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Opinion



South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg, shown here in 2017, declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president in 2020 with a video message that he posted on Jan. 23, 2018. Credit: SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCK TREND, VIA AP.

Call me President Pete; my last name? Never mind ...



Carl Hiasen
Contributor

A 37-year-old fellow named Pete Buttigieg appeared on a network morning show last week to talk a little about his new book, but mostly about running for president in 2020.

He has been the mayor of South Bend, Ind., for seven years, and is no dummy. He attended Harvard, earned a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford and served as an intelligence officer in Afghanistan. He's also gay, which shouldn't be an issue but will be for some voters.

Among other challenges facing Buttigieg is the fact that his name is almost as tricky to pronounce correctly as it is to spell. I can sympathize.

And while a candidate's name shouldn't be a drawback either, it sometimes is. During the primaries Buttigieg will face a mumbly long list of Democratic rivals, many of whom are more recognizable and pronounceable: Biden, Sanders, Book, Warren, Harris, Brown, Yang, ... and so on.

Even optimistic John Hickman, the former governor of Colorado, has a last name that lurches in its memory more readily than does Buttigieg.

Still, the whole point of launching a presidential campaign early is to establish one's self as a national figure before the voting starts. In 2007, I gave Barack Obama my vote. In 2008, I gave the White House to Obama. However, in 2015, I gave the exact same vote to Donald Trump, whose name was known by everyone who owned a TV

or a laptop.

Some say that the last two presidential elections proved by their improbable results that just about anybody with enough self-confidence, energy and determination can win.

Absolutely not true.

All right, the Green Party nominee in 2008, wasn't merely a long shot. She was a jet-setter, and she knew it. By appealing Democratic votes in a few swing states, she helped give the Big Orange Trumpster his majority in the Electoral College.

He should have sent her flowers, or at least a spa-day coupon for Mar-A-Lago.

Stein is still whining about being blamed for putting a hapless, age-driven campaign that set back her environmental and reform agenda by decades. If she runs again next year, she'd be lucky to get more votes than the referee who blew the pass-interference call in the Saints-Rams playoff game.

A similar legacy shadows consumer activist Ralph Nader, whose 2000 presidential bid was doomed from the first day, and ultimately became a numerical factor in deciding the Bush-Gore fiasco.

Also running for the Green Party, Nader received 97,421 votes in Florida, most of them Democratic converts. If only 538 of those promises had stuck with their party, Al Gore would have been president instead of George Bush.

Clearly, both Gore and Hillary Clinton ineptly steered their own campaigns in directions that left openings for third parties to tip narrow margins in battleground states. If they'd been better candidates, their races wouldn't have been close enough for

Stein or Nader to affect.

A new potential spoiler is eyeing the 2020 contest. He is Howard Schultz, the former CEO of Starbucks, who says he might run as an independent.

Schultz has already taken steps toward an official announcement. He has formed the ever-popular "exploratory committee" and recently published the obligatory here's-my-uplifting-vision-of-America book.

Unlike Trump, Schultz is a billionaire with actual billions. But so is Ross Perot, who twice failed to capture the presidency by taking on the Democratic and Republican nominees.

Not surprisingly, Schultz insists things are different now. He says the nation is ready to abandon the far left and far right in favor of a centrist who isn't controlled by either of the major parties.

At this stage of the race, Schultz has better prospects than porn actress Christie DeVille, who last week ended her 17-month quest for the White House.

Pete Buttigieg of South Bend is betting the tide has already changed in his favor.

He doesn't have a Starbucks fortune to bankroll his campaign, or a name as unforgettable as Christie DeVille, but he's got his own catchy theme with which he hopes to meager voters.

"Bitter-Generational Justice!" So, if you're feeling it, America, run right out and buy his book. There probably won't be a line.

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Arming teachers not the answer to anything



Your Turn
Sandy Hook
Sandy Hook

Recent school shootings have raised questions about school safety and how to protect our children. One answer has been to expand the Guardian program to allow teachers to carry firearms in their classrooms. Gov. DeSantis and many legislators are promoting this option, particularly for rural districts whose budgets do not include additional revenue for armed security guards.

As a former classroom teacher, I think this is a terrible idea. I can imagine that political leaders see this as an inexpensive solution that makes sense, but as a teacher charged with the welfare of my students, I would not want the added responsibility of having a loaded weapon in my classroom. There are too many questions that need to be answered before this idea becomes law.

Accidental death or injury. Most gun deaths involving children are accidental. Obviously, the classroom weapon would have to be locked securely in a cabinet or desk drawer. Suppose a curious or nervous child gains access to the gun? Is this potential tragedy worth the risk?

