

## EDITORIAL

Stretch  
legs on  
the walk  
to school

Those old stories from Grandma and Grandpa about walking to school may hold more water than ever, except, of course, for the uphill both ways bit.

Just 48 percent of children who live within a mile of school walk or bike to get there, according to a new report printed in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

In 1969, 90 percent of children who lived near school hoofed it or pedaled their way there.

Another federal report showed big changes, too, for those who live even farther away from school. In 1969, 42 percent walked or cycled. In 2001, 16 percent did so.

While the recent reports did not explore reasons behind the statistics, much has been discussed about possible reasons.

Some have noted safety concerns in this day and age. Whether we are less safe or more overprotective can sometimes be difficult to discern.

Interestingly, those in urban settings were more likely to walk than those in suburban settings. And those with more well-educated parents were less likely to walk than those from lesser educated households.

For some, that means the parents have cars more accessible or are more likely to be working.

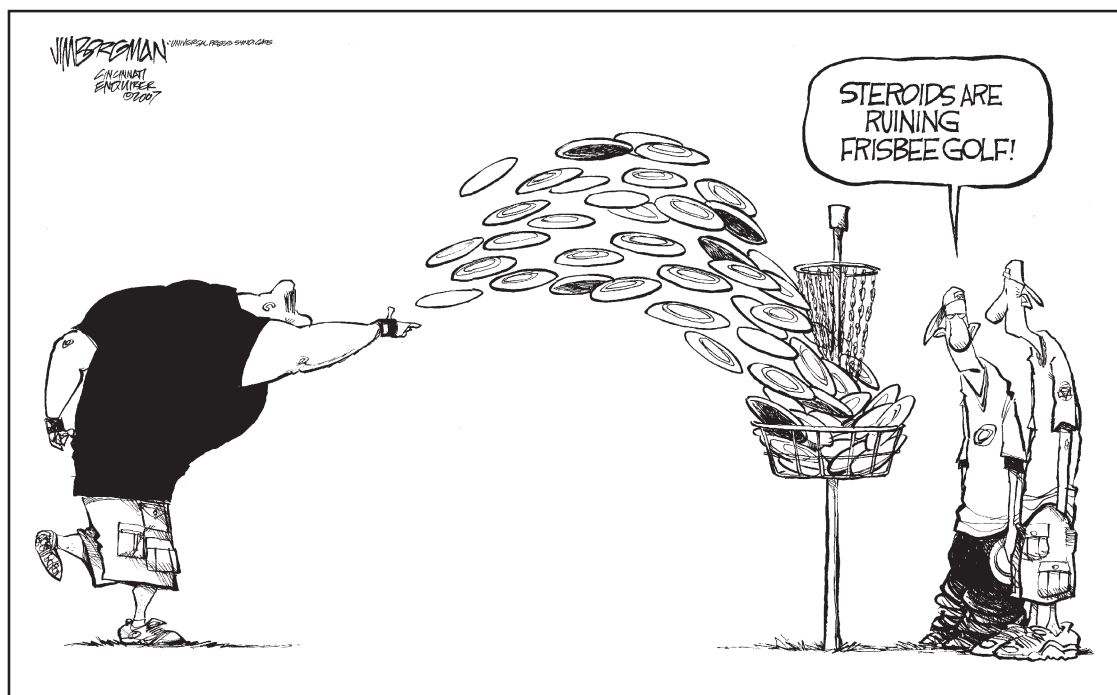
But walking isn't just about getting to school. First of all, it's a healthy habit. And with schools cutting back on recess and physical education, fitting in exercise becomes ever more important.

Walking also is about developing social skills with neighborhood kids, and even good family time with Mom and Dad, if they walk along.

For some, it's about developing independence.

And, hey, with environmental awareness growing, walking fits right in.

With school just around the corner, let's vow to take a walk.



## Punishing Border Patrol

By Tom Fitton  
Judicial Watch

Liberal Democratic California Sen. Diane Feinstein and conservative Republican Texas Sen. John Cornyn don't agree on much. But they agree on this: U.S. Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Alonso Compean should be released from prison.

Ramos and Compean were given 11 and 12 year sentences respectively for shooting and wounding an illegal alien drug smuggler, Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila, during a February 2005 incident on the Southern border.

Aldrete-Davila attempted to smuggle 750 pounds of marijuana — a \$1 million payload — into the United States.

