

VIEWPOINTS

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Around the web

On a new Rays stadium, Schools of Hope and freedom of press

On an article about the Tampa Bay Rays making progress toward building a new stadium, though a location was not disclosed.

It does seem like quite the spin. They're going to build this euphoric candyland that improves life for everyone. Kind of how it goes everywhere when ownership is asking to build a new stadium/arena. I think Hillsborough is going to be very tough to get the buy in to get this done, but good luck. My guess is they'll probably try to use St Pete as a pawn in negotiations. Hence why you get the "nothing is off the table" statements. That's expected. What would make it interesting is if St Pete goes forward with one of the incoming (non-stadium) proposals for the Trop site. That will tighten the screws and give Tampa a lot of leverage.

— **S. Carrado**

Considering the current rush hour traffic at the Fairgrounds, adding a Rays stadium to that location would accomplish complete grid lock every game day except Saturday and Sunday. — **R. Kaiser**

I'll believe it when I'm actually sitting in a seat with a hot dog in my hand. 2029 seems ambitious considering they haven't even picked a dirt lot yet. — **J. Boone**

On a column about Schools of Hope.

I already think people over 65 should not have to pay school taxes, but now my money is going to for profit private schools??? I want my money back. I have done my duty and paid school taxes my entire life and I don't have kids. At some point the taxes should go away. My property taxes would become affordable without paying school taxes. — **I. Barbour**

Of course, why would you want to invest in the future of our society by educating our greatest asset? — **A. Granger Welch.**

On an article about photojournalist Dave Decker getting arrested while covering an immigration protest in Miami.

This is another report of how our government is disregarding laws protecting the



Tropicana Field got a new roof after last year's Hurricane Milton tore it to shreds. The Tampa Bay Rays new leadership team said it is making progress on finding a place to build a new stadium.

(DIRK SHADD | Times)

right of the free press to document news events as they are happening. From what I read, Dexter had not broken any law, but those officers who arrested him acted in a manner contrary to the rule of law they were charged to uphold.

We see more and more how political power is being abused by those who apparently feel that they are above accountability. What is truly disturbing when events like this arise, very few get more than a slap on the wrist if that, and business continues as usual. We as citizens should demand fair treatment from those who are employed to protect and serve us and also accountability for those who disregard our rights.

— **M. Durham**

For every police officer like the one described in the article there are probably many whose sense of duty abhors it. Unfortunately, in the times we live in we have leaders who encourage that type of thugery. When police, (ICE, Border agents wearing masks) can come into a person's home or business knocking down doors, and hauling people away without warrants we have a problem, a very serious problem. People should fight for their constitutional rights exactly as this reporter is doing. Thugs need to be stopped or else a police state comes next. — **R. Tamargo**

I was a Florida television news reporter in the 1980s. Never once did it cross my mind that I might get arrested while covering a protest, and I covered many. We're living in what is on the verge of becoming a police state, where law enforcement use Gestapo procedures against those they don't like. My highest thank yous to those who risk themselves doing journalism these days.

— **K. Lee**

Column

7 years later, Fla. Republicans disregard Parkland's pain

Seven years ago, a 19-year-old walked into a gun store, legally purchased an AR-15 rifle, and murdered 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. In the days that followed, lawmakers from both parties confronted the clear, catastrophic failure that allowed him to obtain that weapon. They acted. They raised the minimum age to purchase firearms from 18 to 21, a safeguard that directly addressed the loophole that enabled the shooting and that would have stopped him from buying the gun.



JACKIE CORIN



CHRISTINE HUNSCH-OFSKY

Now, Florida Republicans, including some who supported that law in 2018, are trying to repeal it. House Bill 133 would lower the minimum age to purchase long guns back to 18, dismantling a protection that Florida's own courts have upheld as constitutional since the Parkland shooting. The current law contains reasonable exemptions for military servicemembers, law enforcement and correctional officers, underscoring that it was designed

as a balanced, common-sense fix. It was never symbolic; it responded to what went wrong at Parkland with a targeted, evidence-based solution. One of us survived the shooting and helped build the national movement that fought for this law. The other represents Parkland in the Florida Legislature and has spent years defending these reforms. We understand exactly what is at stake when lawmakers begin treating life-saving policies as disposable. And we share the same reaction to this reversal: profound disappointment and a deep sense of betrayal.

Leaders who once stood with our community and promised "never again" are now abandoning the very protections they championed, trading principle for political convenience. That decision also ignores what the data makes undeniable.

Firearms kill more 18 to 20-year-olds than anything else. This age group com-

mits gun homicides at three times the rate of those 21 and older. States with minimum age laws saw an 18% drop in suicide deaths among 18- to 20-year-olds. Meanwhile, when other states lowered their minimum age to 18, youth suicide rates spiked almost immediately.

This law saves lives. Repealing it will cost them. And now, after a recent court ruling permitting Floridians to openly carry firearms without a permit, lowering the minimum purchase age would allow teenagers to openly carry AR-15s in public. That is why one of us also filed HB 321 to keep long guns out of sensitive places like courthouses and government meetings.

The Legislature knows the value of the minimum age law. It passed with bipartisan support in 2018, and lawmakers reaffirmed its importance earlier this year. What has changed is not the evidence, but the politics. A constitutional, effective and urgently needed policy is being targeted for repeal because the political winds have shifted, and some leaders would rather appease gun-rights groups than honor their commitments to public safety.

In 2018, 17 families buried their loved ones, and Florida learned from that tragedy. Those families, the Parkland community, and young people across our state have every right to expect that lesson will not be discarded for short-term political gain.

Last month, House Republicans advanced HB 133 through the Criminal Justice Subcommittee, despite powerful testimony from the community. There is still time to stop this reckless reversal.

The 2026 legislative session will reveal whether Florida's leaders still stand by the promises they made in 2018. We urge lawmakers to vote no on HB 133 and uphold the commitments made to our community. We have not forgotten. Floridians have not forgotten. Our lives, and our children's lives, are not negotiable. And we will all be watching what happens next.

Jackie Corin is the executive director of March for Our Lives. Rep. Christine Hunschofsky, a Democrat, represents the district that includes Parkland.