

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Off-street parking mandates should end

By Robert Steuteville

I love free parking. In fact, I love free anything. I'm willing to go to an event that I wouldn't ordinarily attend if there is free ice cream.

Yet imagine if restaurants nationwide were required to provide dessert for no extra charge. The cost of the dessert would be incorporated into every meal, and people who avoid sugar would be paying for those with a sweet tooth. Many who otherwise would not eat dessert would do so because it's free, and this would add to our health problems.

If they gave out free gas at the mini-mart, I would line up like everybody else in town.

But if gas were free — or if we paid a yearly fee for gasoline, so each fill-up was no extra charge — we can imagine all of the consequences.

The people who drive least would subsidize those who drive most. Everybody would drive more, because there would be less incentive to drive less. Our greenhouse gas emissions would soar, as would health costs, congestion, and deaths and injuries from automobile accidents.

Our minimum parking requirements, applied to every type of development, have a similar affect. They create parking spots that are "free" to users, but the costs are rolled into housing or goods and services. They increase driving and, because parking is one of the least productive urban land uses, they cut economic activity and real estate values in the city. They add substantially — often a quarter or more — to the cost of housing, making affordable housing more difficult to build. Because parking lots and garages make for unpleasant places to linger, they discourage walking. Less walking and more driving is a double whammy for greenhouse gases.

Allowing restaurants to charge separately for dessert isn't anti-sweets and doesn't discourage eateries from selling them. Requiring people to pay for gas isn't anti-motoring and hasn't made fuel unavailable. Similarly, ending mandates for off-street parking is not anti-car and won't mean that no new parking spaces are built.

Loads — literally loads — of evidence has emerged that eliminating minimum parking requirements helps cities economically, makes them more appealing, increases walking and decreases driving. By extension, it reduces pollution and boosts health.

The nation has an astounding billion or more parking spaces, experts say, and most are required by law. Parking lots and garages have come to define our nation visually.

The effects of eliminating minimum parking requirements would be slow, not radical. Existing parking would not change much until parcels are redeveloped. For new developments, parking decisions would be based on the market.

Over time, this would create a stronger and better Ithaca. Further, we would join many other communities that are helping to revitalize cities and lower carbon emissions. Let's steer our city in that direction.

Steuteville is a City of Ithaca resident and is the author of "New Urbanism: Best Practices Guide."



Father, forgive us, for we know not what we do

Jonylah Watkins died on a Tuesday.

She was with her father, who was sitting in a minivan in Chicago on the night of March 11 when someone opened fire. Doctors worked 17 hours trying to repair what a bullet had done to her body, but to no avail. She died the next morning. Her funeral was about two weeks ago. She was 6 months old.

Antonio Santiago was 7 months older when his mother put him in a stroller and took him for a walk in their Brunswick, Ga., neighborhood. Sherry West says they were accosted by two teenagers demanding money. She told them she didn't have any. West says they shot Antonio in the face and killed him. This happened two days after Jonylah's funeral.

An Associated Press reporter was on hand a day later as the boy's father tried to comfort his child's mother. "He's all right" Luis Santiago told her, smiling for her benefit. "He's potty training upstairs in heaven."

Which is, of course, the very foundation of faith, the belief that even tragedy will work ultimately for the good, that in the end, the bitterest tears transmute to the greatest joy. That is, in essence, what is commemorated this Easter week. It marks the morning when, we Christians believe, a carpenter turned itinerant rabbi overcame death itself, rolled a stone

aside and walked out of his own tomb.

In the King James Bible, in the book of Matthew, the rabbi — Jesus — is quoted as saying, "Suffer little children and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

When I was a kid, that always confused me. I wondered why children were commanded to suffer. But, as later translations confirm, the word was used in its old English sense, meaning: to permit or allow. Let the children come to me, He is saying, for they are the essence of grace. Love the children.

Two thousand years later, a singer named Marvin Gaye turned that command into a stark plea: Save the children.

As a nation, as a people, we have failed at both.

Nearly 100,000 people will be shot this year according to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Seventeen thousand will be younger than 19. So almost 5,000 kids have been shot since the Newtown massacre in December, the one that was supposed make us finally get serious about gun violence.

That toll speaks unflattering volumes about our seriousness. As does a Politico report that support is softening for laws that would expand background checks and impose other common-sense restrictions on gun ownership. A Florida state

legislative panel just voted to support a bill allowing teachers to bring guns to school. Once again, the nation endorses the Orwellian logic which would "solve" the problem of too many guns by adding more guns.

How do you suppose we would explain that to Jonylah or Antonio? Which of the gun lobby's inane platitudes would we use to justify our failure to keep them safe? Jonylah, guns don't kill people; people kill people. Antonio, the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun ...

Sigh. This year as every year, foes of abortion publicly mourn the loss of babies who could have been. But they — we — remain silent on the loss of babies who actually were, who died because we could not get our act together, because ours is a nation that does not simply enable private gun ownership, but that worships and fetishizes it to the point where sensible restriction — even sensible conversation — seems impossible.