Rapid response. As happened in the first-grade class at Sandy Hook Elementary, the gunman entered the classroom and started firing. Would the teacher have had time to unlock the cabinet, calm her shaking hands, comfort the children and kill the intruder?

Hidden costs. Is the teacher responsible for covering added liability insurance, or will the school district pay? Some reports suggest that insurance companies are not willing to take on this added risk. Will the teacher undergo additional training? How much time will this take and who will pay for it? Will teachers be required to use their meager supply budgets to purchase bullets?

There are better ways to make schools safe. We don't need more knee-jerk reactions that offer the illusion of safety.

There are two types of threats to schools based on recent experience: external and internal. External threats from a changed killer who enters the school can be stopped by locking doors, along with video monitoring to buzz in visitors. Armed and trained security guards add a second layer of safety.

Internal threats come from disgruntled and lonely students who feel alienated and disrespected. Safe schools are not positive and inviting climates where all students feel cared for, respected and treated. Safe schools invest in more counselors and social workers to identify and help troubled children, including working with dysfunctional families to lead and nurture their children.

Arming teachers is not the answer. Sandy Hook is an author and retired elementary school teacher. Her recent book, "Creating Joyful Classrooms," offers ideas for preventing school violence and bullying.

Sentence

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Winchester was granted immunity for his statements, which he provided in October 2007 before he was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the armed kidnapping of Denise Williams. His admission led investigators to Miss Williams' body, buried at the edge of Carr Lake in Leon County. In a final motion before sentencing, defense attorney Ethan Wray filed a motion asking that Denise Williams' mandatory life sentence be found unconstitutional based on the fact that Winchester is not facing repercussions.

It was promptly denied by Hankinson. "The imposition of a life sentence would be grossly disproportionate to the treatment accorded Brian Winchester, the perpetrator of the crime," Wray wrote. "It simply makes no sense for the state to allow an active participant of a homicide to go free while seeking the maximum penalty against a passive participant in the same crime."

Denise Williams still faces two charges of insurance fraud and conspiracy to commit insurance fraud in connection with the case. Contact Karl Elzer at keltzer@tallahassee.com or @KarlElzer on Twitter.

Exploratory oil drilling coming to 'Glades?

Jim Saunders
STAFF WRITER FOR THE DEMOCRAT

TALLAHASSEE — Overturning a decision by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, an appeals court Tuesday ordered the state to issue a permit to a major Broward County landowner who wants to drill an exploratory oil well in the Everglades.

A three-judge panel of the 1st District Court of Appeals ruled the department improperly rejected a recommended order by an administrative law judge, who said in 2017 a permit should be approved for Kanter Real Estate LLC.

The 34-page ruling Tuesday said, in part, that department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein improperly rejected "factual findings" by Administrative Law Judge E. Gary Early.

Those findings included that the site targeted for exploratory drilling was environmentally degraded and was isolated from surface water and groundwater.

Appellate (Kanter Real Estate) currently asserts that (part of Early's recommended order) is made up entirely of factual findings and that the secretary improperly relied upon or created an unadopted rule by basing its decision on a long-standing policy to deny oil and gas permits within lands sub-

ject to Everglades restoration," said the appeals-court ruling, written by Chief Judge Brad Thomas and joined by Judges Harvey Jay and Robert E. Long Jr.

Kanter, which owns about 20,000 acres in Broward County, applied in 2015 to drill an exploratory oil well on about five acres of its land in the Everglades. The department denied a permit, leading Kanter to take the case to the Division of Administrative Hearings.

Early determined Kanter had met requirements for a permit, with the "greater weight of the evidence establishes that the potential for harmful discharges and the potential for harm to groundwater and public water supply are insignificant."

Under administrative law, the dispute then returned to the department for issuance of a final order.

The department denied the proposed permit, saying in part the lands involved are "in the environmentally sensitive Everglades" and that state environmental officials had not issued such an exploratory permit in the Everglades since 1967.

Thomas wrote Tuesday, however, state law requires agencies to accept administrative law judges' findings of fact unless the findings are not supported by "competent, substantial evidence." Also, he wrote that state law bars agen-



Everglades National Park. Credit: COURTESY OF U.S. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

cies from considering information outside the record of the administrative law case.

"Here, the ALJ's (Early's) ultimate finding of fact was that the land in question did not have any qualities that would make it vulnerable to pollution of the land, aquifer or surface waters, a finding the ALJ supported with examples and facts introduced as evidence," the ruling said.

The appeals court also said the Department of Environmental Protection improperly recent factual findings to reach a desired outcome, contrary to law.