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OPINION

'It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up.'

— Vince Lombardi

OUR VIEW

Strickland's challenge: Rhetoric vs. reality

Soaring rhetoric is a staple of "State of the State" addresses in Ohio, and sometimes it seems that the more dire the times are the more our chief executive feels compelled to reach for the stars.

A quarter-century ago, Democrat Richard Celeste vowed to press for development of the Ravenna Arsenal as "the most dynamic, state of the art industrial park in North America." We're not holding our breath waiting for that to happen. Republicans George Voinovich and Bob Taft boasted about becoming "education governors"; Taft actually implemented an OhioReads program but ultimately lost funding for it, while Voinovich responded to the DeRolph school funding decision by proposing a boost in the sales tax that went nowhere.

Which brings us to Gov. Ted Strickland, who showed himself to be no slouch, rhetorically speaking, in his "State of the State" message Tuesday.

"Ohio will rise again," Strickland declared, "Because there isn't a single thing wrong with Ohio that can't be fixed by what's right with Ohio."

"I believe in Ohio," he said, invoking a litany of Ohio-born heroes from John Glenn to Jesse Owens and Buckeye-related icons ranging from Superman to the tomato.

Turning to specifics, Strickland outlined a number of initiatives aimed at boosting the state's economy, including increased development of energy alternatives through a \$40 million program using state and federal stimulus funds as well as a program to encourage Ohio agricultural production by improving access to products grown in the state.

"I will move heaven and earth to create jobs in Ohio, and I will not rest until it's done," he pledged, noting increased investment in infrastructure improvements, revitalized job training efforts, tax reform and expansion of the Homestead Property Tax Exemption as well as a business tax rate that is "the lowest in the Midwest."

Strickland announced creation of a Small Business Growth Partnership to establish a working capital jobs fund to assist small manufacturers in expanding their companies and calling back laid-off workers. He also touted the Third Frontier initiative of his predecessor, Bob Taft, and appealed for voter support for an extension of the program.

"Ohio's promise, Ohio's opportunity, is not to be found by clinging ever tighter to a fading past," he said, "Because, my friends, our renewal lies before us, not behind us."

Facing a re-election campaign that is likely to be cast as a referendum on his leadership, Gov. Strickland's focus on the positive — on "believing" in Ohio, naysayers be damned — is understandable. Whether he will be able to reconcile his rhetoric with the reality of a state where more than 10 percent of the population is without a job remains to be seen.

Believing in Ohio isn't difficult. Turning it around — as Candidate Strickland vowed in 2006 — is another matter.

WRITE US

The Record-Courier welcomes letters from readers.

We reserve the right to condense letters because of space limitations and to correct errors of fact, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

We publish only original letters addressed to the Record-Courier. We will not publish unsigned letters, poetry or letters from, about or endorsing local political candidates.

To ensure a diversity of opinion, writers are limited to one published letter every 30 days. Rebuttals will be printed at the discretion of the editor.

Letters may be sent to 126 N. Chestnut St., Ravenna 44266 or e-mailed to editor@recordpub.com.



LETTERS

A high price for lack of leadership

Residents of this county and throughout America are witnessing and suffering because of the actions of our elected politicians on both sides of the party lines.

The economy of our country was forced into a nose dive for many reasons. First, when the so-called "free" trade agreements became a way of doing business; in addition, we encouraged more job loss by allowing China to become a partner in the World Trade Organization. We also allowed major corporations, without proper control measures, to move their operations across our borders and into other countries. In turn, our elected officials turned a blind eye when businesses totally ignored our immigration laws for cheaper labor. It also didn't help that we pre-empted a war in the Middle East that caused an enormous drain on our financial reserves.

We are now suffering the consequences of these and many other irresponsible political decisions. The result is despair, joblessness and a loss of faith in our leadership. The terrible economic situation in our country is our utmost problem. Our leadership in all phases of government needs to find ways to conserve their budgets and not pass this burden on to our children. Unfortunately, public service reserves have been drastically reduced due to the lack of employment in the private sector. This lack of employment has caused less tax revenue, bankruptcies and home foreclosures. I read about our local government agencies needing to cut costs or reduce services to our residents, which means more job cuts. The nega-

tive impact of this economic downfall affects everyone.

