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EDITORIALS

It’s about time

LET THE Interstate 25 construction begin. City, county, Federal Highway Administration and Colorado Department of Transportation officials were on hand last Wednesday to conduct a ceremonial groundbreaking for construction of a new interchange at Ilex Street.

After more than 15 years of planning and some preparatory work, the reconstruction of the most dangerous stretch of I-25 in Colorado has finally begun. The \$88 million project, which will span two years, will cause more than a few traffic headaches for motorists.

But in the end, I-25 through Pueblo — which has recorded more than 2,200 crashes in the past dozen years — will be a much safer roadway.

First under construction in 1949 and completed in 1958, the interstate through Pueblo features deteriorating bridges, tight curves and dangerous interchanges. This I-25 project will focus on the worst stretch of freeway,

extending from the Ilex interchange to City Center Drive. Contractors will replace four bridges, refurbish several aging bridges, expand the roadway to three lanes in each direction and provide safer acceleration and deceleration lanes. New retaining and sound walls also are in the plans.

Thankfully, all of the construction work won't impede traffic too much, officials promise. There should be no lane closures on the interstate, as crews construct the new section to the east of the existing stretch. Once the new I-25 section is completed, traffic will simply be switched to the new roadway.

If all goes according to plan, CDOT officials hope to be done with their work in the summer or fall of 2017.

It's been a long wait for I-25 improvements, so we're glad work finally has begun in earnest. We can hardly wait for the safety improvements and new bridges to be in place. We expect it to be a huge upgrade for Pueblo's outdated transportation infrastructure.

Rose appointment

WITH THE resignation of Colorado Board of Education Chairwoman Marcia Neal, a vacancy committee is looking for someone to fill the soon-to-be vacant 3rd Congressional District seat.

Neal's resignation requires that a Republican be appointed as a new member. The eventual appointee will serve only until November 2016, when the seat will be up for election again.

Among the nine candidates who have submitted an application is Debbie Rose, a former Pueblo County District 70 board member. We think Ms. Rose is an easy choice for the committee.

Apart from her District 70 involvement,

Ms. Rose also has served on the Colorado Association of School Boards and the Colorado High School Activity Association Board of Control. She has served on the San Isabel Electric Association board as well.

Her business background, as well as her passion for educational reform and excellence, would make Ms. Rose a marvelous addition to the state Board of Education. Even though there are other candidates willing to serve on the board, we encourage the vacancy committee to select Ms. Rose immediately following the upcoming interview process.

She promises to be the kind of public school reformer and educational booster that our state and region need right now.

Plans begin taking off

AN OLD World War II hangar at Pueblo Memorial Airport soon could be brought back to life.

The last remnant of the former Pueblo Army Air Base, the old Blitz Hangar may be the new home for some of the Commemorative Air Force's collection of World War II warplanes.

“We want to restore the hangar to exactly what it was,” says John Huguley, a member of the CAF's Mile High Wing. “This would be the perfect home for our World War II aircraft.”

We completely agree.

The CAF, a nonprofit organization with 11,000 members and a fleet of 150 historic

airplanes nationwide, is attempting to raise funds through grants and private sponsorships to make the \$5 million renovation project possible. No taxpayer money will be required to accomplish the nonprofit's efforts, CAF officials claim. The Blitz Hangar would be one of several throughout the U.S. that would house the CAF collection.

The goal is to have the Blitz Hangar ready for occupancy by 2018.

We encourage Pueblo City Council, and Airport Manager Mark Lovin, to continue to work cooperatively with the CAF organization. We endorse the effort and look forward to seeing B-17s, B-24s and B-29s up close and flying regularly over Pueblo.

TELL IT TO THE CHIEFTAIN

Gay marriage

Once again, the Supreme Court has managed to inject itself in matters that impact more than just the rights of gays and lesbians. This decision has allowed those in control of government to make this about equality when we know this is nothing more than texterter power over religion.

This government could care less about equality. This same government says it is OK to kill a baby at 26 weeks. This is just another matter where gays and the court are

transforming society one step at a time.

This law will effect those who believe they should have the right to refuse to marry these people based upon religious grounds. You have just given the power to 3 percent of our U.S. population (gays) over the remaining 97 percent of people, who now will be accused of being bigots or homophobes because they are not in line with this law.

President Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton were both quoted saying that marriage is between a man and woman and is sacred in its practice. Having to cover

their behinds, they both said they had “evolved” in their thinking. The truth is if you are going to be a liar, you better have a good memory.

This administration is more concerned about fighting for social justice and blind to the results of their obvious failures. They have a history of good intentions backed by a history of bad governance.

So go ahead and cheer this decision, but do not be blind to the fact that justice is what you get when the decision is in your favor.

