

A PATH FORWARD Steven P. Dinkin

TRANS YOUTH ARE LATEST TARGET OF PARENTAL ANGST

The ongoing culture war that's being waged in our schools has a new battleground. It's spelled LGBTQ — and the "T" (which stands for transgender) is getting the most attention now.

We heard it in the recent Senate confirmation hearing of Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black woman to be nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Blackburn talked about transgender swimmer Lia Thomas and her recent victory in the NCAA championships, expressing concern that a "biological male was allowed to compete and beat a biological female."

Then on Monday, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law the "Parental Rights in Education" bill, called "Don't Say Gay" by its opponents.

Critics say the law will curb instruction on gender and sexuality across grades and that its language is vague and subject to interpretation.

The first part of the Florida law applies to kids who are roughly ages 5-9. To most of us, it sounds reasonable.

But Kathie Moehlig has a different point of view. Moehlig is executive director at San Diego-based TransFamily Support Services.

children begin their transition at a young age. If it can't be talked about in schools — using curriculum that has been vetted — bullying and harassment may increase.

But as much as Moehlig dislikes the new Florida law, she's more concerned about legislation that's passed (or is being considered) in other states.

teams is left unaddressed.

The legislation is packaged with clever names that seem hard to object to, like the "Save Women's Sports Act."

In addition, 15 states have enacted or are considering laws that would restrict access to gender-affirming care for trans youth.

Idaho was considering the most extreme measure, making it a felony for doctors or parents to give hormones or puberty blockers to trans minors.

NPR cited a report from the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, which estimates that the restrictions will impact more than 54,000 transitioning transgender youth ages 13 through 17.

American youth identify as transgender, according to the institute's 2017 report — less than 1 percent of students in the 13-17 age group.

The idea of parental rights that Blackburn talked about isn't a new one. Back in 1954, some parents objected to the racial desegregation of public schools.

But the battle du jour seems more fierce, with untenable consequences. Knowing that half of trans teens contemplate suicide, how do we prioritize parental rights?

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility.

WINGS • Most species in exhibit native to Central and South America, Asia, Africa

Park officials already were considering how to improve the exhibit when the pandemic hit in March 2020, temporarily closing the Zoo and Safari Park.

"We were able to have a slower-paced experience last year, and it ended up going pretty well," Lotz said. "It seemed to really enhance the experience for the people, and it was a better experience for the butterflies, too."

The exhibit is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., giving guests 14 windows to experience it.

"I got a membership for Christmas and knew this was one thing that was going to be on my bucket list," said April Berg (no relation to Debbie Berg), at Butterfly Jungle on Thursday during her second visit to the park in two months.

"I try to make the most of my membership," she said while holding a nectar vial to feed a butterfly on her shoulder.

"I love butterflies," said Kylie Leavitt, 11, as she



Debbie Berg takes a photo with her granddaughter Malia Wade at the Butterfly Jungle exhibit last week. Wade was dressed for the theme in a butterfly dress.

looked at one perched on her arm. "They've always been an interest of mine, and I'm learning about them in school."

Lotz said there are some monarchs and other native butterflies at the exhibit, but the majority are native to

Central and South America, Asia or Africa.

"Most people who come through here will never see these butterflies anywhere else in their life," he said.

The park receives the butterflies from breeding farms in Denver and Costa

Rica while they are still in a pupa stage inside a chrysalis. They emerge as butterflies in a high-temperature, high-humidity room next to the enclosure and are released to live out a lifespan of two weeks to two months.

The park does not have a



The Butterfly Jungle exhibit runs through May 8, Mother's Day, at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

permit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to breed the butterflies, which are considered an exotic species, so none of the plants in the aviary are the type butterflies could use for breeding, Lotz said.

While the butterflies themselves are harmless, allowing them to breed and produce voracious caterpillars would be a problem, especially if any were to escape into the wild, he said. As guests leave the exhibit, they are stopped at two exits where staff members give them a once-over to check

for stowaways. In a new attraction this spring, the park is offering a Mimosa Safari on weekends for guests 21 years old and older. The cost is \$129 and up per person and includes a ride in an open-air safari truck for up-close views of giraffes, antelope and other animals. Mimosas and pastries are included.

For reservation information for that and other safaris offered at the park, visit https://sdzsafaripark.org/safaris/wildlife-safari.

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CANDIDATES

including mental health and substance abuse treatment, homelessness and housing.

