

OUR VIEW

So far, So ...

Maybe, just maybe, the Clark County School Board made the right decision in removing the "interim" prefix from Walt Rulffes' name and making him superintendent of the Clark County School District.

In a memo to the school board, Rulffes—who shared the position with Augustine Orci after former schools chief Carlos Garcia departed for a job with textbook supplier McGraw-Hill Cos.—says his "neck is on the block" when it relates to improving achievement. It's an unlikely sentiment from a school district boss. In essence, he's controlling the guillotine himself.

Part of Rulffes' plans to tackle achievement problems include turning four elementary campuses into empowerment schools, where the administrators and educators will have more authority over curriculum, faculty, teaching methods and scheduling, among other things, and will generally be free from meddling by regional and top-tier administrative staff will. (The schools are Rose Warren in the Southwest Region, Kirk Adams in the East Region, Lee Antonello in the Northeast Region and Paul Culley in Northwest Region.)

Rulffes' second empowerment initiative, Superintendent's Schools, groups under one administrative umbrella empowerment schools, magnet programs and schools that struggle the most. Key to the program will be principals; Rulffes wants "entrepreneurial, competent and cutting-edge principals to apply to lead these innovative schools," according to a memo he penned recently. In other words, the kind of leaders schools need. Leaders who will hire the type of teachers that will bring out the best in their students.

Also included in the Superintendent's Schools initiative—which will add a sixth region to the district when implemented this fall—will be Choice Schools. These campuses will eventually include all magnet and vocational programs, with distance education to be phased in. Another innovation: Professional Practice Schools—five campuses to be selected from 13 that have earned "needs improvement" designations for three consecutive years. Like empowerment schools, they will be freed from central control. Lastly, and this is prescient considering the district's diversity, will be the creation of Language Acquisition Models, where emphasis is placed on teaching English. In addition to having more power to set the course for students' educations, teachers at all these new schools will work longer days (by 29 minutes) and longer school years (by five days).

It's been a long time since a schools' chief created a sense that change is possible. Kudos to Superintendent Rulffes for putting his neck on the line for our students.

Close the Gates

It may be months before the other shoes drop on the G-Sting political bribery trial. Barring some unforeseen mercy by the political gods, it's generally certain that the geese of former Clark County Commissioners Erin Kenny, Dario Herrera, Lance Malone and Mary Kincaid-Chauncey, as well as that of their financial surrogate, former strip club owner Michael Galardi, are cooked—they'll pay fines at the least and do jail time at the most.

As the trial continues, it's also fairly certain that other prominent folks will be dragged into the fray for questioning at the minimum and for prosecution at the max. Among those who could be called to the stand: Sen. Harry Reid, Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, former Las Vegas City Councilman Michael McDonald, current County Commissioner Bruce Woodbury and land baron Jim Rhodes. Among those that face the legal hammer: real estate consultant Don Davidson and his attorney son, Lawrence—both have been indicted. A name that has appeared in several news accounts, but needs to be removed is that of County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates. Published reports have noted that Gates isn't entangled in G-Sting. So why mention her name if it isn't germane to the story. Doing this rekindles feelings about racist coverage of Black politicians. Gates hasn't done anything wrong. Please leave her alone.



Immigration: Illegal is the word

By Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice

Over the past week and a half we have witnessed a civil war brewing in this country between the forces that want open borders, no restrictions on who enters the United States, and those of us who are demanding that the federal government stop millions of people from illegally entering this country.

There have been protests in Los Angeles, Denver, Washington and right here in the city of Las Vegas. For the second time in as many weeks, high-school, middle-school and college students here in Las Vegas skipped classes in protest to the pending immigration reform legislation that passed the U.S. House of Representatives in December and calls for stronger criminalization of illegal entry into the U.S.

The plan approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee eliminates the criminal provisions and drops all criminal penalties for those who provide assistance to illegal immigrants, except for those involved in smuggling. The Senate version virtually rewards criminal behavior.

The legislation that's proposed would make it a felony—punishable by jail time—to be in this country illegally (right now it's a misdemeanor). Furthermore, it would make it a criminal charge applicable to any church or organization dispensing aid to the nation's 11 million illegal immigrants.



ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

Immigrant supporters object to legislation that would also impose new penalties on employers who hire illegal immigrants and another provision that would require building fences on part of the U.S.-Mexican border.

In response to the proposed legislation, President Bush and Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) wants to implement what's called a "guest worker program." Such a program would allow foreigners outside the United States to apply for temporary work visas. Other programs would also give the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the country the right to stay legally.

The issue has caused a rift among Republicans. While business interests in the GOP seek to legalize workers, the party's conservative base is strongly opposed to illegal immigration. The program would allow legal status, but not a road to citizenship for some of the 11 million illegal immigrants in the country.

The guest worker program is not new in the U.S. The 1986 amnesty law, enacted by Reagan to offset the Black vote, permitted all

documented immigrants who had been in the United States since January 1982 to apply for permanent residency—and more than 3 million did. This legislation has been considered a failure because illegal immigration increased afterward, and two decades later, we have four times as many illegals.

The Senate proposal actually rewards criminal behavior and threatens Americans' jobs. It rewards those that have broken the law and puts at a disadvantage those who have played by the rules.

Now, what troubles me most about this whole debate is that people seem to be forgetting one major term—illegal. Illegal is defined by Webster as not lawful, not sanctioned by official rules.

Using this definition, these people are breaking the law by being here; however, instead of holding them accountable like we would do someone else for committing an illegal act in this country, factions are trying to make excuses for them and some are trying to grant them amnesty. Amnesty is granting a pardon to a group of individuals, or more explicitly, allowing them to be free from penalty even though they have committed a crime.

So, undocumented workers come to the United States, commit a crime, and demand—and virtually receive—the same rights as people who are here legally. In some cases, they receive more benefits. Something is wrong with this picture.

These people are coming over here illegally and demanding rights that people who have lived here as citizens don't have and aren't receiving. Proponents of bringing this cheap labor to

(See LaGrande, Page 11)

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