

FROM READERS

Another take on immigration

Dan Walters' column ("Immigrants' value to California is a hard fact, not an illusion," Aug. 28) wasn't so much about the value of immigrants as it was about rewarding law-breakers because, after all, what else can we do?

My neighbor loves immigrants, legal or otherwise. He had work done on his house — all at a price within the budget of a retired school teacher.

No dispute, this is the kind of market for services we want — even as we vilify Wal-Mart for doing the same with goods. I suggest that immigrants have something to teach us — about free enterprise and a handshake; about kicking out the middle man (government) and passing the savings along.

But what about the principle that we are a nation of laws? Ah, the fly in the ointment. The left is populated by moral relativists. These secular humanists will bend principle to serve desired outcomes. The law-breaking noncitizen gets a pass; the tax/regulation evader gets jail time — unless he's in America illegally, and then we "level the playing field" for him.

Walters wants us to realistically address facts. Funny, the situation he presents is one in which facts are created. That's unprincipled politics, and Walters calls for more of the same.

Paul Burton
THE CITY

Statistical differences

From Page 10 of Wednesday's Examiner: "Last spring's seniors scored on average 502 out of 800 on the reading section, down from 503 for the class of 2006."

Does anyone out there really believe that there is a statistical difference between 502 and 503? Incredible! And then to try to explain the difference and crow about it — unbelievable! Get real.

Will Richardson
SAN CARLOS

TO ADD YOUR VOICE

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the Constitution, and instead made a mockery of our Justice Department. Only a loyalist partisan hack would think Gonzales got a raw deal. It is the American people who got the raw deal!

Greg Lennon
THE CITY

Free transit days senseless

It appears that Spare the Air free transit days simply reward people who normally take mass transit every day due to its convenience and low cost versus driving and parking. For people who don't normally take mass transit, it isn't due to the cost. They drive because it's easier for them or they just don't like using public transit or they like to show off their spinning rims. So it seems to be a huge waste of money to give free rides to people who would have taken public transit anyway while very few motorists might be swayed into using transit on the free days. I'm certain the money allocated to this program can be better spent elsewhere.

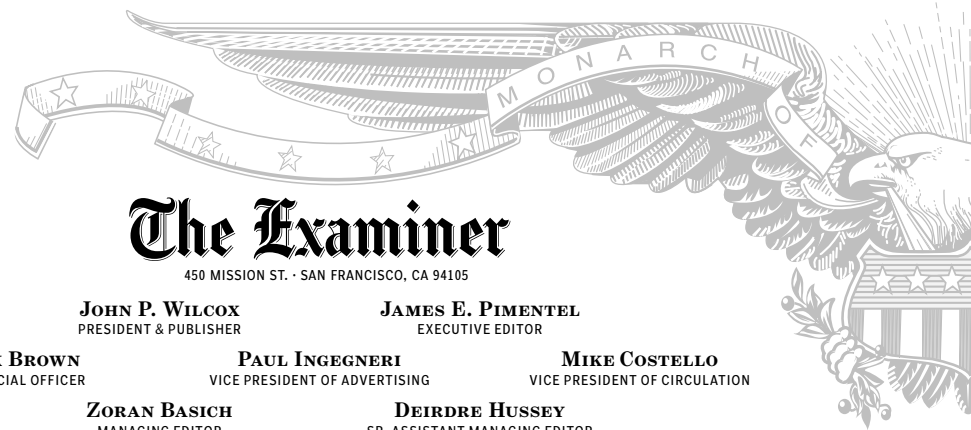
Marc Schoenfeld
THE CITY

Nowak a space case?

Capt. Lisa Nowak's trial is about to begin and her lawyers are going to try using the insanity plea as defense. They could be right because who else would drive hundreds of miles wearing a diaper thereby passing up making pit stops to go after her rival in this sordid NASA love triangle.

The troubled lady could use a "Huggie" in her time of need. She could be facing exile to "Space ... the Final Frontier" if found guilty.

Herb Stark
MASSAPEQUA, N.Y.



EDITORIAL

Big Labor strangles government

Frustrated by their steadily declining membership in the private sector where fewer than one in 10 workers are now unionized, Big Labor's bosses have been aggressively trying to recruit dues-paying members from the ranks of state and local government work forces. They've succeeded to the point that one in three public employees is now unionized.

But the union bosses want more and, since Denver is the site of next year's Democratic National Convention, it's no surprise that they now have Colorado taxpayers in their sights. The union bosses are pushing Gov. Bill Ritter to back a proposal from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to make all local and state workers subject to collective bargaining.

The proposal has "bad idea" written all over it and, as a middle-of-the-road Democrat who showed backbone earlier this year on Big Labor's card check trick, Ritter can give it to them straight now, too. Here's why collective bargaining for Colorado public employees is ill-advised:

First, there is one simple reason unions love to organize government workers. It's a lot easier to extract

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big raises and juicier benefits from politicians bidding for votes among politically active bureaucrats, who, unlike the private sector, don't have to worry about the bottom line. That explains why unionized public sector workers covered by collective bargaining agreements cost an estimated 20 percent more than nonunion workers, as measured by Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Nearly one-fourth of Colorado state employees are in unions already, a key factor in boosting the average state worker salary to more than \$44,000. UnionFacts.com estimates that Colorado taxpayers could pay 15.23 percent lower state taxes without the added expense of unionized state workers.

And let's not forget that collective bargaining will also mean fatter health and retirement benefits for government workers. Many states with heavily unionized public work forces — notably California, Illinois, Indi-

ana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio and West Virginia — now face the bitter choices of raising taxes, cutting state spending on other programs or defaulting on public employee pension and health care obligations won through collective bargaining agreements years ago. There can be no doubt that the latest collective bargaining grab by the public employee unions will only make Colorado government more expensive.

What's most worrisome about the proposal, however, is the havoc it would wreak in many Colorado workplaces, public and private. Besides collective bargaining for state and local employees, the labor bosses also want to force nonunion public employees to make a "fair share" payment to the unions. Once unions have such power in public workplaces, how long before they demand it in private businesses as well? Colorado's healthy working environment would then be in serious trouble.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Tom Toles/The Washington Post

