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Letters from page 8

beings and that increasing the burden on them will not end up being reflected in the lives of everyone associated with them. Denying those people the ability to express their concerns is unjust.

Sincerely,

Faith Clendenen

Curtain Raisers for the 2020 Election?

The Beacon's readership has been treated in the June and July issues to letters from both sides of the political spectrum. Are we reading curtain raisers for the 2020 election?

On the moderate Democratic side, State Representatives Ken Wells and David Karrick have reported from the State House and, in my opinion, informed readers about their priorities. Ken Wells sought funding for local education to reverse the many years of downshifted costs to the towns, local property tax relief, as well as funding for mental health, the opioid crisis, and for women's and children's services. David Karrick discussed the deficiencies of the "Learn Everywhere" program, highlighting how the program is "one more tool to hollow out and cripple our public schools while benefiting private and religious schools."

Letters from Louis Andrus and Natalie Wells represent the "Live Free or Die/Americans for Prosperity" point of view. Natalie Wells, who took the Americans for Prosperity pledge not to raise taxes in 2016, states her belief that the Democrats have voted for measures that are contrary to the best interests of "hard-working Granite Staters." Her objection, following Louise Andrus's lead, is that measures in question raise taxes. She finds this in the widely popular Mandatory Paid Family Leave Act and in increased business taxes, which Wells, when in office, lowered.

Wells joins Andrus in objecting to HB564, which, as you may remember from my July letter, simply prohibits carrying a firearm on school property as a measure to protect school children. Her objection, in words almost identical to those written by Andrus, is that the bill "protect[s] criminals by disarming law-abiding citizens."

Wells and Andrus are vocal advocates for 2nd Amendment rights. I try to approach citizen rights with care. I wonder, in view of the fact that guns are prohibited from courtrooms and elsewhere as provided by local ordinances, why shouldn't the regulation of guns on school property be considered as a matter of school safety? HB564 puts the burden on school boards in every district to develop and adopt a policy for the possession of firearms on school property. Nothing happens unless the school board acts. In addition, I suggest, "disarm" is hyperbole and a distraction. HB564 does nothing to keep citizens from possessing guns. HB564 does not authorize school boards to confiscate guns. The bill only gives

school boards authority to have a policy regarding possession on school property.

Wells also joins Andrus in objecting to HB696, that establishes a protective order for vulnerable adults, in exactly the same phase that Andrus used, "creating a guilty until proven innocent standard." I am as baffled now as I was last month on how they reached that conclusion. Hopefully an explanation will be forthcoming.

Taxes and taxation highlight two opposing points of view. In 1775 the colonists accepted taxes as necessary for government. Their complaint was taxation without representation, and we send our representatives to Concord to work through the perennially tough process of "ways and means."

My impression, from the Ken Wells and David Karrick reports, is that they have focused on the key issues that local citizens care about (reduction in local property taxes being foremost as I have observed at Andover's annual town meetings) and sought appropriate revenue sources. They acted, as I understand it, with the assumption that a state income tax, as traditionally understood, was off the table. Revenue in New Hampshire comes from a variety of taxes, none of which, strictly speaking, are a traditional "income tax." I suspect, without being present at any of the committee and other meetings, that the budget setting process involved considerable give and take within the majority party and across the aisle. I believe politics is based on compromise and the "art of the possible." State representatives and senators have the civic responsibility to fund adequately or better what the state agencies require for the general welfare.

Andrus and Natalie Wells, I suspect, do not share my view of taxes. Every measure, Andrus would have us believe, is a tax on income. And thus every tax becomes a cudgel for battering our state representatives. Every tax measure that raises revenue, no matter how badly needed, also becomes a moral issue because, as they see it, it is "theft" from the income of "hard working" folk. It is also a business prosperity issue because, in their view, taxes on businesses limit profits and growth.

I have three questions that I hope will be addressed in coming letters.

First, how can the state of New Hampshire maintain excellent schools and colleges, as well as highways and bridges (to take only two of many issues) on an inelastic, limited revenue?

Second, what empirical evidence demonstrates the negative effect of increased business taxes in Merrimack County? What businesses failed because of high taxes? (I asked Natalie Wells these questions in the first months of her term in office, and I eventually received a general statement that the state's prosperity came from lower taxes.)

Finally, looking ahead to the 2020 election, How well do we know the candidates? Mario Ratzki asked that question and many specific ones in the

See Letters on page 23