What is the answer that will put an end to this? I wish I knew. However, until we can change the minds of our federal leadership with regard to many things, such as bringing back jobs to our country, stopping special treatment for other countries and fixing our problems here first — until we change their minds — we must all make sacrifices, both public and private employees. This should also include administrators and elected officials.

Despite it all, we as Americans will get past this. Hopefully, we will learn to become more involved in our political process and not fill government by party lines but by individual stances on issues that affect us all as citizens.

**Ron Horn
Rootstown**

Clear message goes unheeded

Regarding Democrat Arlen Specter's arrogant "Act like a lady and don't interrupt me" comments that were directed at Republican Congresswoman Michele Bachmann during a radio debate: Senator Specter's behavior was ignorant and downright embarrassing. He showed himself for what he is — a frustrated man who no doubt feels a noose around his neck following those three defeats of fellow Democrats.

Specter was in effect telling Bachmann to sit there and shut up. It's a glaring example of an ego that runs not only through Specter, but throughout an arrogant Congress.

We Americans are clear: Cut the spending, nix the health care, and focus on jobs. But a pompous Congress ignores us

and continues to contemplate ways to ram through a health care monstrosity that the majority of us can't stomach. Sweet deals were fashioned behind closed doors, and this administration continues to snub one special question: How good can a health care plan be if you have to bribe members of your own party to vote for it?

We have a president who thought it was OK to mock fellow citizens by dangling an imaginary tea bag from his fingers and telling Tea Parties to "get serious." He didn't even realize he insulted a range of political affiliations. Furthermore, after 158 Obama news interviews, and 42 Obama news conferences, arrogance continues to reject the reality that, yes, American voters do have minds of their own.

Kudos to Michele Bachmann for handling a dose of insolence with class and grace. As for Specter, a toodle-loo and "the boot" come the month of November.

**Joanne Quesenberry
Mantua**

Figures on toll of abortion clarified

In Right to Life of Portage County's two-page ad in the Jan. 24 Record-Courier, two sentences were erroneously combined, resulting in some confusing statistics.

The last lines in the "Facts of Death" section should have read: From 1973 to 2008, a daily average of 3,774 Americans were killed by legal abortion. During 2008, in Ohio alone, a daily average of over 81 were killed.

We apologize for the error.

**Raymond J. Adamek
President
Right to Life
of Portage County**

ANOTHER VIEW

Obama and the middle class

When President Barack Obama addresses the nation tonight, he will drag to the lectern rock-heavy bags from a trying first year: an economy at the edge of collapse, stepped up war deployments and metastatic joblessness. All of it big, all of it morphing with each passing week, all of it occurring at stratospherically expensive levels.

His announcement Monday that he would, along with health care overhaul, aim his best efforts

at removing economic pain from the middle class is good news to us, indeed. Exactly how he will do that is just emerging, and we hope to hear in his State of the Union address that measures designed to make life easier for middle-income workers will be swift and without corollary damage to the untargeted.

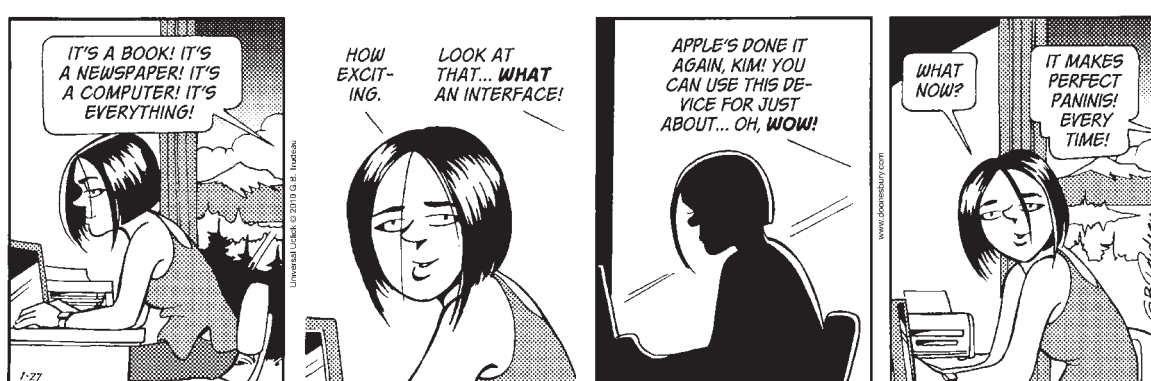
So far so good. He wants to bolster child care benefits, offer tuition debt relief for college