As a result, we are a nation where what happened to Jonylah and Antonio has become grimly, sadly ... routine. That fact alone starkly illustrates the insanity to which we have devolved, and the challenge that faces faith this Easter week.

We keep crying the bitter tears. We are still waiting for the joy.

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Leonard Pitts

Commentary

TODAY IN HISTORY

This is Thursday, April 4, 2013. On this date:

- » In 1818, Congress decided the flag of the United States would consist of 13 red and white stripes and 20 stars, with a new star to be added for every new state of the Union.
- » In 1841, President Wil-

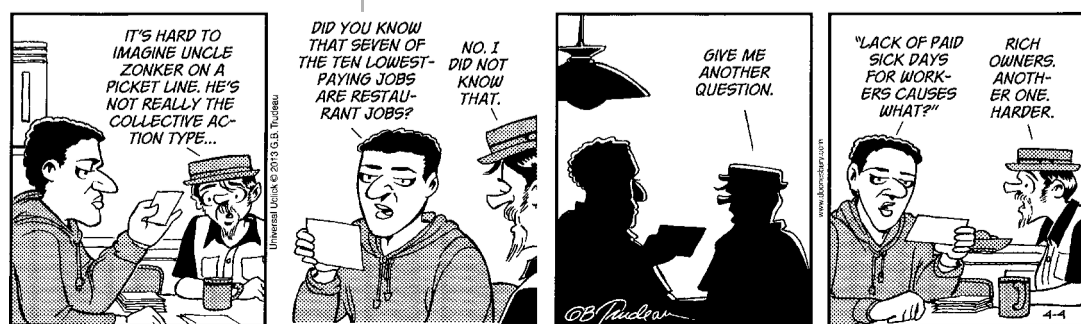
liam Henry Harrison succumbed to pneumonia one month after his inauguration, the first U.S. chief executive to die in office.

- » In 1850, the city of Los Angeles was incorporated.
- » In 1902, British financier Cecil Rhodes left \$10 million in his will to provide

scholarships for Americans at Oxford University.

- » In 1949, 12 nations, including the United States, signed the North Atlantic Treaty, foundation of NATO.
- » In 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., 39, was shot to death in Memphis, Tenn.

DOONESBURY



LAURELS

Success is spelled C-O-M-M-U-N-I-T-Y

» **Laurel from the Ithaca Public Education Initiative:** Thanks to the many individuals and local businesses that made our 15th Annual Adult Spelling Bee such a success on March 3. Thanks to our generous event and team sponsors, more than \$14,000 will go to our teacher grants program.

Thanks to the Chemung Canal Trust Company, the blue ribbon champion sponsor of the bee; to Cat's Pajamas and Wells Fargo Advisors, the red and gold finalist sponsors; and to media sponsor Cayuga Radio Group.

IPEI appreciates Greg Bostwick, Martha Hardesty, Ralph Jones, Deborah Lynn, Paulette Manos, Jean McPheeters, Mayor Svante Myrick and George Preston, who generously donated their time to help officiate the bee; and also all of the spellers, team sponsors, and spectators who attended the bee (see complete lists at ipei.org).

Thanks to Barny Cole of Calf Audio, the IHS Brain Team, Bee Fairies Nuala and Anastasia Ugine, and Emily and Isabel Rubin. The bee also depends on our prize donors Agway, Cat's Pajamas, DonorsChoose.org, Emmy's Organics, Hangar Theatre, Heron Creek Cards and Gifts, Life's So Sweet Chocolates, Micky Roof and the Jewelbox, Panera Bread, The Piggery, Purity Ice Cream and Susan McCutcheon; and refreshment donors Aladdin's Natural Eatery, Ithaca Coffee Company, Moe's, P&C Fresh, Subway, Tops and Wings Over Ithaca.

Special thanks also to the BOCES Print Shop, Cornell Laundry and West Hill Graphics for their generous help with services and supplies, and to the Ithaca City School District for the use of the Ithaca High School Bliss Gymnasium.

Many offered welcome, inspiration to students

» **Laurel from Sara Garner:** I want to thank my Ithaca community for welcoming the students of Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School so warmly and generously.

This trip would not have been made possible were it not for the help of several people. First, my fellow teachers Danielle Henderson and Sarah Fishstrom conceived, organized and fundraised to make this trip possible, and our principal, Matt Brown, offered unwavering support.

Applause to Damon Brangman and Josh Dolan from Cornell Cooperative Extension, our chauffeurs around Ithaca and organizers of our farm visits, as well as Dan Muska from Primitive Pursuits. Good Life Farm opened its doors to us. Eternal gratitude to the Clarion Hotel, Moosewood, Glenwood Pines, Ithaca Bakery and Kitchen Theater. A big thank you to Ithaca College's and Cornell University's admissions and multicultural diversity offices for welcoming us to their campuses and inspiring our kids to dream big.

This trip was one of the most meaningful experiences of my teaching career, and I can tell you all that it had a huge effect on our students. To quote 11th-grader Kenroy Kerr: "I don't want to leave. It's good to get out of the city — it gives you perspective. I'm definitely coming back here."

We Be People

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 grievances. — The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution