



## Jay Leno on a \$100 bill?

Bogus bill found in Fort Myers may have star's image

BY JEFF CULL  
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A bogus \$100 bill turned up in Fort Myers last week and bank tellers and a customer agreed: The watermark image imbedded in the currency looked like TV host Jay Leno.

"It looked just like him," said Michelle Hall, an employee of Salty Sam's Marina on Fort Myers Beach.



LENO

Hall had taken several bills to Wachovia Bank at the corner of Winkler and Summerlin roads on Friday, Sept. 21 to change them into smaller bills. She said she used a special pen designed to detect counterfeit bills and all the bills passed the test.

However, tellers at the bank said one of the bills felt thinner than normal. That's when they held the C-note up to the light to read the imbedded watermark. It should have been Benjamin Franklin's image but Leno's distinctive mug popped out.

"She (the teller) said it was Jay Leno," Hall reported, adding that two other tellers confirmed it: the star of "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" had joined the pantheon of now seemingly butt-ugly dead white males who starred in the 18th and 19th century history of the United States.

■ **Inside:** Learn how to spot a counterfeit bill. **A9**

Perhaps George Washington (\$1), Abraham Lincoln (\$5), Alexander Hamilton (\$10), Andrew Jackson (\$20), Ulysses S. Grant (\$50) and even good old Ben Franklin have had to make room for an illegal immigrant to the face of American money, and one who remains alive, no less — Mr. Jay Leno.

SEE LENO, A9 ▶

"This is one of the oddest situations you'll probably ever find in land use."

—Tom Missimer, DR/GR

# Land of uncertainty



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

This sign was nailed to a tree along Corkscrew Road. Some residents are opposed to Lee County allowing further mining in the 96,000-acre Density Reduction/Groundwater resource area.

20 percent of Lee County land is currently restricted. Is it bureaucratic ruse or sound policy?

BY EVAN WILLIAMS  
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In 1989, former Lee County commissioner Charles L. Bigelow received a phone call from friend and colleague Tom Pelham. Back then, Pelham was the head of the Florida department that managed growth and was pressuring county's to plan for the future. They agreed on a compromise, which may have helped protect Lee County from developing visions of an urban nightmare — endless rows of grey rooftops and gassy factory smoke beneath a sickly yellow sky; questions like "What exit are you from?"



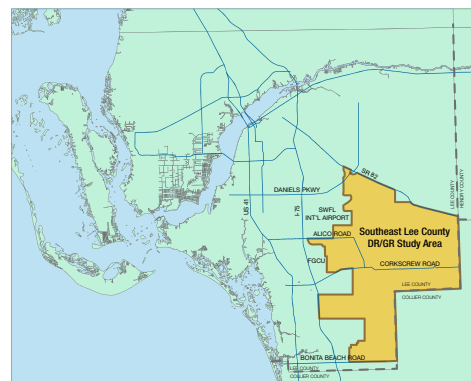
BIGELOW



MISSIMER

Or it may have been something else altogether: simply, the beginning of a long, messy geopolitical imbroglio. Maybe both.

■ **Inside:** Learn more about the DR/GR. **A8**



FLORIDA WEEKLY GRAPHIC

"You could probably call Charles Bigelow the father of the DR/GR" Tom Missimer said. Missimer has a PhD in geology and specializes in hydrology, the study of water, and has been involved with the DR/GR before it was so named, in a 1973 U.S. geological survey, as well as drilling some of the initial test wells there.

DR/GR stands for Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource. It is the 96,000-acre patch of land, located mostly east of I-75 and south of State

SEE DR/GR, A8 ▶



## Musical marionettes

Cuban-American artist Pablo Cano creates marionettes that are works of art. **C1** ▶



## Bella Terra

Estero community features multi-generational residents. **B1** ▶



## Fox Electronics booming

Area company quietly taking on the giants. **A28** ▶

## Something new in Florida Weekly

>>>You'll notice some changes in Florida Weekly today. We've added some new features and moved some old standbys to a different section of the paper.

>>>Artis Henderson's weekly column "Sandy Days, Salty Nights" will take you through the highs and lows of dating in Fort Myers. You can find in on page **C2** ▶

>>>Local wine connoisseur Jim McCracken will help you find the right wine for the right occasion. Read his bi-weekly column on C18, right next to Florida Weekly Cuisine. **C18** ▶

>>>To make room, we've moved Pet Tales and Outdoors into the **A** section. Enjoy.

