



# Bluegrass Beacon

BY JIM WATERS

## **Hang this idea in effigy**

By Jim Waters

By hanging images of President-elect Barack Obama and Gov. Sarah Palin, some redneck racists demonstrate the persistence of prejudices that should have died decades ago.

The fact that the effigy of our first black president hung from a tree on the campus of Kentucky's flagship university reinforces racial stereotypes that vex our state.

I hope those responsible get what they deserve.

Public pressure forced West Hollywood's chief buffoon, Chad Michael Morrisette, to remove from his property a mannequin resembling Palin. Law-enforcement officials said it didn't violate any laws because it made up part of a Halloween display.

Scary.

The effigy of Obama — complete with a mask and noose around its neck — rightly drew condemnation from University of Kentucky President Lee Todd, who called it "deplorable."

The university continues to put forth a full-fledged effort to increase its minority student population. Its actions don't jibe with this pathetic prank.

Such prejudice — in any form — should have died long ago. These effigies offer a throwback to the days of public lynchings, which essentially amounted to little more than an era of the worst kind of collectivism — minority suppression by a raging, lawless majority.

Not only do I hope the perpetrators get their due, but I believe intelligent Kentuckians who read this column would agree that such prejudicial ideas and behavior deserve a place only in history's dustbin.

On the other hand, I have an idea about something that does deserve a hanging in

effigy: Raising taxes to deal with fiscal challenges.

While campaigning for office, Gov. Steve Beshear promised to consider tax increases "only as a last resort."

Yet, Beshear now plans to waste costly fuel traveling around the state to try and soften opposition toward raising taxes and manipulating the hardworking residents of Kentucky into approving the distasteful idea of expanding casino gambling.

"As a last resort" means after exhausting all other options.

However, the governor offers no suggestions for meaningful reform of the state workers' pension system. So far, Kentucky's "tax-islature" has avoided tough, cost-saving choices, including addressing elements of the pension system that line their pockets.

Why should taxpayers have to pay for Cadillac-like pension benefits for state workers — including for legislators — when a Ford-like plan would do?

Speaking of automakers, on the same day recently that Beshear offered his latest and increasingly tiresome, "fire-in-the-crowded-theater" message about a \$294-million "shortfall," came the announcement that state officials had approved \$180 million in tax breaks for Ford Motor Co. — nearly two-thirds of the alleged shortfall.

How about we hang such government-extracted bailouts for failing auto companies in effigy? Then, we can tie the "as-a-last-resort" promise to the same dummy because it no longer means anything.

Likewise, we've seen no action taken to eliminate antiquated labor practices such as prevailing-wage requirements on public projects, which wastes \$130 million in state tax revenues every year.

Even as a public-school graduate, I can correctly figure that \$130 million in savings from eliminating the union-biased, economy-bashing prevailing-wage policy, and the \$180 million in tax breaks for Ford. By golly, that adds up to \$310 million.

Not only could the state clear the alleged deficit, it could net \$16 million — just by eliminating prevailing wage on public projects and taxpayer-funded handouts for just a single private company.

How can this administration possibly justify a tax increase at any time until it deals with these issues?

Promising to raise our taxes only as “a last resort?”

If Beshear succeeds in pressuring weak Kentucky lawmakers into going along with his fiscal Three-Card Monte, we might as well also hang in effigy all those “No New Taxes” pledges signed by many of those same politicians in recent years.

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