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GUEST EDITORIAL

Rooting out corruption in NCAA basketball

The FBI's recent investigation into corruption and fraud in men's college basketball can't really be called a wake-up call. Not when the problems — big money, flouted rules, sham classes and never any consequences for wrongdoing — had been so out in the open for so long. Good, though, that the scandal forced the National Collegiate Athletic Association to acknowl-

edge the long-simmering problems by appointing a commission to examine the issues.

Even better is that the commission took its charge seriously, delivering a series of recommendations that — while certainly not curing all the ills of intercollegiate athletics — would be improvements over the status quo.

At the heart of the report released last month by the Commission on College Basketball is the assessment that schools have lost sight of their central mission of providing higher education to students in what has amounted to an arms race to recruit the best talent to their lucrative basketball teams. "We need to put the 'college' back in college basketball," said former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, who chaired the 14-member commission.

Accordingly, the commission recommended ways to encourage college athletes to complete their degrees, including allowing

undrafted players to return to school without penalty and enabling athletes who leave early to earn their diplomas cost-free.

It sets out a separate path for athletes who have no interest in college by calling on the NBA to once again allow 18-year-olds to be eligible for the draft, thus ending the one-and-done phenomenon in which sought-after players spend a year in college before jumping to the pros.

Noteworthy was the call for overhaul of the NCAA's investigative and enforcement arms, using independent investigators and imposing stiffer penalties. That the University of North Carolina escaped punishment after being caught — and admitting — that athletes got credits for courses never taught by instructors showed the association's inability or unwillingness to get its member institutions to adhere to rules.

Such failures, as the commission pointedly noted, serve as a reminder that school officials as



Villanova head coach Jay Wright celebrates with his team after beating winning the Final Four NCAA college basketball in April.

well as the NCAA bear responsibility for violations, and it recommended that university presidents be required to certify annually their due diligence in complying with NCAA rules.

The commission punted on whether athletes should be paid or

allowed to earn money from their name or likenesses, deferring to an ongoing court case it said would help sort out the legal parameters. Caution on this controversial issue, while seen by some critics as winking out, is wise given the fraught issues of going to a professional model.

Urgency, though, is called for in implementing the commission's recommendations. Although they were endorsed by the NCAA's governing board, work is required in changing rules, crafting legislation and building consensus among the 351 men's basketball Division I members. And it will be up to the NBA and the players association to determine if there will be an end to one-and-done.

What they all need to keep in mind is the warning from the commission that "corruption and deception are now at a point that they threaten the very survival of the college game as we know it."

This editorial was first published in the Washington Post.

OPEN MIC

What's the value of a teacher's hard work?

I am a 12-year veteran teacher in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. My salary is about \$44,000.

A new teacher's salary, with zero experience, is \$41,000. Let that sink in.

Most Floridians will tell you that investing in our future — children — is essential to better our communities, state, and nation. So why do we collectively continue to shortchange the key educational stakeholders, teachers?

For the past decade, teachers have been simultaneously praised and impoverished by their communities.

We have balanced our communities' budgets during recessions and economically prosperous years on the backs of educators.

Blame Trump. Blame Obama. Blame Tallahassee. Blame charter schools.

We point the finger in every direction and hope that someone else will solve this problem.

A gift card to an expensive coffee shop during "Teacher Appreciation Week" apparently absolves everyone from any responsibility on the issue. Yet the problem remains.

A teacher rebellion would seem obvious; however, this is not a possibility. Teachers cannot strike in Florida; the consequences of striking are termination and the loss of one's teaching certificate and retirement benefits.

Even if teachers could strike, they likely would not; it could hurt our students, so most of us would refuse such action.

And politicians know this.

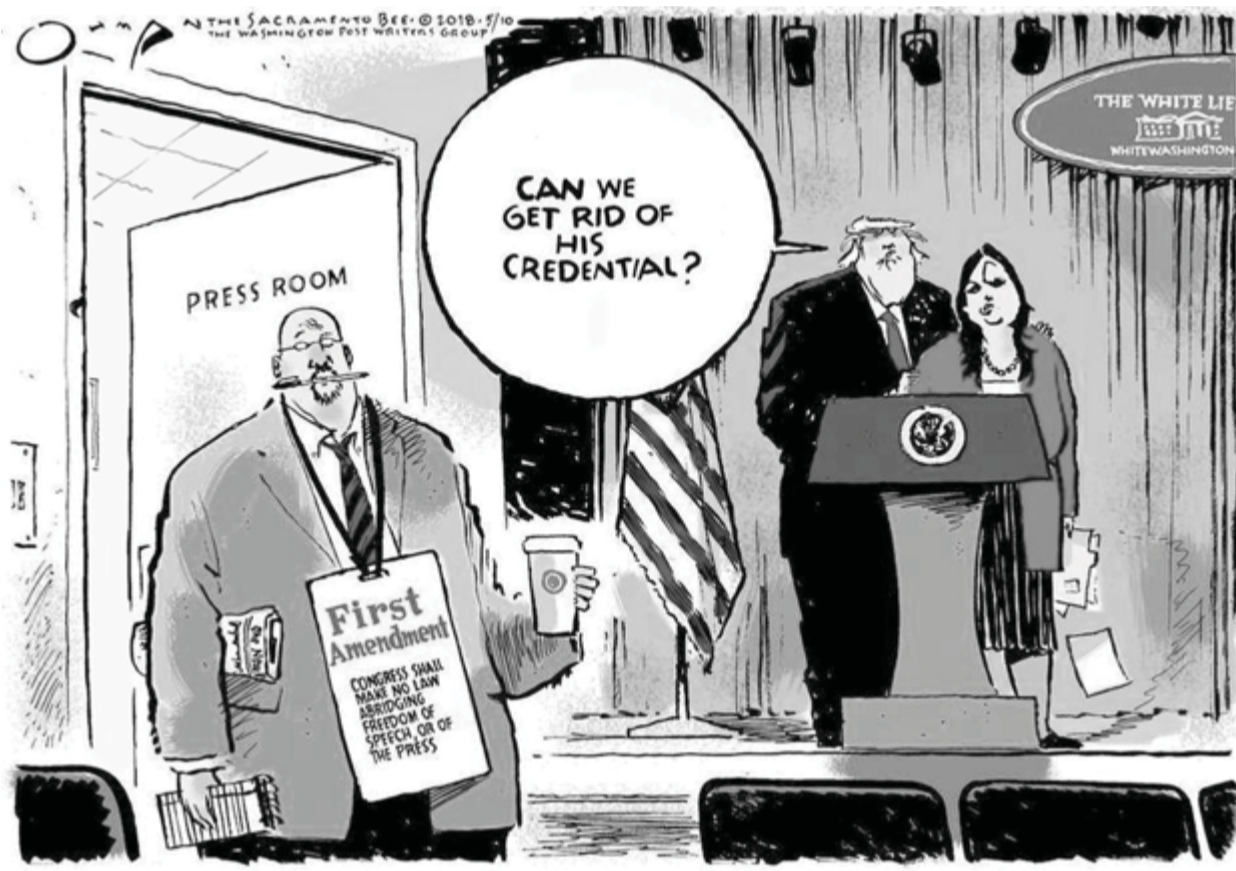
That is why we are wearing Red for Ed. We are fighting a silent battle. It's a cry for awareness, compassion and sincere economic praise and justice.

Wearing Red for Ed is the only way we are allowed to fight back without hurting students.

What value do you place on education?

Apparently, that value is \$44,000 for 12 years of teaching experience. That is why I wear Red for Ed. Maybe it's time we all wear Red for Ed.

— Mauricio Restrepo, Jr., Miami



ANIMAL ABUSE

Re the May 13 online story "The senior prom was jungle-themed, then a real wild tiger showed up." What were the organizers and school officials thinking? Do they not know that, apart from human beings, animals fear fire the most? At this event, dancers were going around the cage with fire. The poor creature must have been terrified.

What an example to set for young people — cruelty to animals at their special event. First, there was a poor, bewildered horse in a nightclub and now this form of animal torture.

Shocking.

— Hilary Langen, Miami Beach

TIGER AT PROM

I was appalled at the sight of the petrified tiger being wheeled in that small cage onto the dance floor during the prom at Christopher Columbus High School. It was so amazingly cruel and misguided — totally without reason.

How could a group of educators and parents think that an animal, one that should be living among its own kind in a jungle, would be comfortable in a small cage, in a strange and noisy place — and that it would be appropriate for teenagers' party?

It only taught these young adults that there was not any shred of decency in exploiting a creature that cannot speak for itself.

Sadly, these people need to be reminded that they did a grave disservice, one that never should be repeated. I cannot get the

image of that poor tiger's fear out of my mind.