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# DR/GR

From page 1

Road 82 (and partially in North Fort Myers). It is purportedly reserved to help contain urban sprawl and protect natural resources, most importantly, water; Missimer claims that's only partially true, saying both newspaper and television media made an "urban legend" out of the DR/GR.

"(County planners) sat down with a map and a pen, and the boundaries were set nice and square," he said. "They weren't based on land use or water. There just happened to be empty land there. The way they would justify these areas was as a water resource. They retroactively adopted four studies that backed up the science of it."

"To this day, I wonder whether the whole crisis was sort of artificial."

The name of the land itself is misleading, Missimer said. The term "Density Reduction" was thrown in as a sarcastic remark at a county commission meeting as the DR/GR was being planned. It stuck, he said, giving the area a greater significance than it deserves. The term "Groundwater Resource" was the excuse the county used for making the restrictions on that particular land sound politically legitimate.

"This is one of the oddest situations you'll probably ever find in land use," Missimer said.

Pelham, who was reappointed this year by Gov. Crist to again lead the state's growth management department, had explained in that 1989 phone call to Bigelow that he was suing Charlotte County officials for over-developing. Because of the lawsuit, he said it wouldn't make political sense for him to turn around and agree to let the same thing happen in Lee County that he was suing the neighbors for.

In addition, the state of Florida was putting pressure on the county to lower the density of population growth, threatening a moratorium on any and all building, which would last for one year.

The compromise those commissioners made involved keeping a specific area of Lee County from being developed with any more than one house for every 10 acres of land (instead of the originally agreed upon one to one ration), and allowed for agriculture, mining, and limited commercial development on that land.

"I conceived it," Bigelow said, thinking of the phone call he received 18 years ago and what it led to.

Over the years, and in spite of some intentions otherwise, the county initiated and approved development in the area. For example, Florida Gulf Coast University was built within it. Also, the university is located in a spot already pressured into higher concentrations of development, Bigelow said, because it sits where I-75 runs closest to the Gulf of Mexico, compressing any residential and commercial growth - including the University and all the roads, shopping malls, movie theatres, dormitories and housing complexes which flow from it - into a narrow corridor.

But there was always pressure to develop. The reason?

"Sunshine," Bigelow beamed.

A report by The Estero Council of Community Leaders in May 2006 alluded, in its own, bureaucratic manner, to the sunny appeal Florida holds for multitudes of ageing northerners: "The need for density reduction stems from the pre-platted community development escapades of the 1950s when the developers of both Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres sold hundreds of thousands of small-down-payment, quarter-acre retirement lots to persons around the world."

A recent study performed for Lee County by Van Buskirk, Ryffel and Associates, Inc. summarizes the situation as follows:



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

Mining operations along Corkscrew Road in the DR/GR. Some area residents object to further mines being permitted.

"In 1994, Lee County had 237,818 vacant platted lots, the highest of all counties in the state of Florida. As a result, Lee County contains two of the largest lot-sales communities in the nation (Lehigh Acres and the City of Cape Coral)."

**DELISI**

One statistic says one in every 500 people in the United States live

in Lee County.

"Lehigh Acres changed the drainage pattern north of State Road 82," Missimer said. "Permanently."

The rooftops of Lehigh Acres platted lots appear in the northern edge of aerial photographs of the DR/GR provided by Passarella & Associates (a team of ecologist, biologists, environmental consultants and technicians); large portions of the 96,000 acres are studded with what appears to be lakes (mines), or rows of notches (citrus groves).

Don DeLisi, a land planner who formerly worked for the Bonita Bay Group, uses these aerial maps to help plan development in a 4,000-acre section of the DR/GR located in Bonita Springs.

