

Opinion

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“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievance.”

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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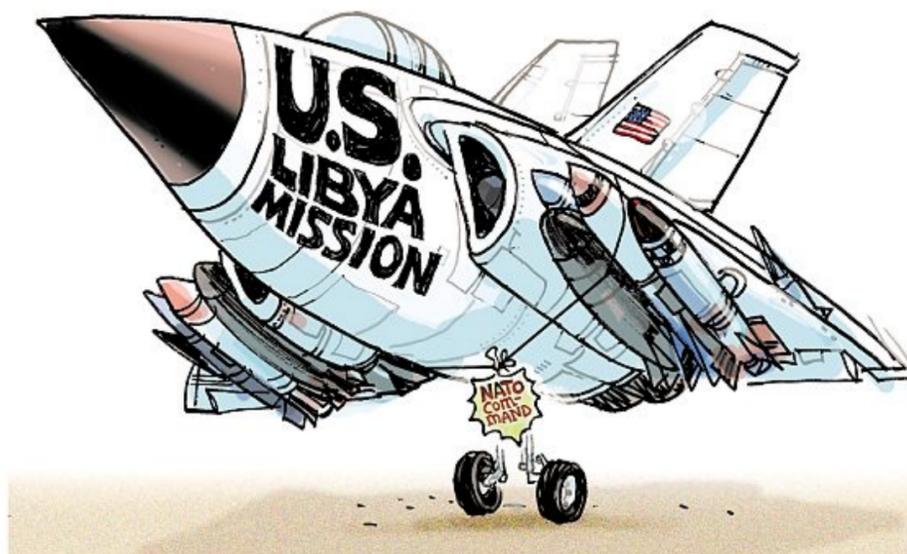
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MONDAY NEWSMAKER

Writing a new chapter in learning

Principal Lynda Lake talks about challenges, opportunities facing Cielo Vista Charter School

Lynda Lake has lived most of her days (and even some nights) on the grounds of Palm Springs Unified School District schools. She has come full circle, working to distinguish her elementary alma mater — Cielo Vista Elementary, at the time — into a recognized “school of choice” as Cielo Vista Charter School.

After graduating from Cielo Vista and Nellie Coffman Junior High, Lake received her diploma from Palm Springs High School. She received her bachelor of science degree in child development from San Diego State University and her master’s in education administration and special education from Azusa Pacific University.

Upon graduation, Lake came back to her hometown and began teaching at Katherine Finch Elementary in 1976. Through the years, Lake taught at Cielo Vista Elementary, Cathedral City Elementary, Landau Elementary and was assistant principal at Agua Caliente Elementary before being named principal at Cielo Vista in 2003.

Lake’s list of awards and accolades is lengthy and includes 1996 District Teacher of the Year and 2007 District Principal of the Year, as well as leading Cielo Vista to earn accolades, including: Title 1 Achieving School, 2006; California Distinguished School, 2010; Apple Distinguished School 2008, 2009, 2010. But according to Lake, her loftiest achievement is still unfolding each day, as Cielo Vista Charter School develops in its first year as Palm Springs Unified School District’s first alternative elementary school ... a school of choice, where students, parents and teachers are dedicated to working together for long-term benefits of the children and community.

QUESTION: What does it mean to you to come up through the PSUSD and now to lead a new chapter in education at one of the very same schools you attended?

ANSWER: I love this community. This is my 33rd year working in the PSUSD system, which has been good to me. When I was appointed to principal at Cielo Vista, I went to each room to introduce myself to the students. One young man asked me if I knew a former CV student. I told him that was one of my students when I taught at CV. He told me that was his mom. I felt old but loved the fact that generations were still supporting the school. The sense of family and pride of working for a common goal is very gratifying.

Why are you so passionate about the charter system?

The charter affords us flexibility with the curriculum and budget that allows us to explore and implement different teaching strategies and programs while teaching the state standards. With “Project Based Learning” teachers collaborate with a team while utilizing their individual strengths. By

working together and rotating students, teachers incorporate a multitude of subjects in one project. Creating a positive, empowering place for teaching and learning encourages everyone to continually reach and excel.

Where do you see California’s education system heading?

If the budget is not resolved, it does not look good. All schools must be accountable for test scores, but without adequate funding, schools will not be able to keep up with technology to prepare students for the 21st century. Most schools already lack funds for PE, art, music and materials. With more budget cuts, the schools that can keep their doors open do so by only having the bare necessities. We need to support teachers and students by providing the tools they need to work and learn. Students all learn differently; by creating an environment where they love to be, we create a love for learning — that is priceless.