— Connie Mogull, Mamaroneck, N.Y.

GO TO JAIL

Sexual predators should not be made to sleep out on the streets as punishment for their crimes. Instead, they belong in jail or in prison until the parole board decides that they have been rehabilitated for their sex crimes before being released into society.

It is inhumane and unfair that anyone should be sleeping on the streets, even though they committed a crime.

— Jack J. Russell, Kendall

MOVING THE HOMELESS

In 2007, Ron Book pushed for the 2,500-foot ordinance named after his daughter. In 2010, he pushed to have the homeless sex offender registrants moved from the Julia Tuttle Causeway after it made Miami an international embarrassment. Then in 2011, this was repeated in Shorecrest's pocket parks, and again in Allapattah.

Now in 2018, we have the same script from the same cast of characters. Book is once again shoving the homeless registrants to yet another community with another offer to assist them.

Stop pretending the registrants there are homeless by choice and place the blame where it belongs: Miami-Dade's Book and the Lauren Book Child Safety Ordinance. This is the reason Miami has a unique homeless crisis in the first place.

The solution is to repeal the law — and fire Book.

— Derek W. Logue, OnceFallen.com, Cincinnati, Ohio

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Kudos to 104-year-old Australian scientist David Goodall for choosing when and how he would like to die and carrying out his wishes. It was unfortunate, however, that he could not do so in his own country, in his own home and among friends.

It is time we look at the right to die as an inalienable right, like our right to life.

Why should I be forced to live longer than I want to? It is my body, my life, my choice when to end it. The laws must be changed to allow us to die with dignity at a time and place we choose.

— Karen Kerr, South Miami

MUSLIM REFLECTION

Not eating or drinking from dawn to dusk for 30 days seems crazy, right? Well, for us Muslims, and many others around the world, Ramadan is the best time of the year. It may seem like a weird annual ritual, but, in essence, the sacred month is a time of building a closer relationship with God, self-reformation and thinking of others.

From a young age, our parents teach us that nightly prayers bring us closer to God. Although we are still young, we learn how to better ourselves through discipline, patience and respect. This time of year also invokes a sense of gratitude that makes us

want to help those who are not as fortunate as we are.

By praying to God every night, instilling better qualities in ourselves and opening our hearts to others, Ramadan is like an open door for cleansing our souls.

— Ayesha Minhas, Fort Lauderdale

A THOUGHTFUL ACT

The May 14 article "When span fell, where did crane go?" about the FIU bridge collapse, mentions that a homeless man was the first to call 911. This stirred me greatly.

All many homeless people try to do is survive in a meager fashion, not using up energy on frivolous actions. Bless that thoughtful man.

— Fredric Bernard, Boca Raton

END BLASPHEMY LAWS

Suicide bombings have rocked Indonesia recently with attacks on churches and police. The most disturbing part is that children, as young as 8 years old, are being used to carry out the attacks.

As a Muslim, I am shocked and saddened by these attacks and wonder how extremists can justify them if they claim to be following true Islam. Are they following the same Quran, the Islamic scripture, that prohibits the taking of one's own life? Do they read the same Quran that says killing one innocent person is as if they killed all of mankind?

The Quran doesn't say killing a Muslim or a Christian or a Hindu is forbidden — it protects people of

all faiths, ethnicities and races. How can, then, extremists justify attacking a church?

Indonesia is one of several countries that has blasphemy laws. As a result, people of different faiths and beliefs routinely face persecution. The government must do more to curb growing insurgency and protect minorities. It can start by abolishing the country's draconian blasphemy laws.

— Huma Munir, Miami

MONITORING TRUMP

So, if President Trump is indicted before June 12, will his bail conditions allow him to travel outside Washington, D.C., to Singapore?

Maybe if he wears an ankle monitor.

— Paul C. Hunt, South Miami

PUTIN'S INVESTMENT

President Trump has pulled the United States out of the Iran nuclear deal, the Paris Climate Accord and the Trans Pacific Partnership, even though our allies still support these agreements.

Trump's most recent action has not isolated Iran or our enemies at all. Rather it has completely isolated the United States from all its allies. The president now is aligning the country with oligarchs, dictators and enemies of Democracy. He is Vladimir Putin's most valuable asset.

Unlike cows, Trump supporters are blindly cheering all the way to the slaughter. Putin sure got his money's worth.

— Jude Smallwood, Royal Palm Beach