

## It all adds up

**Y**ou can't overstate the importance of Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base to both the local and regional economy. Today's front page is good evidence of why we must continue to be a good neighbor to our largest employer, also one of the biggest economic engines in south Georgia.

The \$1.1 billion in economic impact benefits Camden County to a large extent, from the contracts it holds with area businesses to the shops and restaurants that are attracted by the Kings Bay workforce and their whopping \$677 million payroll.

When the private sector was suffering through the Great Recession, government jobs provided a great deal of stability to our local economy, countering the tremendous hit suffered by our real estate and construction industry.

The temporary barge permit that St. Marys is currently considering would allow a private contractor to transport building materials to the Kings Bay waterfront from a temporary barge dock in the North River. Projects like these will only drive that economic impact higher.

The project also brings some commercial activity to the former paper mill site, which has been dormant for years. As a temporary permit, it allows local economic developers like the Joint Development Authority to gauge the site's appropriateness for that type of activity without having to make a long-term commitment.

It's a win for St. Marys and a win for the Navy.

There aren't very many drawbacks to being a good neighbor to Kings Bay, but the closing of the St. Marys Airport is arguably one of them.

An airport can also be an economic driver and many cities would fight to have and keep that facility. Unfortunately, the Navy remained convinced the proximity of the airport was a safety and security threat to the sensitive assets at the base.

The economic impact of the airport, by comparison, made closing the airport an easy choice. What we have gained because of Kings Bay far outweighs anything that we may have lost. By removing obstacles to the future development of Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, we increase our odds of pushing those economic impact figures even higher.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Opposition to variance should put up their cash

Dear Editor,

I have a proposal to all the bleeding hearts that oppose the variance the county planning commission approved for the subdivision on Cumberland Island.

Sounds to me to be a very legitimate hardship case and would certainly have no problem elsewhere in the county.

Since all of those who are objecting are not adjacent property owners within 200 feet of the proposed subdivision, which would be required for the variance, I suggest the following: all of those who oppose this, should request that the county officials take the property by eminent domain for betterment of the community at market value.

I would expect all the objectors to put their money where their mouth is and set up a fund to pay for the purchase. After all, a few million dollars is a small price to pay for ideals on what to do to with someone else's property.

Chuck Lanham  
St. Marys

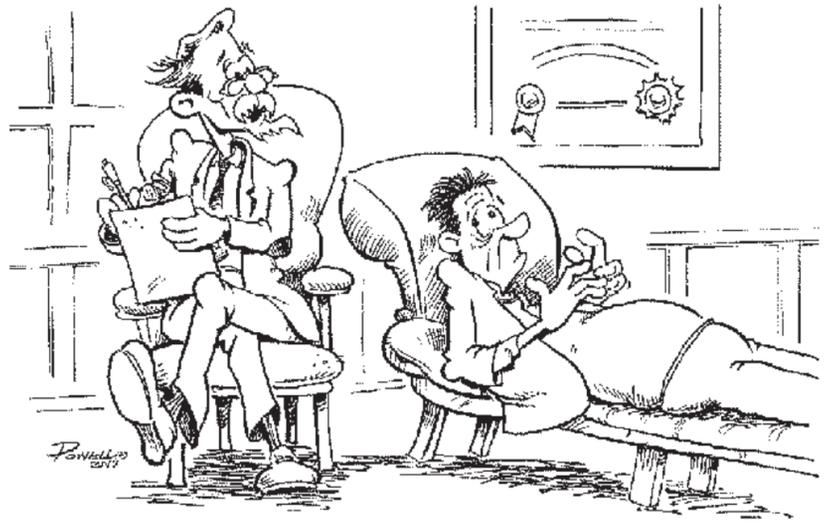
### Democrats aided Puerto Ricans

Dear Editor,

I have written a few letters and by now I presume to be somewhat known by a few of the readers of this section.

Further, it is my intention to keep on writing letters for as long as my fingers do not get stiff or my mind fogged up by old age and, not less, for as long as our patient and gracious editor is willing to publish them.

Recently I was asked why I am so adamantly Democrat.



"Relax, you are perfectly normal. Politics is driving everyone crazy."

Also, in response to my shirt "I'm a Democrat," I was asked by an impertinent foe, if given the circumstances, I would ever consider becoming a Whig.

Quite frankly, that possibility not only has not ever crossed my mind but, based on some historical facts, I would never consider such a travesty in spite of the worst of adversities. Here is why.

As part of the Spanish-American War, in the year 1898 our island was invaded and easily conquered by the U.S. Marines. Immediately after such event, they installed in place a military governor shortly followed by a civilian governor. A succession of governors were appointed (some of the times they were Democrats, other times oppressive Whigs, depending on the party in control of the federal government) and that continued until 1952 when the island status went from an ordinary colony to a commonwealth — whatever that is — and a civil governor who was, for the first time, freely elected by the will of the islanders. During the convulsive

period of 1898 to 1952, the largest part of the population was just working poor. In general, Democratic administrations helped the people with food vouchers and subsidies. Whigs, on the other hand, gave them plenty of hardwood instead, and I mean "hardwood" in the form of clubs and truncheons, while they intentionally ignored the consequences of their brutality.

