

OPINION

Bluegrass Beacon

Taxpayers hear ringing in their ears

Gov. Steve Beshear told the Kentucky School Advocates during the gubernatorial campaign that "public employees deserve the same rights to join together and bargain collectively as employees in the private sector enjoy."

It's commendable that the governor is speaking of applying private-sector practices to government workers.

So far, Beshear seems content interesting in doing so only when it doesn't disturb his political cronies in the Legislature and labor unions. He hasn't demonstrated that he will maintain the same stance, even when it makes those same folks pout.

But taxpayers hear "cha-ching" when he doesn't.

Cha-ching: Beshear favors giving state workers collective-bargaining rights.

His predecessor, Gov. Ernie Fletcher, considered that economically oppressive. But does Beshear also favor offering new state workers a defined-contribution plan rather than a loaded up defined-benefits plan? Not doing so will drive the commonwealth further in the pension-deficit pit.

Cha-ching: Fletcher used an executive order to cancel the collective-bargaining agreement for state workers, the same way it started. Fletcher was right. Beshear and lawmakers sponsoring House Bill 401 are wrong. This policy unionizes state workers and uses the force of Frankfort to swell the ranks of labor unions and drive up the cost-of-state government.



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By Jim Waters

Shively Rep. Jon Jenkins is the leading sponsor of HB 403. She's the same politician who pool-pooled Elizabethtown Rep. Tim Moore's recent proposal to eliminate government-mandated wages on schools and other public projects.

The Courier-Journal reported that Jenkins "urged lawmakers not to balance a budget on the backs of the working class."

Hand Jenkins a tissue. Give me -- and all Kentucky taxpayers -- a break.

Moore's proposal would free up more than \$100 million that the state could use to repair its crumbling schools and fund university projects.

In the private sector, such obvious cost-cutting measures are no-brainers.

Cha-ching: In his State of the Commonwealth speech, Beshear promised a plan to address the pension crisis. We'll see if his plan structures benefits for future state hires that reflect a private-sector, 401(k)-like approach, or if he avoids the commonwealth further with short-term Band-Aids.

Doing so will just drive the state further into the pension pit.

For private companies, cost-sharing retirement plans are no-brainers. Business owners understand that in order for their company to survive and ensure their workers have jobs, they've had to slow the gravy train that drove some companies into bankruptcy just 16 percent compared

and left others teetering on the edge.

Even if the governor does offer a pension plan that utilizes private-sector approaches, he would negate much of the savings by signing Jenkins' collective-bargaining bill into law.

I wonder if the governor plans to use the bully pulpit to promote changes that would make it easier for lazy, underperforming and incompetent teachers, including those who take from others rather than going out and earning it for themselves.

That is precisely the reason we fought the Revolutionary War. The Colonists who had struggled to build their lives in the New World were fed up with the British government stepping in and taking what they had worked so hard to acquire.

It was important enough that they were willing to go to war, to sacrifice their lives if necessary, in order to preserve their freedoms and their right to Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness -- those unalienable rights endowed by the Creator.

Suppose those young men had knocked on doors and explained that they needed money and were willing to work to earn it. I have no doubt, based on the generosity demonstrated by the people of this Commonwealth, that folks would have given them odd jobs to earn \$5 here or \$10 there, whatever they could spare.

But that's not what happened. Those boys know what they were doing

with an 11-percent increase for private workers.

In 2006, public workers collected an average hourly wage of \$39.50 per hour versus \$26.09 earned by private workers.

If public employees deserve the same right to

unionize as the private sector enjoys, then why shouldn't taxpayers expect government workers to get the same treatment as their counterparts in the real world?