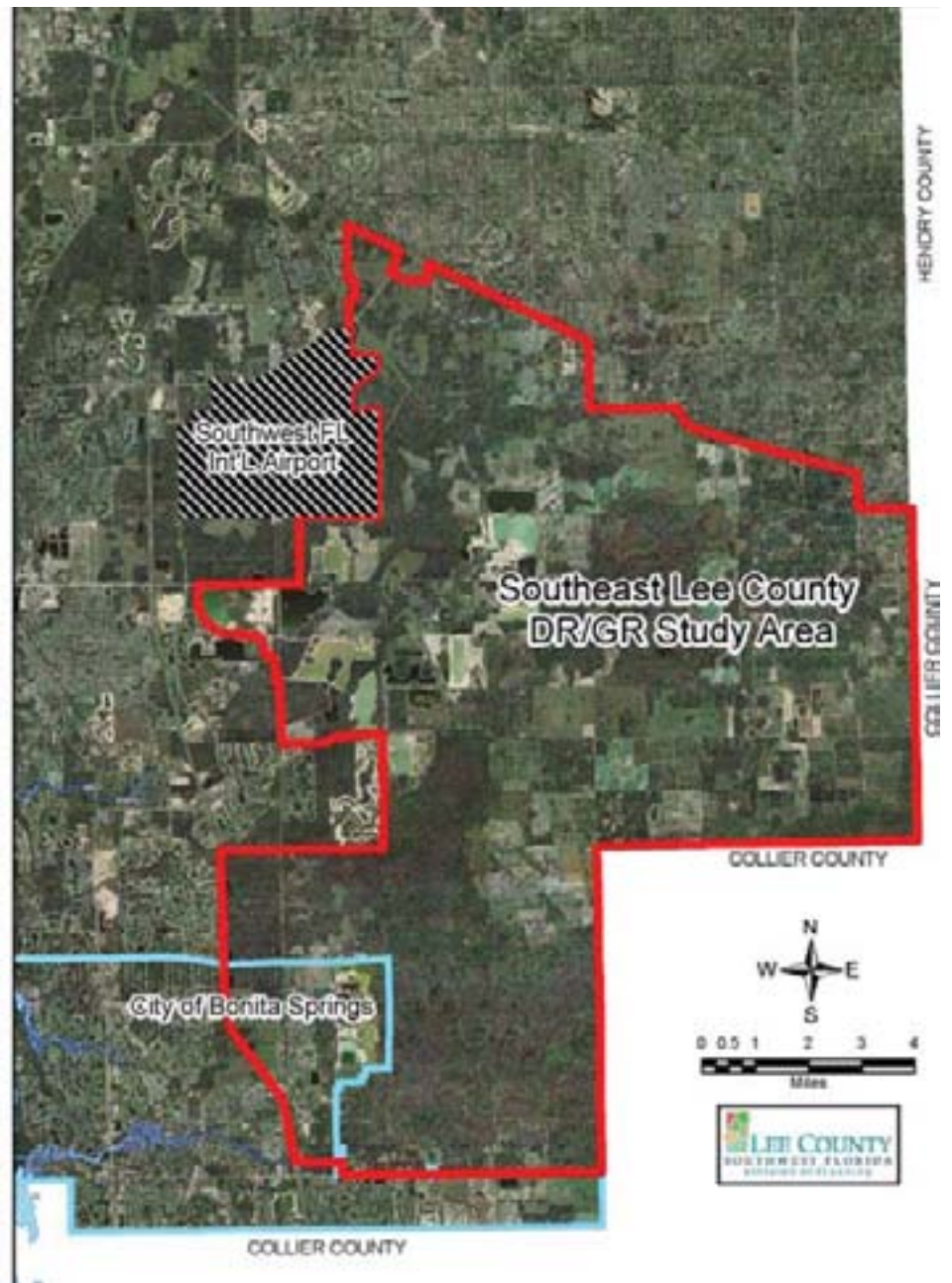
"Most of the existing state of the DR/GR has already been impacted in some way," DeLisi said. "Our goal as planners is to figure out what areas are still pristine, and how to save and preserve those areas. From a Bonita Springs DR/GR standpoint, there's almost nothing with any value in its current state. There's nothing pristine about this area."

In fact, Cypress Trees and Pines were logged very early on there, as soon as the railroad came through in 1903. Most of the trees were removed by the 1920s or 30s. Aerial photos of the land from 1944 reveal that ditching and diking of Lee County land, for agricultural purposes, had already begun, Missimer said. By the 1980s and 90s, residential development was creeping into the area as well.

DeLisi pointed to areas on the map where a mobile home park had been built, where wetlands had been overrun by exotic plants like Melalucea and Brazilian pepper, and citrus groves and mines had visually changed the appearance of the land.

But that mining is necessary, Missimer and DeLisi agree, because it supplies the county with local, high-quality aggregate, crushed stone and sand mined and processed for construction of roads, bridges and buildings.

