., but would start many more with more favorable immigration regulations

In our law office, I am now regularly contacted by Canadians interested in starting businesses in California and other states. The proposed businesses will almost always eventually lead to job opportunities for Americans. And while the Canadians have the capital and the interest to start a U.S. business, one impediment frequently exists: How can the Canadian run a business in which he or she can only personally be present for a maximum of six months a year?

And while there are certain visas that could overcome this problem, they typically require a significant financial commitment and the requirement of hiring several Americans quickly. Maybe the proposed business would eventually grow to the point to satisfy these requirements, but how many Canadians are looking



Michael W. Brooks

to make a far less substantial commitment at the inception of the business? How many prospective Canadian-owned U.S. businesses never get formed because of the 180-day rule?

» Even after immigration reform, hurdles would still exist

Is the Canadian government just going to let some of their most affluent citizens stay in the U.S. most of the year? Maybe not. Canadian provinces might have to agree to extend their province-run medical coverage for their residents who leave the province up to, for example, nine months a year — as opposed to the current rule of most provinces, which discontinues the medical coverage of residents who leave more than six or seven months a year.

Would they be so gracious? Would Canadians move to the United States if it meant forfeiting their Canadian governmental medical coverage? Likewise, the United States might have to make some accommodations for the Canadians as well. Would the U.S. include Canadian seniors moving to the U.S. in Medicare?

Also, would the U.S. make an exception to its tax laws — requiring foreign citizens in the U.S. more than six months a year to file U.S. tax returns? One would think the U.S. might have to.

» Any U.S. immigration reform must include a provision for Canadians

Of note recently, Congress has had the opportunity to review the Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel Act ("JOLT Act"), which would allow certain Canadians to stay in the U.S. up to eight months a year. Why not simply incorporate the JOLT Act as part of our impending macro immigration reform?

The continued recovery of many states, and of course our beloved Coachella Valley, relies on the continued uninhibited and encouraged contribution of our Canadian cousins. We all know immigration reform is tricky, and does not happen often. We must not make the mistake of letting this rare immigration overhaul occur without remaining ever mindful of the importance of the eager and vital immigrants in waiting from Canada.

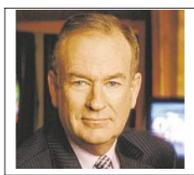
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Our president needs to command

On Monday, I went before a live television audience and tried to put the Boston terror attack into some perspective. I told the viewers that as an American, I was angry. I said the attack was vile and cowardly, designed to injure innocent people including children. I said that President Obama made a mistake by using the word "tragedy" to define the attack.

While the dictionary defines "tragedy" as "a disastrous event, especially one involving distressing loss or injury to life," the word is not precise enough to define what happened in Boston. If the bombers are foreigners, the event is an act of war. If the killers are Americans, it is high treason; in committing an act of terror, you essentially declare war on your own country. There is a difference between detonating bombs that kill and maim innocent people and shooting up a school or movie theater. Both are murderous acts, but only one is politically motivated. The political factor that takes "tragedy" out of the equation.

Obama did not do anything wrong in describing the Boston bombings as a tragedy. But he did not use his pulpit to clearly define the issue. Americans need to know that this country is under attack by a variety of forces from within and without. U.S. authorities have performed brilliantly in keeping terror attacks on American soil to a minimum, but too many folks do not understand the danger this country is facing. There are fanatics who



Bill O'Reilly

would kill each and every one of us if they could.

Freedom puts all of us at risk. We are living in a time when just about every security measure is controversial — from drones to Internet snooping with a warrant. In New York City, liberals rail

against the "stop and frisk" police policy designed to control illegal weapons. Never mind that the policy has saved thousands of lives. The zealots don't like it, and that's that. Security be damned.

Obama should bring a sense of urgency to terrorism. At times, he doesn't even like using the word. His style is cool, while the issue is hot. Americans react emotionally when children are blown up on the streets.

Obama's use of the word "tragedy" is a small thing, and again, he did not do anything wrong. But I want my commander in chief to command. All Americans are under attack. Let's sound the alarm in very vivid terms.

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Mayor calls for education boost

Antonio Villaraigosa worked for Los Angeles' teachers union for eight years before embarking on a political career that took him to the California Legislature, to the speakership of the state Assembly and then, eight years ago, to the Los Angeles mayor's office.

Unions and other elements of the education establishment strongly backed his steps up the political ladder — until he became an advocate of charter schools, parental empowerment, modifying teacher seniority and tenure and other reforms that the establishment despises.

That experience has given Villaraigosa, now within weeks of leaving the mayoralty, a unique perspective on California's troubled education system. And on Tuesday, he called for a "grand bargain" to raise schools from "the bottom rungs of the education ladder" in both spending and academic achievement.

Villaraigosa, speaking to the Sacramento Press Club, bragged a bit about his efforts to change Los Angeles schools, which shredded his relationship with the teachers union. But his prescription — connecting better financing to better outcomes — nevertheless resonates.

Pointedly, he said that with fellow Democrats now holding all the reins of Capitol power, "there's no excuse this time" not to better finance schools, nor to provide schools with more flexibility, reform tenure and seniority policies and implement teacher evaluation systems based on student testing.



Dan Walters

Villaraigosa's prescription parallels what other Democratic reformers have been advocating, and he made his appearance just a block from the convention hall where those reformers were denounced at a Democratic Party convention at the behest of the California Teachers Association and others.

Gov. Jerry Brown has embraced an overhaul of education financing to put more money in schools with large numbers of poor and English-learner students — which Villaraigosa also endorses. But Brown, who received major financial support from the CTA during his election campaign in 2010 and his tax increase campaign last year, has been leery about other elements of the rebel Democrats' reform agenda, such as teacher evaluation, tenure and seniority.

If there is to be the "grand bargain" that Villaraigosa advocates, a prominent Democrat would have to become its champion.

Brown's not volunteering, and Villaraigosa soon will lose his bully pulpit.

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