That is that. Now you all know why I am an adamant Democrat leaving absolutely no room to even consider the other option. Admittedly, those were the conditions that molded my decision and they may not be the same for others. However, whatever are the reasons for someone to follow a political party, after such decision is made and for the sake of decency and loyalty, that commitment should be maintained, although I know of at least two local known politicians who have become turncoats just as a matter of convenience and opportunity. I would not want to be in their shoes when they get chased by the calls of their

own consciences, if they have any.

By the way, and for those who have no knowledge of these facts, the political status of the commonwealth of Puerto Rico as determined by the United States Congress, is and has been in limbo for the last 65 years and remains even today as one of the largest anomalies in the American political system.

Ruben Gomez  
Kingsland

### A thank you to Woodbine church

Dear Editor,

In our letter to the editor dated Feb. 2, "Thanks for aiding MLK celebration," there was one organization omitted.

It was for the Rev. R. Lester and Ebenezer Baptist Church in Woodbine. We sincerely apologize for this omission. Also to Ebenezer, we look forward to your continued support.

Rev. Aubrey Randall, president  
Camden County King Free  
Foundation

### Get in touch with leaders

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## Tribune & Georgian

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### OUR MISSION

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## Reaching closure in St. Marys

**I**f you haven't driven down to the historic district in the last week, I encourage you to do so to see the impressive new monument sign welcoming everyone to historic St. Marys. And right behind the sign is the colorful new fountain in the center of the pond.

These new amenities enhance the entrance to our downtown and are the result of the city's agreement with the trustee who is managing the sale of the former mill site. Both new features were included in the negotiations when we agreed to the rezoning of the mill site property. We appreciate the trustee's commitment to honor the agreement and move forward on completing the projects at no cost to the city.

Currently there is considerable activity regarding the closing of the airport. I realize this has been a long and arduous task but we are now in the final stages of the official closing. Officials from the U.S. Department of Defense, the Federal Aviation Department and the Georgia Department of Transportation will make their recommendations including an appraisal of the property to the affected parties. I have met with the leadership of these groups and we have reviewed the proposed plan for the closure of the airport and will soon be in the process of final negotiations.

As with all decisions of this



John Morrissey

Guest columnist

magnitude, there are significant legal documents that must be completed but we are on track with the tentative timetable that has been proposed by the responsible federal agencies. The airport will officially close July 14 based on the timetable presented to the city by the DOD.

One of the next steps is for the four parties involved to complete an agreement on the closure which will include some oversight into the types of industries they find acceptable in close proximity to the base. We know there will be restrictions on height of structures and on certain types of industry.

While the details are not yet known, it is clear that no production of ammunition or explosives or fireworks will be allowed. Beyond that, we will wait to see other recommendations or restrictions. That information is important so that we can advise the Camden

County Joint Development Authority and the Development Authority of St. Marys so they will be able to market this great property to the appropriate and acceptable industries.

The potential for this property is fantastic and I am confident that the city leadership and JDA will be able to secure the right industries to take advantage of this property and bring both jobs and revenue to the city.

On another note, this is Black History Month and the schools have been including a number of programs to highlight the importance of this event as has our local community theater. Our city is known for its fun festivals and this weekend celebrates Mardi Gras with the popular annual parade.

Moving into March, downtown merchants and restaurants, with the support of dedicated volunteers, are creating fun First Friday events so watch for special March 3 events. Rustapalooza, the popular vintage market event that attracted so many tourists last year, is back for a two-day event March 10 and March 11. If you're still in the party mood, there will be St. Patrick's Day festivities at various restaurants in the city.

On a final note, the city welcomes citizen input on two current issues. First, the design for the downtown streetscape to enhance the waterfront area is still open

for comment. To check the proposed design, please go to the city website [www.stmarysga.gov](http://www.stmarysga.gov) and click on "Main Street Visioning." If you have ideas or comments, please email your thoughts to me directly.

The second item is a proposal from a construction subcontracting company, Barnett Southern, hired to bring rock to reinforce Crab Island across from the submarine pens at Kings Bay. The company wants to use the old barge port on the former mill site as a staging area. They have the trustee's approval and are applying to the city planning commission for the special use permit we required when we approved the rezoning. You can see their proposal at [www.stmarysga.gov](http://www.stmarysga.gov) and click on "Barnett PowerPoint" that will go before the planning commission next week. This proposal will be brought to council if approved by the planning commission.

February has been a short month but a very active one for the city. I continue to encourage you to attend city council meetings the first and third Monday of every month for more information. If you cannot attend, please feel free to email me with any concerns or comments.

John Morrissey is the mayor of St. Marys. He can be contacted at [john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov](mailto:john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov) or (912) 510-4041.