"There is compatibility between mining and water supply," Missimer said. "When you leave the mining site, that hole fills up with water. The water doesn't just go away. The issue is, what



AERIAL PHOTO COURTESY LEE COUNTY

The Southeast Lee County DR/GR encompasses 96,000 acres or about one-fifth of the county.

do you want to have left, at the end? Even with mining and agriculture, you could have a very fine environment,"

The widening of I-75 and State Road 82, as well as the airport runway expansion, depends on rock coming from those mines, DeLisi added.

"No matter what we do we need to widen State Road 82 and I-75, and widen the runways at the airport, so we're going to need that rock," he said. "If our approach is to just never widen roads, we're going to have a really lowered quality of life."

In addition, if selective parts of the DR/GR are not developed into residential communities, so as to take the pressure off other areas, DeLisi said it will create urban sprawl - the very thing the DR/GR was supposed to protect against. Take Lehigh Acres, for example.

"It is mass low-density, singly-family units with very few areas of service and everyone needs to go to State Road 82 or Colonial Blvd. to get to shopping malls or places of employment," DeLisi explained, also noting the way that community was built, has wiped out the environment there and created traffic congestion.

Bigelow, DeLisi, and Missimer agree that the county must prepare a comprehensive plan that will involve a compromise with solutions such as these: saving the lands that are still pristine, developing on the lands that are not, recreating as much of the natural environment as possible, mining in limited areas and in the most environmentally friendly ways possible, and accepting the realities that some development and its inconveniences (trucks filled with rocks, impassable



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

This is one of many signs along Corkscrew Road in the DR/GR.

roads, the sound of a drill on cement) are necessary.

“Who are the real stakeholders?” Bigelow asked. “Is it the landowners, the developers, or all of us?”

Last Tuesday, county leaders voted to put a one-year moratorium on mining and any zoning changes in the DR/GR.

“If I was a betting man, I’d think the state is going to take real exception to that,” Missimer said, adding that “water flows down hill, except during zoning hearings.”

County Commissioner Chariman Bob Janes said the area was suitable for multiple purposes, and that the one-year moratorium would give everyone time to think about what those purposes are.

“The [rock mines],” he said, “are a tremendous asset that there is a scarcity of and that we need. Once those natural resources are gone, they’re gone.”

Leaders have also taken actions towards providing a comprehensive plan for the area. They recently hired an impartial team of professional researchers, ecologists and hydrologists to conduct studies of the area.

An 80-page summary review of the report that team prepared summarizes the findings and reassures just how impartial the studies were, and how detached the facts are from the realities of government planning.

The opening pages are filled with dis-

claimers about the report’s unbiased nature. It is a “scientific study, not a planning policy document,” the contents of which are available only for “possible consideration” by Lee County staff.

The report also says that in the absence of sufficient information on some topics, one of which is the “ecological impacts associated with mining activities,” it declines to say whether they are “important for the future management of DR/GR lands in southeastern Lee County.”

On page 4 it lists all the things it is not intended to do: create public policy, provide DR/GR land with an environmentally holy status, offer opinions about whether or not it’s appropriate to mine or build on the land, claim to know the “value” of the land, or provide any recommendations about what you should or should not do on it or with it.

But it is also, even if inadvertently, a compelling argument for the beauty of a delicately interconnected ecosystem. Consider the term “landscape mosaic,” which the report uses to describe natures elegantly balanced backgrounds – now mixed with our own, sometimes less elegant, additions: mines, mobile homes, citrus groves, roads.

“The Florida black bear uses many habitat types,” the report tells us atonally. “...such as pine flat woods, cypress swamps, and mixed hardwood-pine, but may travel to specific locations to feed

on palmetto berries in the fall.”

One study found that specific areas within the DR/GR are considered to be among the best remaining areas of pine flat woods in this section of Florida, but they are not currently protected by any laws.

“Most of the last remaining pines flat woods are north of Cape Coral,” Bigelow said.