Louis Magana
Pueblo

IMMIGRATION

Zigzagging policy



RUBEN NAVARRETTE
Opinion

SAN DIEGO — White House adviser Cecilia Munoz — who pulls double duty as director of the Domestic Policy Council and the Obama administration's chief Latina spinner of propaganda related to immigration — was heckled and booed at a recent gathering of immigration lawyers.

Much of the media didn't seem to understand why. The few outlets that covered the incident made it seem as if Munoz was unfairly put on the spot through no fault of her own.

As someone who follows the immigration debate closely, I would have described the reaction as being linked to the fact that this administration has wreaked havoc on America's immigrant communities. It has broken Barack Obama's promise to make immigration reform a top priority, deported more than 2 million people, separated hundreds of thousands of families, spread misinformation about who was being removed, set a yearly quota of 400,000 deportations, and politicized the immigration issue in ways that help Democrats and hurt Republicans so that now no one in Congress will go near it.

Munoz has been a major player in the debacle that has been Obama's immigration policy. It's not merely that she has caught the blame for the mistakes of the administration, but that she's made many of her own — as when she overestimated the percentage of deportees who had criminal records.

As the daughter of Bolivian immigrants, and someone who first joined the White House as

head of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Munoz was almost immediately thrust into defending the administration's zigzagging immigration policy.

And because Munoz speaks fluent Spanish, she was especially helpful in pulling the wool over the eyes of Latino voters and trying to redirect their anger away from a Democratic president and toward Republicans in Congress. At times, the bilingual messaging was full of contradictions.

During an interview on English-language television, she'd take a hard-line view insisting that the law had to be enforced and some separation of families was inevitable. Then, during an interview on Spanish-language television, she'd become warm and cuddly, and come across as eager to accommodate the same illegal immigrants that she had just said on another channel ought to be removed.

Given this dreadful record, you might think that Munoz would be an odd choice to speak to the annual meeting of an organization that is supposed to advocate for immigrants — the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Never heard of it? Not surprised. During much of the last six and a half years, the Democratic-leaning group has taken a powder when it comes to criticizing a president whom many of its members support.

That has begun to change recently, but it's likely that this is only because Obama no longer has to face re-election. With AILA, politics always seems to get in the way of doing the right thing. But that's what happens when you're Democrats first, and advocates second.

Maybe this wasn't such an odd choice after all. The speaker and the organization seem to be cut from the same cloth. They deserve each other.

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CHRISTIANITY

Liberated by grace



E. J. DIONNE
Opinion

WASHINGTON — For those who see religion as primarily an opiate, African-American Christianity offers a riposte. For those who see Christianity itself as a faith that encourages quiescence and conservatism, the tradition of the black church is a sign of contradiction.

Over the last few weeks, white Americans who never paid much attention to the religious convictions of their brothers and sisters of color have received an education. As has happened before in our history, much of this learning is prompted by tragedy, beginning with the murder of nine people at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., and also a series of church burnings, not all of which have been explained.

The African-American Christian tradition has been vital in our history for reasons of the spirit but also as a political seedbed of freedom and a reminder that the Bible is a subversive book.

In the days of slavery, masters emphasized the parts of Scripture that called for obedience to legitimate authority. But the slaves took another lesson: that the authority they were under was not legitimate, that the Old Testament prophets and Exodus preached liberation from bondage, and that Jesus took up the cry to “set the oppressed free” with passion and conviction unto death.

The church was also a free space for African-Americans, not unlike the Catholic Church in Poland under communism,

which provided dissidents with room to maneuver. Even when segregationist Jim Crow laws were at their most oppressive, their churches provided places where African-Americans could pray and ponder, organize and debate, free of the restrictions imposed outside their doors by the white power structure, to borrow a phrase first widely heard in the 1960s.

It was thus no accident that the black church was at the center of the civil rights movement. And it's precisely their role as an oasis from repression that the churches became the object of burnings and bombings.

But the church is about more than politics, and a liberating Gospel is also a Gospel of love. The family members of those slain at Emanuel AME astonished so many Americans by offering forgiveness to the racist shooter, Dylann Roof.

There was nothing passive about this act of graciousness, for forgiveness is also subversive. By offering pardon to Roof, said the Rev. Cheryl Sanders, professor of Christian Ethics at Howard University's Divinity School, the families of the victims demonstrated that there was “something radically different” about their worldview. The act itself “was a radical refusal to conform to what's expected of you. It's a way to avoid hating back.”

The scholar Jonathan Rieder noted in his book about Martin Luther King Jr.'s ministry, “The Word of the Lord Is Upon Me,” that the Resurrection and the Exodus stories were rich sources of hope, especially in the movement's darkest moments.

“God will make a way out of no way” was King's answer to those whose spirits were flagging.

No shootings, no bombings, no fires can destroy this faith.

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