"We're making real progress on the big challenges facing San Diego families and I won't let anyone take us backwards," he said. "We must continue to fight forward. That means more affordable housing, more homeless off the streets and safer communities."

Despite bitter disputes over lockdowns, social distancing rules and mask and vaccine policy that have led to marathon board meetings and threats against public officials, Fletcher credits strict COVID-19 policies with preventing infections and deaths.

"As chair of San Diego's Board of Supervisors, I led our region's COVID-19 response that achieved a 93 percent vaccination rate and saved lives," he said.

Fletcher moved to San Diego as a Marine in 1997 and served until 2007 as a human intelligence/counterintelligence specialist. He served two tours in Iraq, the Near East and Horn of Africa, for which he was decorated for valor under fire.

He began his career in the state Assembly as a Republican in 2008, where he passed legislation including Chelsea's Law to strengthen penalties for violent crimes against children. He later left the party over what he said were ideological differences, and ran unsuccessfully for mayor of San Diego as an independent in 2012. Fletcher,

who lives in City Heights, won county office as a Democrat in 2018, when he beat former District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis by a 2-1 margin. Fletcher has been endorsed by the San Diego Democratic Party.

Reichert said she was not involved in politics until the pandemic galvanized her. She formed ReOpen San Diego with two other local women to oppose school and business closures and mask and vaccine mandates.

"San Diego County is moving in the wrong direction," Reichert said. "For the past two years, I watched in disbelief as the county implemented draconian lockdown policies against our residents — irreparably harming first responders, small businesses, workers, and students."

Reichert led protests against the county's COVID-19 response, organizing scores of speakers to voice objections at county meetings. She has disavowed the threats and racist slurs from some protesters, but said she understands the frustration that many feel over lockdowns and other measures. While she said she doesn't oppose vaccines or masks, she disagrees with mandates.

Reichert launched a campaign for the fourth supervisorial seat after redistricting changes placed her home in La Mesa within Fletcher's district. She has been endorsed by the Republican Party of San Diego.

"When I realized I had the opportunity to unseat my opponent, I did not hesitate to jump at the chance to cor-

rect the many wrongs committed by him and others like him in leadership positions," Reichert said.

Both candidates identified housing, homelessness and inflation as top issues of concern for their campaigns, but differ in their proposed solutions.

"To reduce homelessness, I'm focused on the tough work to really tackle the mental illness and drug abuse that are at the root of the crisis on our streets," Fletcher said. "We're delivering more shelters, more treatment programs and more mental health support so we actually help people off the street, not just shuffle them from one encampment to the next."

He pointed to county efforts to lobby for gas price relief, expand affordable housing on government-owned land and increase child care options. And he said he's focused on reducing gun violence through efforts including a new ordinance to ban unmarked "ghost guns."

Reichert shared concerns about homelessness, but said she believes there has been misuse of public housing funds, and argued that much of the cost comes from permits and regulations. She said that if elected she would call for an audit of public spending on affordable housing.

"Every San Diegan should be up in arms about this kind of government hidden tax and profit-making off affordable housing," she said.

Both candidates acknowledged the importance of protecting San Diego's en-

vironment while maintaining a healthy economy. Fletcher noted efforts to convert the region to 100 percent renewable energy in order to combat climate change, and said the county has approved more than 14,000 new renewable energy permits in the last three years.

"There are extremists out there hellbent on taking us backwards on homelessness and who still aren't sure climate change is even real, but I'm fighting forward for the safer, cleaner, more affordable San Diego all our families deserve," he said.

Reichert said she was active in efforts to prevent the state Route 125 Toll Road from damaging sensitive habitats, and said she believes environmental regulations should be balanced with business needs.

"I believe in balanced government regulations that recognize the importance of protecting the environment, while still allowing communities to flourish and thrive," she said. "I will never vote for fees or taxes that penalize people who want to responsibly utilize the resources this great county has to offer."

Despite the partisan differences on the Board of Supervisors, members typically collaborate on local issues. Fletcher said 93 percent of the proposals he has brought to the board have passed with bipartisan support.

The two candidates with the most votes in the June 7 primary election will advance to the general election in November.

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CLAIMS

Federal Election Commission records show that on June 14, 2021, he contributed nearly \$6,000 to Rodriguez's campaign for the 49th Congressional District represented by Democrat Mike Levin. Hanna donated \$2,900 to the "Rodriguez for Congress" committee and \$2,900 to Winred, the national Republican committee that supports Rodriguez and pays for many of his campaign ads.