Following a high-speed car chase, the two agents discharged their weapons and clipped Aldrete-Davila in the buttocks as he disappeared across the border on foot. Ramos and Compean say they believed Davila was armed.

This incident is all-too common on the nation's Southern border, and it likely would have been forgotten were it not for what happened next. The federal government decided to prosecute Ramos and Compean, while providing immunity to the illegal alien drug smuggler in exchange for his testimony. (The feds also provided medical care for Aldrete-Davila.)

As one might expect, given the contentious debate over illegal immigration, this incident has generated a tremendous amount of public interest. Sure enough, on July 17, the U.S. Senate held a hearing to investigate the government's decision to prosecute the agents. (Senators on both sides of the aisle believe the government

## Let's get to the bottom of the prosecutions

overreached and some urged President Bush to commute their sentences so that they can be released from prison.)

Judicial Watch has launched an investigation of its own, filing a series of open records Freedom of Information Act requests with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the State Department. Predictably, the government has stonewalled, and on July 23, our lawyers were in federal court arguing for the release of documents.

We hope the documents provide answers for some of the following questions:

First, why did the federal government aggressively prosecute the two Border Patrol agents, using a federal law usually reserved for drug kingpins, while giving an illegal alien drug smuggler immunity for his testimony? (Aldrete-Davila was implicated by the Drug Enforcement Agency in yet another drug smuggling operation just months later.)

Second, what kind of "deals," if any, were made between the U.S. and Mexican governments related to how the shooting incident was prosecuted? U.S. Attorney David Sutton, who handled the prosecution, cooperated with the Mexican government for Aldrete-Davila's return to the United States in the weeks following the incident.

## Open Forum

ster out front that had been ordered by the previous tenant, and we wanted to keep it a little longer. So I walked out to the curb to talk with the gentleman from the solid waste management department. His name was Russ, and he was wonderfully kind. Just then, the garbage truck drove up to get the Dumpster, and the two men who got out were also extremely helpful. Between chatting and laughing with the three men there in the shady street, between Russ calling a colleague about the Dumpster and the two men saying we could keep it a few more hours, I was left feeling grateful that I live in such a welcoming, friendly place.

When we complain about city services — grouching about how "they" should be doing this or that — it's good to remember that there's always a real person at the end of the "they." My family has lived in Longmont for almost 40 years, and we've known quite a few city employees. I even worked for the city as an intern in the electric department one summer. For the most part, "they" are good people who really care about our city and about doing a good job for their neighbors. Give "them" a break. Heck, give "them" a wave and a smile.

And a thank you.  
JANE ELLEN COMBELIC  
Longmont

## Faith in the 1st

LifeBridge Christian Church critic Richard Juday objects to the church's development plans in Longmont because it might become a "religious enclave" that wouldn't "integrate into the social fabric of the city." It's all too fashionable these days for secular progressives like Juday and arch-atheist Richard Dawkins to marginalize, demean and try to taint religion. But even if his

claim comes true, so what? Who cares? I'm not a religious person, but I believe in the First Amendment and tolerance for diversity of belief.

Some claim that the free exercise and establishment clauses require a "benign neglect" of religion by government, neither favoring nor disfavoring it. But just as the Constitution's establishment clause forbids the government from establishing a state-sponsored religion, its free exercise clause requires that the government defend private religious expression against bigotry or oppression. This duty outweighs all of the petty "character of the neighborhood" canards trotted out by Juday and his ilk. Federal law, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, codifies the affirmative obligation of local zoning authorities to facilitate religious freedom.

Zoning originally emerged in New York City as a way to keep Jews, Catholics, blacks and Irish confined to ghettos. Public officials must remember these evil roots and ensure that such poisonous bigotry has no place in their decision-making.

People such as Dawkins, with their atheistic bigotry and secular hate speech, are antithetical to the foundations of American culture and law. Their complaints must be ignored and their attitudes vilified.

The right of the people to peacefully assemble and freely exercise their religion is a root precept of our society. This includes the inviolable right to establish "religious enclaves" in defense of religious practice against oppression and the infringement of Constitutional rights by those whose avowed goal is the destruction of religion.

Lawmakers would be hard-pressed to enact a set of policies more destructive to farmers, taxpayers, consumers, the environment, trade, global anti-poverty efforts and even our health than the current farm policies. Is Congress paying attention?