graduates and create smarter retirement savings practices for all employees. These things strike us as right on time in several ways.

We'll be listening closely tomorrow, aware that nothing's free. But we'll be clear, too, in our sense that any relief Obama wishes to bring to mid-income workers find full articulation from him and speedy follow-through in Congress.

(Reprinted from *The Oregonian*, Portland, Ore.)

DOONESBURY



GOP in need of positive approach

Scripps Howard News Service

Congressional Republicans are right to savor Senator-elect Scott Brown's stunning victory. Democrat Martha Coakley's self-destructive gaffes notwithstanding, conservative Republican Brown's formidable 52 percent to 47 percent triumph is akin to Democratic Rep. Barney Frank surfacing in Salt Lake City and, three weeks later, zooming past a pro-market entrepreneur right into the Senate.



DEROY MURDOCK

Massachusetts voters embraced limited government, fiscal discipline, lighter taxes, and tougher treatment of terrorists. Republicans should enjoy this moment and thank Brown for reminding the GOP of how to run a winning campaign.

Once the high fives and hoisting of beer glasses have abated, however, Congressional Republicans should develop a coherent legislative agenda and promote it throughout this election year. If President Obama and other stunned Democrats help Republicans implement these objectives, splendid. But if they cling to big-government "solutions," Republicans should use this policy-shopping list like a latter-day Contract with America, which helped Congressional Republicans capture the House in 1994.

Let's call this 21st Century document Agenda 21. It should include these items:

- Health care: Brown's win seems to kill ObamaCare as we know it. Instead, Republicans should coalesce around patient-centered reforms, including voluntary, universal, tax-preferred Health Savings Accounts. Americans should be free to buy health insurance across state lines, which will boost competition and cut costs. Uninsured citizens ineligible for private or public assistance should receive Health Stamps. Like Food Stamps, such an affluence-tested subsidy would help them choose and purchase basic, private coverage, with government furnishing money, not micromanagement.

- No more Mr. Nice Guy on terrorism: America's Islamofascist enemies should be barred from civilian courts. Guantanamo should remain open until al-Qaeda is crushed like a quail egg beneath a steamroller. Enhanced interrogation — including water boarding — must remain in America's anti-terrorism arsenal. The Nigerian crotch bomber should experience this policy firsthand.

- Fiscal discipline. Massachusetts voters gagged at Team Obama's relentless outlays and this fiscal year's \$1.4 trillion federal deficit. Republicans should fight for a two-year freeze in overall federal expenditures.

- Tax relief: According to Americans for Tax Reform, Washington Democrats have enacted or proposed some \$2.1 trillion in tax hikes since President Obama's inauguration. During a severe economic slump, these include \$858.45 billion in taxes that would hit families earning less than \$250,000, breaking Obama's solemn promise.

The GOP should offer a dramatic alternative: An optional flat income tax, ideally at 15 percent, would let Americans file their tax returns on a simple postcard.

- School choice: Obama and Congressional Democrats last year threw Washington's low-income black kids under the school bus with the teachers' unions at the wheel. Republicans should restore D.C.'s school voucher program with all deliberate speed.

Republicans should introduce these measures in Congress throughout the year and invite nervous Democrats to join them. If they do, America will prosper. If not, Republicans will meet Democrats at the polls on November 2 and let voters choose between these two competing visions.