

IN OUR VIEW

Winter wonder

TDI EDITORIAL BOARD

Winter Wonderland is well under way with the annual parade last Tuesday along Carter and Central Avenue in Ashland. Winter Wonderland is a massive undertaking that is much more than the parade. Hundreds of thousands of lights are installed in Central Park and along the new parade route.

This starts early with the testing of the lights and installation begins in October. The city installs most of the lights and park crews start in October to avoid paying overtime.

It was very appropriate to have John W. Clark as Grand Marshal of the parade. Clark's Pump-N-Shops have made contributions throughout their service areas. John W. Clark started as a gasoline distributor in Westwood and parlayed his business to more than 70 convenience store locations.

Clark's Pump-N-Shops resisted becoming a publicly traded company, making it family-owned by his sons Brent and Rick.

Nearly every community in our area has a Christmas lights display and most have parades. Take a trip up to Gallopolis, Ohio, and you'll see they've decorated their park situated along the Ohio River. A fun trip might be an evening drive in the region to check area lights — perhaps the BOCO Holiday Light Trail.

Never underestimate local tourism and the dollars it can bring to a community. There's much to do this time of year. Get out and enjoy.

GUEST EDITORIAL

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of The Daily Independent. This piece originally appeared in The Toledo Blade.

Accountability goes with voucher

It would seem to be a no-brainer to require that schools receiving Ohio taxpayer-funded private school education vouchers must account for the use of that money.

That was the requirement of a bill making its way through the General Assembly. Except now it has been amended to remove the disclosure and testing requirements.

The Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee last week eliminated some key provisions in House Bill 407, those requiring private schools to submit an annual report to be posted online, including how voucher funds were spent.

The committee also eliminated a requirement that scholarship students take the same state standardized tests that public school students take.

In its first year, spending on scholarship vouchers — taxpayer-funded payments to private schools on behalf of children attending those schools — is close to \$1 billion. Can the state justify making those expenditures without knowing for certain how the schools are using the money, or whether the children are learning?

At present, it's reasonable to say yes, because of the history of private schools, which have a reputation for educational competence leading to high graduation rates and students going on to college. It is known that the schools have relatively few frills and pay their staff less than public school systems pay their staff.

Whether this will continue into the future with the addition of \$1 billion in taxpayer funds to be accessed remains to be determined.

Private, religious schools have been thrifty and low-budget out of necessity, with feelings of religious conviction often offsetting the low pay.

Those feelings will continue. Students with family income up to 200% of the poverty level must not be billed beyond the full amount provided by the state. Tuition above the state stipend can escalate when family income is above the 200 percent threshold. But private schools cannot simply add the state per-pupil payment to their current tuition.

The reality of a new source of revenue changes the expectations for these schools.

They should have to show the public how the money is being spent, and there should be a requirement that student scores are reported. It's a reasonable expectation and trade-off.

Taxpayers will not want tax funds to go to unregulated private schools that produce classes of students who earn low test scores.

Parents should be able to choose the education they feel best serves their children's needs and the state should be satisfied with any school that meets its expectations for a well-educated child.

There is nothing about disclosure of salaries and test scores that conflicts with either of those very legitimate goals. The requirements for disclosure and testing should be added back to the bill.



Time for AOC to go

Of all the neighborhoods in Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's district, one stood out on Election Day as a considerable surprise.

The left-wing congresswoman represents a very diverse population ranging from struggling immigrants in Queens and a piece of The Bronx to young professionals gentrifying areas right across the river from Manhattan.

New York's 14th Congressional District just reelected her and went for Kamala Harris, but Donald Trump's share of its vote rose by 50% over 2020. And the heavily Latino enclave of Corona provided Trump's strongest support there.

Why would that be? New York magazine asked questions and found answers.

Like low-income and working-class Americans everywhere, inflation weighed heavily on many of the locals.

But what bothered people most in this neighborhood — where it's hard to get along without some Spanish — was mass immigration from Central and South America.

Since 2022, some 200,000 migrants have descended on New York City. The people of Corona felt that they had been unfairly burdened by the pressures and problems created by this influx of new arrivals.

Like many Latino voters along the Texas border with Mexico, they moved toward Trump in response to the civic disorder unleashed on their doorstep. Relatively affordable and Spanish-speaking, Corona naturally attracted the newcomers. More affluent

neighborhoods succeeded in pushing the surge away from them.

Corona residents complained of increased crime, some of it exaggerated, some of it not. It wasn't so much horrible crimes, like murder.

The New York Police Department's 110th precinct, which covers Corona, reports a 75% drop in murders from two years ago. Rather it was a perceived rise in the less violent infractions of shoplifting, illegal vending and prostitution.

Unlicensed street vendors lined the commercial thoroughfare of Roosevelt Avenue, selling food or merchandise.

That was not only in-the-face lawbreaking; it took business away from the shopkeepers paying rent and taxes. The street vendors would routinely pour their grease into the sewers, which attracted rats to store basements.

Residents were angered by an explosion of sex workers soliciting customers outside makeshift brothels.

Prostitutes even beckoned to boys going to school. Many of the women were believed to have been working to pay off the smugglers who got them over the border.

The sense of disorder was said to scare customers away. Similar quality-of-life issues were felt nationwide. California voters, exasperated by the scourge of shoplifting, pushed

back on decriminalizing low-level crime.

AOC understood none of this — or didn't care. Some in Corona recall her appearing at a recent local rally to support the illegal migrant vendors. One annoyed resident told the reporter that their local representatives only showed up for "LGBT mobilization or when the lady prostitutes do a rally."

Interestingly, some of the interviewees themselves had been here illegally at some point in their American venture.

They were disappointed that Biden didn't obtain amnesty for the estimated 15 million undocumented people already in this country, including, no doubt, a good number of their neighbors. Most said they voted for Biden in 2020.

Democrats can turn this situation around.

The vulgarity and cruelty of Trump and his MAGA movement are bound to wear thin. But the party's woke left has proven itself a turnoff to voters and must be replaced. It's not too early to promote primary challenges for the 2026 midterms. Start with AOC.

Ocasio-Cortez has recently presented herself as a more moderate version of her earlier self, but her earlier self still has quite a way to go. Her most avid supporters seem to be college grads, but even many of them are tiring of her.

Americans want order, at the border and on their streets. That isn't too much for any of us to ask.

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