Further, most farmers are not poor. According to the Department of Agriculture, the average farm household earns \$81,420 annually and enjoys a net worth of \$838,875 — both well above the national average. Farm incomes are setting records, and the industry's business failure rate is among the lowest.

Of course, some family farmers continue to struggle. But if subsidies were really designed to alleviate farmer poverty, then lawmakers could guarantee every full-time farmer an income of 185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$38,203 for a family of four) for under \$5 billion annually — one-fifth the current cost of farm subsidies.

Instead, federal farm policies specifically bypass family farmers. Subsidies are paid per acre, so the largest (and most profitable) agribusinesses automatically receive the biggest checks. Consequently, commercial farmers — who report an average annual income of \$200,000 and a net worth of nearly \$2 million — collect the majority of farm subsidies. Fortune 500 companies, celebrity "hobby farmers" and even some members of Congress collect millions of dollars under this program.

These farm policies are more than merely ineffective — they impose substantial harm. They cost Americans \$25 billion in taxes and an additional \$12 billion in higher food prices annually. Environmental damage results from farmers overplanting crops in order to maximize subsidies. By undermining the nation's trade negotiations, subsidies raise consumer prices and restrict U.S. exports. Cotton subsidies undercut African farmers, keeping them in desperate poverty.

And as Michael Pollan, author of "The Omnivore's Dilemma," has written, farm subsidies contribute to obesity, rising health-care costs and early death by subsidizing corn and soy (from which sugars and fats are derived) rather than healthier fruits and vegetables.

Even small farmers are harmed. Excluded from most subsidies, they must endure the lower crop prices, higher farmland costs and industry consolidation that result from subsidies to agribusiness.

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SCOTT WEISER  
Boulder

## The dirt on farm subsidies

By Brian M. Riedl  
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Republican and Democratic congressional leaders rarely agree on a major issue. Yet both House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Minority Leader John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, have gone on the record as opposing the current \$25 billion farm-subsidy system, which Congress is in the process of rewriting.

Changing the system won't be easy. They will have to battle the powerful agriculture lobby and its allies on the House Agriculture Committee, who are once again employing Norman Rockwell imagery to assert that farm subsidies are an all-American necessity that ensures an adequate food supply and alleviates farmer poverty.

But two seemingly arcane aspects of farm policy undermine both claims. First, farm subsidy eligibility is restricted to growers of only a few crops. Second, once a farmer's eligibility is established, subsidies increase with the size of the farm. This makes farm subsidies just another narrowly targeted corporate welfare program.

On the first point, producers of just five crops — wheat, cotton, corn, soybeans and rice — receive nearly all U.S. farm subsidies. In fact, only one-third of the \$240 billion in annual farm production is targeted for subsidies. All other farmers — including growers of fruits, vegetables, livestock and poultry — receive nearly nothing.

This raises the question: If farm subsidies are necessary to produce an adequate food supply with stable prices and thriving farmers, why haven't the growers of non-subsidized crops experienced these problems?

Walk into any supermarket and you will quickly find yourself surrounded by farm products, from apples to oranges, beef to chicken, that are produced and distributed without farm subsidies. Yet their prices and supplies are relatively stable, and the farmers' incomes are just as high as those of subsidized farmers. The free market works for all other farm production, and it can surely work for producers of wheat, cotton, corn, soybeans and rice.

These crop eligibility restrictions also undermine the second justification for subsidies: alleviating farmer poverty. If that were the purpose, there would be no reason to favor one crop over another. After all, lawmakers would never create a welfare program that was restricted to workers in certain industries. Creating a farmer-poverty program that serves only growers of certain crops (regardless of income) makes no more sense. Today, a rice agribusiness can collect millions of dollars in aid while a low-income apple grower receives nothing.

Furthermore, most farmers are not poor. According to the Department of Agriculture, the average farm household earns \$81,420 annually and enjoys a net worth of \$838,875 — both well above the national average. Farm incomes are setting records, and the industry's business failure rate is among the lowest.

Of course, some family farmers continue to struggle. But if subsidies were really designed to alleviate farmer poverty, then lawmakers could guarantee every full-time farmer an income of 185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$38,203 for a family of four) for under \$5 billion annually — one-fifth the current cost of farm subsidies.

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Office hours:  
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Weekdays

Circulation  
Monday - Friday  
5 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Saturday, Sunday  
5 a.m. - noon

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