How are state budget cuts affecting



Lynda Lake, principal of Cielo Vista Charter School in Palm Springs.

Lake talks about her experience with the charter school system in a video at mydesert.com/opinion

Cielo Vista and its effort to maintain its charter?

We will make it through the first cut, but it will not be pretty if they take \$1,000 per child. These cuts will have a huge impact on technology, art, music, field trips, PE and materials, which will take the fun and creative flow out of learning. We want to be a school of choice for parents because we can offer educational flexibility and support the “No Excuses” and “Character Counts” programs. Our teachers are here because they love what they do; we need to support them. We have been writing grants and trying every kind of fundraiser we see. Donations have helped us this first year.

Some critics of charter schools say they divert resources from other schools and have an unfair advantage because they can be selective of what students they accept. How do you respond to that?

There is a distinction between dependent and independent schools and funding. We are a dependent charter with PSUSD; we pay our portion for District oversight and Special Education. We do not take funds away from other schools. We have behavior standards that must be upheld by attending students, but we are unable to be selective of students. Adhering to state mandates for charters, we hire an outside firm to run our student lottery, which provides teacher/class lists and a waiting list. Our charter follows the same due process as PSUSD. We are currently open for registration for 2011-12.

Do you have a suggestion for the Monday Newsmaker feature? Email Community Conversations Editor James Folmer at james.folmer@thedesertsun.com or call (760) 778-4625.

VALLEY VOICE



george runner

Online tax would only cost state more jobs

They’re at it again. Lawmakers in California, in a desperate attempt to generate revenues, are again seeking to force out-of-state retailers to collect taxes for online purchases made by California shoppers.

If they are successful in passing this legislation, not only will they fail to raise even one more nickel in tax revenue, they will cost the state thousands of jobs.

California has a cutting-edge industry of Internet entrepreneurs called “affiliates.” You’ve seen “affiliates” while surfing the web: blogs and websites that provide “click-through” ads to online retailers. If you click through and make a purchase, the affiliate gets a small percentage in payment from the retailer.

According to the Performance Marketing Association, there are nearly 25,000 California-based affiliate businesses that provide information to California consumers and improve the ease and thrill of their shopping experience online or with remote retailers and their catalogs.

If the Legislature passes a so-called “nexus” law, which will require out-of-state retailers to collect and remit California’s sales tax, those online retailers will terminate their relationship with California’s affiliates. They have done it in other states and have said they will do it here.

Business at risk

Paul Misener, Amazon’s Vice President for Global Public Policy, recently sent me a letter citing four pending measures aimed at requiring out-of-state online retailers to collect sales tax. He warns: “If any of these new tax collection schemes were adopted, Amazon would be compelled to end its advertising relationships with well over 10,000 California-based participants in the Amazon ‘Associates Program.’”

A Board of Equalization analysis cautions that the proposed legislation’s projected revenues would fall by 50 percent as a result of Amazon’s action and be “further diminished” if other online retailers also terminated their affiliate programs.

Thus, the unintended consequence of this tax policy will be to wipe out one of California’s few healthy business industries. That’s not what California needs when we have a statewide unemployment rate of more than 12 percent.

Collectively, affiliate businesses in California last year paid a total of \$124 million in state income taxes, plus business, employment and property taxes. If a nexus law is enacted, California can say goodbye to a good portion of those revenues.

Another way

As a member of the Board of Equalization, the publicly-elected tax board charged with collecting this tax, I believe the best course of action is to make it easier for Californians to be aware of their obligations and pay them.

Lawmakers’ efforts aside, neither the Board of Equalization nor the Legislature has the authority to force out-of-state retailers to collect sales tax. In 1992 the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution prohibits states from asserting taxing authority outside their borders unless the retailer maintains a physical presence in the taxing state.

The unintended consequences of a nexus law would be disastrous. Killing private sector jobs only worsens our state’s budget crisis. Lawmakers should reject such ill-conceived measures and instead start helping Californians get back to work.

Elected in November, George Runner represents the Second District of the Board of Equalization. Prior to his election to the Board, Runner served 12 years in the California Legislature. For more information, visit www.boecagov/runner.

MYDESERT POLL

Today’s question

Do you think lawmakers can agree on spending and avoid a partial government shutdown? **To vote, go to mydesert.com/opinion**

Sunday’s poll results

271 votes cast as of 9:30 p.m.

Will the proposed Whitewater jail hurt Coachella Valley tourism?

39.5% **Yes**
60.5% **No**

Do you have more to say on this topic?

Send comments via our Web site at mydesert.com/letters