The Fortland Observer

May 26, 2010

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No Housing Fix Will Work without Jobs

Folks can no longer afford to buy

Pastors

Jerry & Annie

Gutierrez

Would like to

invite you

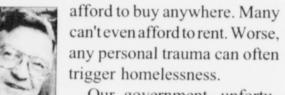
for Service every

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS

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Our country has plenty of housing. It's just in the wrong place. There are lots of houses in Detroit, East St. Louis and rural spots where jobs have left. Cheap. But Washington a "housing crisis" who wants to settle there?

tune and is in short supply where Instead it means a shortage of mortthe economy is strong. With today's steady downward pressure on shortage of sales for homebuilders.



any personal trauma can often trigger homelessness. Our government, unfortunately, has other priorities. In

doesn't mean a shortage of afford-Conversely, housing costs a for- able places to live. Heaven forbid. gage business for Wall Street and a

whatever administration is in office.

Congress has responded to corporate and personal housing woes bonanza for folks who were planning to buy a home anyway, and for banks who needed a spurt in profitable lending. It also enticed some people into home ownership who won't be able to sustain it. Plus it was expensive to taxpayers.

And it avoided the main problem. wages, many folks can no longer Or it may just mean a weaker Fueled by steady productivity ad-

economy, which would embarrass vances and job exports, our nation housing was sold off or torn down. simply doesn't offer as much decent employment as it used to. Income is sparser overall. Many Americans with a foolish homebuyer's tax credit. are struggling to hang onto their As many predicted, this became a houses and apartments. A lost job, divorce, or illness can push them

> House is costly, So is rent; Next step down Is to a tent.

pens every day.

The last time our nation was this short of affordable housing we went out and built some. A lot. Right after place to live, thank you. World War II. Europe did it too. Over time, people started earning A. Collins is a former state repremore money and conservatives sentative and a former mayor of gained political control. Government Norwalk, Conn.

Today we only build tiny amounts of it, and the budget for replacement units and for Section 8 housing certificates commonly gets siphoned off instead to Kabul.

That's OK for many folks, who over the edge into the street. It hap- don't want any new buildings for the

poor in their neighborhood and aren't keen on having such residents scattered around invisibly through Section 8.

Thus even as our familiar social structure decays and as hardship mounts from the disjointed economy, Congress gets political support from average folks back home

not to do anything about housing. The citizens who bother to vote (especially seniors) already have a

OtherWords columnist William

Hope of a Life after Prison

Court decision steps toward fairness

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS The U.S. Supreme Court, which has in recent years been overwhelming conservative in its decisions, showed signs of humanity when it ruled that juvenile offenders Florida, a state known for its tough under 17 could no longer be sentenced to life without parole for crimes judges across the country must have that didn't result in a death.

role for someone so young in a case where no one was killed seems especially harsh.

Currently, 37 states and DC support a life sentence without parole for juveniles in crimes that don't involveadeath. Now, as a result of the Court's decision, those local practices must change. There are currently 129 juvenile offenders sentenced under such laws in



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the U.S.; more than half of them are in sentencing laws. At their core, realized that handing down such a Calling such sentences cruel and punishment in these types of cases

With their ruling...asks that judges act fairly - and humanely - when handing down sentences.

tion of the Constitution's Eighth Amendment, the Justices ruled 6-3 in favor of putting an end to judicial punishments that give offenders no hope of a life after prison. Even Chief Justice John Roberts, a notorious conservative appointed by President George W. Bush, ruled on the side of what's fair and decent.

At the heart of the decision was the case of Terrance Graham who, at 17, was already on parole when he broke into a home and robbed the owners by gunpoint. To be fair, it seems that Graham, now in his early 20s, didn't learn from his first crime and stint in jail. However, a life sentence without the possibility of pa-

unusual punishment, and in viola- was unjust and, though it was legally acceptable, decided to go another route.

> With their ruling, the Court does not excuse the Graham's of the world. Rather, it asks that judges act fairly - and humanely - when handing down sentences. This decision is a step toward fair sentencing practices that could give offenders, with the aid of rehabilitation, hope of a life after prison. Since America incarcerates more people than any other country in the world, this is a step our country needed to take.

Greg Mathis is a retired Michigan District Court Judge and syndicated television judge.