

HOME/OPINION/PREMIUM OPINION

End unnecessary subsidies for greyhound tracks

Tue, Oct 29, 2013 @ 3:26 pm

Floridians have been subsidizing the greyhound industry for years. Not the tracks. Usage has been declining among the customers.

What has been subsidized is the industry of providing dogs for the tracks.

A number of humane society groups say that subsidies often are going to out-of-state greyhound facilities.

In most of the nation, greyhound racing is dead. Florida is one of the last strongholds.

And it probably would have been replaced by other forms of gambling long ago if not for a state law that mandates live dog racing in return for adding other games such as poker.

An unusual coalition has supported a change in the law in recent years — humane society groups that oppose much of the greyhound training activities and the tracks themselves that see more profit potential in poker than in dogs.

“This forced union of two unrelated forms of gambling makes no sense and inflicts unnecessary cruelty on greyhounds, who spend their racing lives confined, suffering terrible injuries and may be killed once they are no longer profitable,” said Ann Church, vice president of state affairs for the ASPCA.

The Jacksonville Humane Society is one of the 16 animal protection groups that support a change in the law to “decouple” greyhound racing from other forms of gambling.

There is no reason for this subsidy. Florida has much better uses for its taxpayer subsidies — higher education, for instance.

OBAMACARE

The flawed rollout of the Affordable Care Act has received attention in recent weeks. It’s a great example of poor management and insufficient testing of a major software system.

But less noted is that the rollout has been successful in a few states, those “laboratories of democracy.”

California, Connecticut and Kentucky have spent about two years building their exchanges, apparently out of sight of the federal government.

So while the federal government tries to find someone to actually be accountable for its system and fix all the glitches, it ought to bring in experts from the states who have done it well.

This is not just a story about government bureaucracy. This is affecting the lives of millions of Americans.

WHO ARE THE UNEMPLOYED?

There are more than 90 million Americans available for work but not employed. That is 10 million more than when President Barack Obama took office, reports The Wall Street Journal.

The percentages of employed are the lowest since the 1970s.

Who are these people?

About half of them are boomers who have turned 65 since 2008.

Another large share are young people who have stayed in school.

Many of the boomers are retired and the young are in school in large part because good jobs are so hard to come by.

Nevertheless, there are too many Americans in prime working years who are unemployed.

So who is hiring? Go to Washington, young man. Government hired more workers in August and September than any sector other than health care and business services.

QUOTABLE ON OBAMACARE

■ “Obamacare did not have to be a con job. Insurers could have been allowed to offer the young and low risk the sensible, affordable policies that insurers already sell them in voluntary transactions. The older and sicker customers whom Obamacare wishes to subsidize could have been subsidized directly with tax dollars. ... A lot more low-risk people would have signed up.”

— Columnist Holman Jenkins in The Wall Street Journal.

Our opinion: The Obama administration needs to consult with the insurers like Florida Blue to construct a system that makes practical sense.

■ “Last year a Health Affairs study found that 51 percent of the policies sold to the 19 million consumers who buy on the individual market are inadequate ... By the time the trauma recedes, more Americans may lose current coverage than gain it through the exchanges.”

— Wall Street Journal

Our opinion: Some of these individual policies may be too skimpy to provide real coverage. But some of the Obamacare mandates ought to be revised. A young man, for instance, shouldn't have to buy pregnancy coverage.

SUICIDE BY COP

Nobody knows how many mentally ill people are killed every year by law enforcement. Nobody keeps good statistics.

Somewhere in the mass of “justifiable homicide statistics” are the deaths that could have been avoided if the nation had a better way of treating the mentally ill and if more police officers were better trained to handle the mentally ill.

Crime rates have fallen nationally in the last few decades, but not justifiable homicides, which have risen from 297 in 2000 to 410 in 2012, reports The Wall Street Journal.

Last year more than 44 million adults were mentally ill.

That means police officers must be prepared for a mentally ill person. Because they are be more unpredictable, the chance of violence is increased.

Barking orders to a mentally ill person may be less effective than a more conversational tone.

GREENSPAN ON WASHINGTON

“I've never seen it like this. Clearly the problem is within the Republican Party. If you make every issue uncompromisable, you cannot have laws.”

— Former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan in Time magazine.

Our opinion: The genius of the American system is the ability and willingness to compromise. It can't work otherwise.
