

A Misguided Solution

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Revenue caps and appraisal caps are again being touted by some legislators as a solution to increases in property tax appraisals and revenues. These misguided restrictions have been tried in California, Florida and Colorado with disastrous results. Let's look at the real driver of property taxes in Texas.

First, Texas is a low-tax state, ranking around 45th among the states in total state and local taxation. However, Texas is a high property-tax state. Why? Because Texas has no state income tax, and the state has mandated that local governments (schools, counties and cities) perform functions and services that are state-funded in other states.

What tool has the state given to local governments to fund these mandated functions? The local property tax.

Further, the state has prescribed a system of property appraisal guaranteed to keep appraisals

high, ensuring an increasing source of property tax funding for public schools and limiting the amount of state funding. The appraisal system certainly needs reform (such as uniform price disclosure) to repair the inequities in the process, but artificial limits that distort the values is not an answer.

Second, local governments, especially counties, are caught in an impossible situation. Faced with unfunded mandates from the state and rising costs of services for an increasingly population, they must either curtail their discretionary services—such as law enforcement and transportation—to continue the mandated services, or increase their tax revenue.

No local official looks forward

The Imitation Game

by Neoma Williams

A few Sundays ago, I came home from church and decided to go against my upbringing of getting all of my work done (never happens) before “playing.”

I turned on the TV, and had planned to watch some news, and this idea of “play” popped in my head when I saw that “Imitation Game” was on as video-on-demand.

If I go to the movies, it's usually in Plainview, and often the movies I want to see likely wouldn't draw a large enough crowd in Plainview to warrant getting the movie. The last movie I saw at the Plainview

to increasing property taxes. They must pay them on their own property, and they must explain the necessity to their voters. However, the present statutes allow no other options if public safety is to be maintained and the roads are to remain passable.

Imposing revenue caps and appraisal caps on local government will not reduce the cost of local government by one cent, but it will reduce local services that citizens need. If the state Legislature wants to join local governments in their efforts to restrain property tax increases, it should provide funding for its mandated services and release the dedicated funds that are being improperly held to balance the state budget.

Cinema 6 was a few months ago, and it was “McFarland USA.” I highly recommend this, especially to towns like Hart with a largely Hispanic-populated school. It's a great movie.

Anyway, I decided to watch “Imitation Game.” I had seen the previews when the movie was up for the Oscars. The actor who played the main character, Alan Turing, received an Academy Award nomination. He is a British actor with an imposing name of Benedict Cumberbatch.

Turing was a super smart British mathematician who helped break the Nazi code during WWII. He was homosexual, a hot button item these days among Americans, and often criticized in the Christian world. The movie depicts that Turing had a liking for a classmate at what I presume was a prestigious school for young British scholars.

The movie did not dwell on the homosexuality, but on breaking the code. But, one could sense Turing's inability to come to terms with his homosexuality.

At the end of the movie, the continued to Page 3

PLAIN ENGLISH COLUMN

By Mary Jane McKinney

El Nino is officially here. Meteorologists in Japan declared El Nino 2015 in March. Australia concurred in May. The weather pattern that brings rain to Texas brings drought to other locations. We know too well that El Nino is a good boy to some and a bad boy to others. Rain for us means drought for other parts of the world.

Finally! The drought in Texas that began in 2011 is over for now. We don't like to hear the caution, “not so fast.” We want to rejoice, celebrate, and put the drought behind us as if it were never going to come again. El Nino does not last long. Here's what we can expect

2-3 Years of Rain – maybe longer. The U.S. will have wetter years in the southwest, south and Great Plains regions. The El Nino weather pattern caused by a warming trend in the Pacific Ocean typically lasts 3 years. We had an 8-year El Nino between 2002 and 2010. Other El Ninos have lasted 1-2 years. Meteorologists can't predict how long the conditions last. They constantly monitor ocean temperatures, but they do not have a crystal ball. Countries that benefit from El Nino are U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Argentina.

Fewer Hurricanes. Tropical storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic practically disappear during El Nino. During the 2009 El Nino hurricane season only one storm made landfall in the U.S. Tropical Storm Claudette hit the Florida panhandle with 45 mph winds.

Warmer Winters. Temperatures will be warmer and drier in the Pacific Northwest, Upper Midwest, and the northeast.

Wetter Winters. Above average rain will fall in northwest Mexico, the American southwest, and southern California.

Cooler Winters. Below average temperatures and wetter weather will prevail in northeastern Mexico and the southeastern U.S., including Virginia.

Other countries. Europe will experience colder, drier winters. Warmer weather and drought will dominate Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Indonesia, India, Japan, and South Africa. Crops that will suffer include cotton, wheat, barley, rice, sugar, vegetable oil, palm oil, fish, and shellfish.

Epidemics. A correlation exists between El Nino climate conditions and some mosquito-borne diseases. Historically during El Nino years there have been epidemics of malaria in India, Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia. Australia encephalitis increases in southeast Australia and Rift Valley fever surges in Kenya and Somalia.

Scientific evidence shows that the El Nino/La Nina weather patterns have existed for at least 10,000 years. Specific data on El Nino has been kept for 225 years. Sometimes El Nino changed the course of history. Between 1789 and 1793 an El Nino caused low crop yields in France, a factor that spurred starving farmers to join in the French Revolution. La Marseillaise, the French national anthem, has angry lyrics that allude to the drought: “Let impure blood water our furrows.” The El Nino in 1876-1877 caused a famine in China that killed 13 million people and sparked unprecedented migrations from rural to urban areas.

For the rest of 2015 ranchers will have lots of grass and hay. The wheat and cotton crops may set records. Our lawns, trees, and shrubs will be lush and green. It's easy to forget the hard times when happy days return. Science tells us the rain won't last. Drier days are ahead.

We should all take advice from the Greatest Generation, the people who survived the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, World War II, and the Great Drought in the 1950s. Keep conservation measures going even in the wet years. Plan ahead for the La Nina years when we will be on the flip side of rainy El Nino.

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Letters to the editor are welcomed and will be published as space permits. Letters should be personally written and signed. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Letters will be edited for length and libelous content. Letters endorsing candidates are considered advertising.



Weather

Neoma Williams
U.S. Weather Observer

	Hi	Lo	Pr
Thursday	85	56	.85
Friday	76	51	
Saturday	79	51	1.08
Sunday	69	52	
Monday	76	54	
Tuesday	83	58	.04
Wednesday	89	59	
May moisture.....	7.60		
2015 to date	10.98		
2014 for same period	4.94		