

# STARS AND STRIPES

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR/OPINION

## Charity needs no middleman

I normally do not feel compelled to write in response to opinion pieces that appear in Stars and Stripes but Rev. Richard Cizik's submission on evangelicals raised my ire ("Not all evangelicals in lock step with tea party goals," Nov. 14).

Like most social gospel promoters Cizik veils his preference for socialist/marxist thought with the skillful use of agitprop while conveniently ignoring the facts of evangelicals and charity. The Bible is very clear that Christians should do their giving in private lest it honor the giver and not God. Additionally the notion of free will has at least a small part to play in the Christian walk. Cizik conveniently ignores the millions of American evangelicals who donate millions of dollars to charity. He fails to acknowledge that when one cuts out the "middleman" of the government, those dollars go farther in helping those in need.

Evangelicals embrace the tea party precisely because they know the needs of their communities better than bureaucrats in D.C. Taxing people for failed social programs, stripping off huge overhead for those programs and then rerouting the scraps back to those in need is hardly in concert with Christ's teachings. In fact Christ very clearly distinguished between what a government does and what believers are supposed to do. Rome was hardly a charitable place. Libertarian notions of free will and personal responsibility are not anti-Christian; they are the essence of Christian behavior. Cizik's coercive brand of socialism, veiled in the mantra of "but it is for the kids," is decidedly not.

The United States remains the most charitable nation on Earth. It used to have an extensive network of Christian- and Jewish-based hospitals that treated the poor for free. That was until the social justice "do-gooders" determined that faceless bureaucracies and regulations would deliver a better product. Now, in order to

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access care one must essentially become a "ward of the state." Where is the human dignity in that? Physicians cannot even adjust pricing for fear of being charged with insurance or medicare fraud.

We have experienced the immense waste that laundering money through D.C. creates before it gets to those in need. Americans, when given a choice, invest efficiently to directly meet needs — be they a struggling family or a Habitat for Humanity Home. They quickly identify those who seek to abuse charity and those who truly need it. Socialist pastors who preach a distorted gospel and wealth-redistributing bureaucrats do not share the same track record.

**Todd Fredricks**  
*Camp Buehring, Kuwait*

## Aid GIs' transition to the calm

We all have the upmost respect for those who serve in our armed forces and for those who serve overseas in harm's way. They deserve special respect and benefits, since they are the only ones who stand between us and those who wish to do us harm. Now in addition to Veterans Day this month we have another unique opportunity to act and put our words into action. To really honor our service people who have survived and

sacrificed, we are the ones who now need to do them a service. We need to help them with the many problems that have been plaguing our veterans on their return.

Unemployment for veterans is at least 2 percent higher than for nonveterans. Twenty percent of returning veterans have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and PTSD raises the risk of domestic abuse. Prescription drug abuse has soared and suicides have outnumbered combat deaths in the last two years. Even one-third of children who have parent deployed in a war zone are at higher risk for psychological problems and, a new study says, violence is more common among kids of combat veterans — and that includes the daughters.

It seems clear that not one group or institution could handle these problems all by themselves. We are now all going to have to pitch in to make sure they all have a soft landing. I cannot think of many adjustments bigger than coming from an environment where there is violence to one where there isn't. We can never know what they went through and I'm sure they don't want us to go through it and find out.

If we want America and its forces to continue to be strong, and we want America to continue to become more peaceful, then it is time for all of us to do our service personnel a service and give them the special attention and consideration they deserve in areas big and small. This goes not only for the ones who will be returning but the ones who already have. This would not elevate them above the rest of us but only ensure that they can enjoy a normal life like the rest of us. This is probably the biggest gift we can give them, that despite their sacrifice they are still an equal member of the American family and the American dream.

**Douglas A. Wain**  
**Founder and executive director**  
**Win The War! Against Violence**  
*Lexington, Ky.*

# In debates, Gingrich's real target is Obama

By **JONAH GOLDBERG**  
*Los Angeles Times*

**H**e's baaack!  
Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich is back in the saddle after falling off his horse at the starting line. At least according to one poll (Public Policy Polling), Gingrich is actually the GOP front-runner.

Many say it's simply Gingrich's turn to be the not-Mitt contender, now that Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry and Herman Cain have had their chances.

But that is not entirely fair. Gingrich has been relentlessly seducing GOP voters in the debates. Mitt Romney may have been winning on points and technicalities, but Gingrich has been consistently winning the crowds.

Moreover, he's been deftly using the debates to develop a sales pitch to GOP voters. His Reaganesque refusal to attack fellow Republicans has been appreciated, as has his more mercenary determination to ridicule the media by pouncing on stupid — and sometimes not-so-stupid — questions from debate moderators.

But the core of his strategy has been to plant a question in the minds of Republican voters. The question he wants them to ask is, "Whom would you most like to see debate Barack Obama?"

In each debate, he keeps mentioning how he wants to challenge the president to as many Lincoln-Douglas-style debates as possible. And if the presidential baloney won't march into the Gingrichian grinder? Well then, the grinder will come to the baloney. Gingrich vows to follow Obama on

## The risk for Gingrich is that primary voters may eventually recognize what he's up to.

the stump, offering rapid response after every presidential utterance.

It's a brilliant tactic. Watching Gingrich walk onto the debate stage, it's like seeing a great beast returned to its natural habitat. They should play "Born Free" whenever he comes out from behind the curtain.

The tactic works because the unifying conviction among hard-core Republican voters is that Obama is both overrated and full of it, a man pretending to be presidential and intellectual rather than the real thing (ironically, Gingrich has long been the subject of similar criticisms). Gingrich's promise to goad Obama into a fair fight is beyond tantalizing.

Talk to rank-and-file conservatives about such a matchup and they grow giddy, like nerds asked if they'd like to see a battle between Darth Vader and Gandalf the wizard. Ask them if they'd like to see an Obama versus Romney debate (the thriller with vanilla!) and they shrug. Meanwhile, if you nominate Gingrich, you'll get a ticket to the fight of the century.

The risk for Gingrich is that primary voters may eventually recognize what he's up to. After all, as a purely practical matter, the point of picking a Republican nominee isn't to find the candidate who can beat Obama in a debate but to pick the nominee

who can beat Obama in an election (oh, and be a good president too, a worthy subject for another day). Winning debates is great and important — as Perry has painfully learned — but they are a means to an end, not an end unto themselves.

It's an open question whether Gingrich can defeat Obama in 2012. It's taken as a truism that he has "too much baggage." Well, some of the baggage is lighter than it appears. He was cleared by the Clinton-era Internal Revenue Service of wrongdoing in alleged ethics violations stemming from a college course he taught in the 1990s. The charge that he surprised his cancer-stricken first wife with divorce papers has been, at the least, exaggerated.

But, as with Kim Kardashian's attic, you can throw away a lot of old baggage and still be left with too much for one person to carry. His marital infidelities, his verbal indiscipline, the strange mix of God and Mammon that is Newt Inc., and his grandiose way of talking about himself as one of the lions of the 20th — and now 21st — century: It may just be too much muchness for voters once they're reminded of it all. And, oh boy, would they be reminded of it if Gingrich got the nomination.

On the other hand, this could be Gingrich's moment. Perry was undone by the debates because voters understand that the only way to beat Obama is to take the argument to him, particularly because — from a Republican perspective at least — the mainstream media has little interest in holding Obama accountable.

Maybe it is time to cue "Born Free."