Government agencies are generally protected from lawsuits by what's called "sovereign immunity." However, many agencies have procedures in place for people to file complaints for personal injury or damages caused by government employees or a hazardous condition they created.

Another favorable resolution of a complaint in Oceanside occurred last year after an unusual accident on North Clemente Street outside the residence of Maria Penaflor and her family.

"It was raining and a lamp post in front of the apartment fell on the car," said Lupe Penaflor, Maria's sister. "It was totaled."

Her father called police, and the officers advised him to file a claim with the city. The city issued a check for \$4,535, plus \$165 for expenses, for a car she said was about 15 years old.

"My dad was grateful," Penaflor said.

City records offer few details on any of the cases.

One of the smallest checks issued went to Wally Stevens, a retired Marine and longtime Oceanside resident. For many years Stevens was a regular observer and often a speaker at Oceanside City Council meetings, where he addressed issues from residential development to canine care.

Seated in a chair Tuesday in his yard on Maxson Street, Stevens said he told city officials time and again that the trees in the public right-of-way near his house needed to be trimmed, before a dead branch fell and hurt someone.

Then a tree limb plum-

meted onto his fence and crushed part of it. He filed a complaint for damages, and on Feb. 25, 2021, the city paid him \$45.35.

"That was fair," Stevens said.

Other settlements included \$1,000 for unspecified damage to a roof, \$1,000 for expenses caused by a sewer backup, \$3,805.65 to San Diego Gas & Electric for damage to a gas line, \$14,218.26 plus \$75 in expenses for something that happened to a 2019 Tesla Model 3, and \$19,500 for wrongful termination of a city employee in the accounting office.

Not all complaints result in financial awards. Some, such as a "trip and fall" allegedly resulting in injuries and one claiming excessive force by a police officer, were closed during the year with no monetary settlement. Other cases were unresolved and remain open.

One unresolved case, perhaps with the potential for a large award, was filed by the family of a 68-year-old transient woman who was killed early one morning in September 2020. A tractor drove over her while she was sleeping on the beach during sand replenishment work near the harbor.

Other open cases involve a pedestrian hit by a police vehicle in a crosswalk, someone hurt in a fall from an electric scooter, and damage to a sewer line caused by tree roots.

Cities everywhere have deep pockets and are often the target of financial claims, but a majority of the claims are denied.

More than 80 claims were filed in Oceanside in 2021, according to the city's records. However, only 33 settlements were awarded during the year, and some of those were multiple awards to the same party.

In Carlsbad, a similar Public Records Act request showed that the city received 71 financial claims totaling more than \$74 million in 2021. Of those claims, the city paid only \$61,667.35.

The largest settlement by Carlsbad during the year was \$7,500, and that went to a person who had filed an injury claim for \$250,000.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, April 3, 2022.

Today's highlight in history

On April 3, 1973, the first handheld portable telephone was demonstrated for reporters in New York City as Motorola executive Martin Cooper called Joel S. Engel of Bell Labs.

On this date

In 1882, outlaw Jesse James was shot to death by Robert

Ford, a member of James' gang.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Marshall Plan, designed to help European allies rebuild after World War II and resist communism.

In 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. delivered what turned out to be his final speech, telling a rally in Memphis, Tenn., that "I've been to the mountaintop" and "seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you.

But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!"

In 1974, deadly tornadoes began hitting wide parts of the South and Midwest before jumping into Canada; more than 300 fatalities resulted.

In 1996, Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski was arrested.

Today's birthdays

Conservationist Dame Jane Goodall is 88. Actor William Gaunt is 85. Songwriter Jeff Barry is 84. Actor Eric Braeden is 81. Actor Marsha Mason is 80.

Singer Wayne Newton is 80. Singer Tony Orlando is 78. Musician Mick Mars (Mötley Crüe) is 66. Actor Alec Baldwin is 64. Actor David Hyde Pierce is 63. Actor Eddie Murphy is 61. Singer Mike Ness (Social Distortion) is 60. Singer Sebastian Bach is 54. Ski racer Picabo Street is 51. Actor Jennie Garth is 50. Actor Adam Scott is 49. Musician Drew Shirley (Switchfoot) is 48. Actor Cobie Smulders is 40. Singer Leona Lewis is 37. Actor Amanda Bynes is 36. Actor Rachel Bloom is 35.

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