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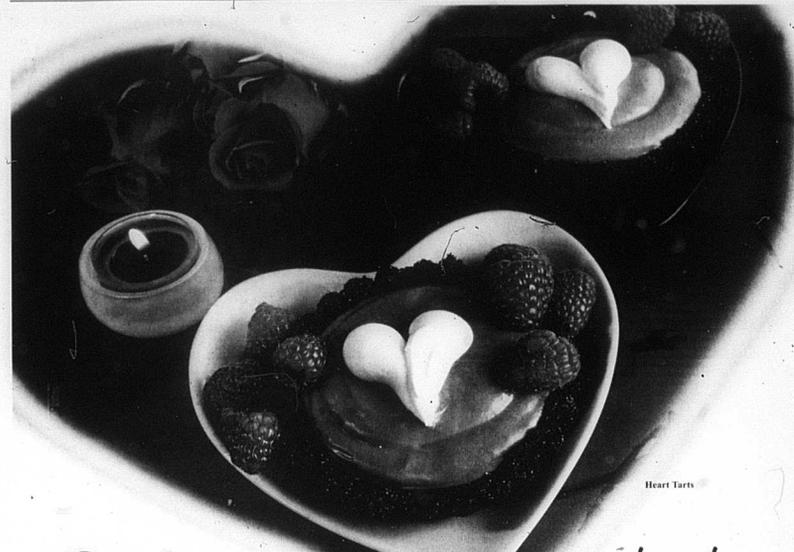
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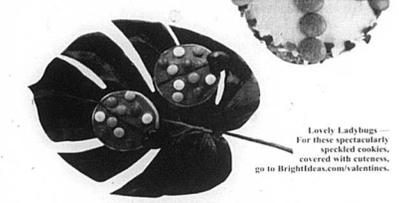
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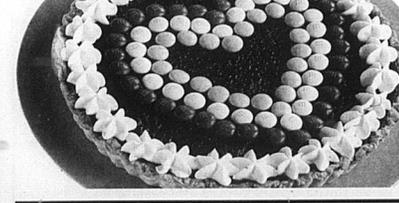
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Send Cupid's arrow this Valentine's Day! Gather in the kitchen for some quality time and make treats the whole family can share. Homemade chocolate treats from your kitchen are sure to warm anyone's heart.

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Change of Tart
Bake a tart for your sweetheart on the most romantic day of the year!
Prep time: 10 minutes
Baking time: 7 to 10 minutes
Decorating time: 5 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

For Crust

- 1 box (9-ounce) thin chocolate wafers, finely ground
- 8 tablespoons butter, melted
- 4 tablespoons sugar

For Filling

- 1 bag (25-ounce) each instant chocolate pudding
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream, whipped or whipped topping
- 1 pint raspberries

1. Combine ground chocolate wafers with butter and sugar. Press mixture into sides and bottom of 12-oz. (4 1/2-inch each) greased tart pan.

2. Place tart pans on cookie sheet(s) and bake in a preheated 350°F oven approximately 7 to 10 minutes. Remove and cool completely.

3. Melt (DOVE) Brand Rich Dark Chocolate Hearts in microwave, stirring every 15 seconds until smooth. Prepare pudding according to instructions on package. Whisk melted chocolate into pudding and refrigerate until set.

4. Before serving, fold 3/4 cup whipped cream into chocolate pudding mixture and fill tart shells. Spoon remaining whipped cream into resealable bag with snipped corner and pipe heart design on top. Cover with raspberry.

Makes 12 servings.

Change of Tart
Bake a tart for your sweetheart on the most romantic day of the year!
Prep time: 10 minutes
Baking time: 30 to 35 minutes
Decorating time: 15 minutes
Difficulty: Moderate

For Crust

- 1 bag (25-ounce) Brand Dark Chocolate Miniatures
- 1 bag (25-ounce) Milk Chocolate Candies for Valentine's Day
- 1 refrigerated pie crust (9-ounce), at room temperature
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 cup whipped cream

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.

2. Press pie crust into 9-inch tart pan and prick bottom with fork. Place sheet of foil on top, and bake 15 minutes. Remove foil, and continue baking another 3 minutes, or until golden brown.

3. While pie is baking, melt butter and 18 (DOVE) Brand Dark Chocolate Miniatures over a double boiler.

4. Whisk together eggs, heavy cream and salt. Stir mixture into warm chocolate, and pour chocolate mixture into hot pie crust.

5. Reduce heat to 350°F, and bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until filling is just set.

6. Remove from oven, and let cool to room temperature. Fill resealable plastic bag with whipped cream, snip corner, attach star tip (optional) and pipe rosettes around outside of tart.

7. Separate M&M'S® Brand Milk Chocolate Candies for Valentine's Day by color, and arrange them into concentric hearts in center of tart.

Makes 1 tart.