

May 27 Readers' letters

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Body

'Will of the people' trumps civil rights

I'm so saddened by Tuesday's California Supreme Court ruling to uphold Proposition 8. This is another example (besides our budget mess) of why our state's system of rule by proposition needs to be overhauled. When the "will of the people" can deny citizens their civil rights, it's not justice, it's legally sanctioned discrimination. If the voters at the time had the final word in their respective times, neither blacks nor women would have the right to vote today.

Terry DeBenedictis

Redwood City

Gingrich could clean up this mess

Allen Lazarus' effort (**Letters**, **May** 26) to tie former House Speaker Newt Gingrich to congressional deficit spending is misplaced at best. After two years of ballooning deficits under President Clinton, Speaker Gingrich and the Republicans were swept into power and promptly ran budget surpluses from 1998 to 2001, the only federal budget surpluses since 1968. Our Democratic Legislature would better serve California if it promptly retained Speaker Gingrich to clean up their mess. I am sure he would be happy to help and the results would likely be the same as the last time he cleaned up a Democratic mess lower taxes and budget surpluses.

Eric C. Bellafronto

San Jose

Soldier suicides deserve attention

Thanks for your coverage in the past few days of Army soldier suicides. The in-depth story (Page 1A, **May** 25) of the Rev. Susan Turley's experience with the death of her son, Army Pfc. Keith Moore, when he was in Iraq was particularly touching. And the story about the young soldier who committed suicide last week in Santa Cruz was another stark reminder of how some who risk their lives for our country don't get the help they need and deserve.

My son returned from Iraq about this time last year after being part of the "surge." When his Army division took time out at their U.S. base on Memorial Day 2008 to honor those who had lost their lives during their prior 15-month deployment, one name was missing from the list. It belonged to a young soldier who committed suicide in a combat base watch tower. My son was outraged and disappointed. So was I.

The war **may**, or **may** not, have been a substantial contributor to these three deaths. But young men and women who wear our nation's uniform deserve more vigilance, and top-notch mental health services, from the Army.

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Stephen E. Wright

Dublin

How about a real proposal for state?

Mercury News **readers** deserve more thoughtful opinion articles than Newt Gingrich's (Opinion, **May** 24) laughably partisan misreading of the California election. Couldn't you instead find a California Republican leader to fill the space with an actual proposal of what services he volunteers to be cut in his district and how many early release prisoners he welcomes to his district?

I believe that the election results were a rebuke to the scorched earth partisan politics like Gingrich engages that have made the budget process unworkable.

Ed Brown

Sunnyvale

Take another look at state spending

Regarding the recent editorial on Californians' "hard choices," has the Mercury News (Editorial, **May** 21) considered that it is our legislators, not our citizens, who have abdicated responsibility here?

Spending has increased 40 percent since 2003 with no discernible improvement in services. Had spending been held flat, which it was from 2000-2003, we would have a surplus today.

Now, the Legislature and this newspaper are presenting a false choice between basic services and even higher tax increases. We had those same services and a functional state before 2003, and we can go back to those spending levels. Our legislators' threats to the contrary show just how little attention they've paid to their spending rates.

Elizabeth Altmaier

Cupertino

The late, great state of California

T.J. Rodgers (**Letters**, **May** 24) rails against his home being buzzed by CHP traffic planes and focuses on the imagined cost of the patrol as he claims CEO wisdom could fix the state budget.

I agree planes should not buzz homes, but the cost is not the issue. Think of the lives saved by traffic enforcement; priceless and precious. It seems most CEOs focus only on cost but to grow investment is needed. That costs. Preoccupation only with cost is myopic.

California's problem is revenue, not cost. Proposition 13 ruined California's budget because ironically over time it skewed the tax base to homes, reducing revenue. California needs a politically impossible overhaul of its taxation that is fair. As we degenerate to a Third World backwater, whither our dynamism, innovation? Who will want to live or work here?

J.R. Knutson

Fremont

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