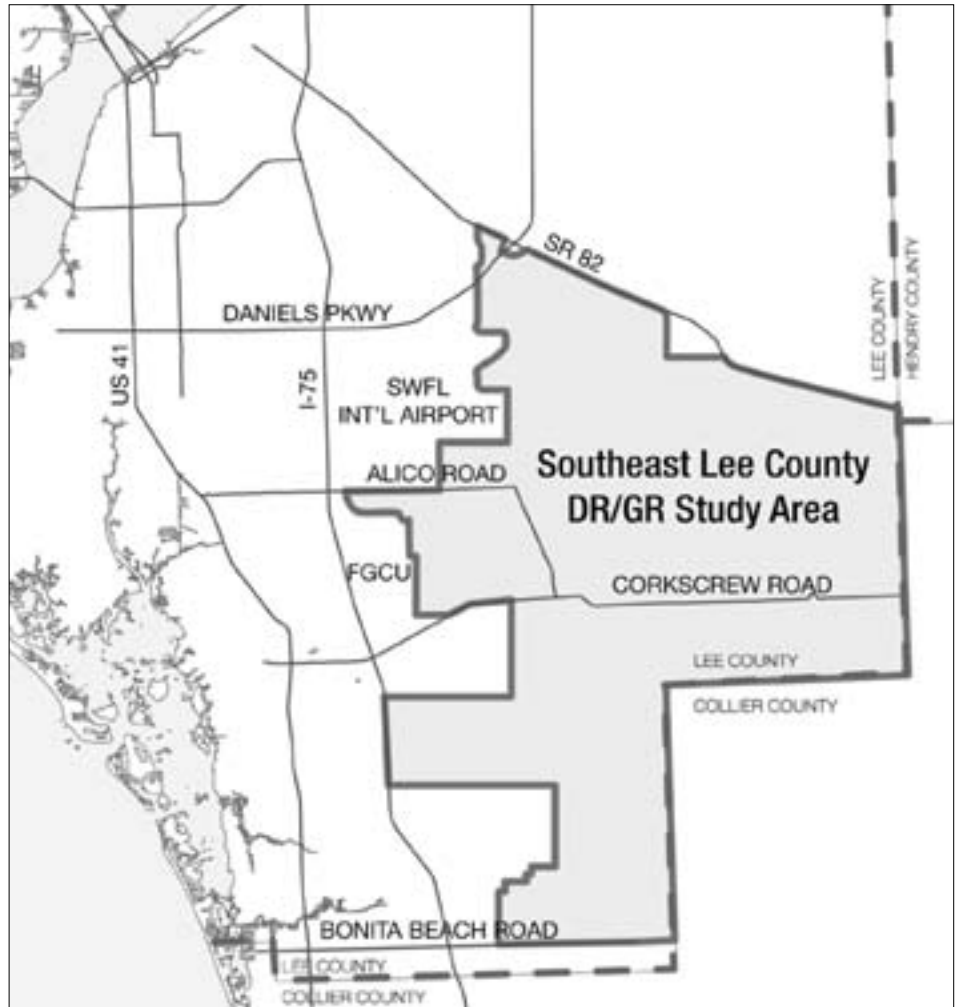
Another report, by the ECCL, gives a tour of where water flows through land in Estero, another instance of interconnectedness: “The Estero portion of the DRGR contains large wetland areas associated with a flow way that connects the Corkscrew Swamp Preserve to the Halfway Creek and Estero River flow ways that slowly transports rainwater from the interior under I-75 and through The Brooks, Coconut Point and between Marsh Landing and Fountain Lakes into Estero Bay. During and after heavy storms

some of this water is diverted north into the Estero River through the Villages of Country Creek and through old Estero on its way to Estero Bay. Any substantial development east of I-75 in the present DRGR area may cause future flooding problems in some or all of these communities. In addition the Estero DRGR area provides habitat to many animal and bird species, several of which are protected by Federal law and County Codes. “

But things change, get older, fall apart to become new again. In the DR/GR, like anywhere, life goes on – until it doesn’t.

“What do you want to have left, at the end?” Missimer had asked.

“Who are the real stakeholders?” Bigelow had questioned, having already come to the answer for himself long ago. “Is it the landowners, the developers, or all of us? ■



FLORIDA WEEKLY GRAPHIC

# LENO

From page 1

Officials at the Leno show would not comment on the discovery. They expressed no opinions about how this news could affect the immigration debate, nor did they volunteer any revelations about a potential run for the presidency by Leno. He would join Republicans Ronald Reagan (the late and 40th president, who appears on no American greenback), and Fred Thompson (not so late, and a mere candidate, also minus the nod of honor on an American bill) as an actor-turned-politician — that is, if he announces a bid for the high office, and by extension, the face of American legal tender.

But Leno officials asked to be kept informed of the story.

Bank officials, citing security reasons, would not confirm that the bill’s watermark resembled Leno and would not allow the tellers to be interviewed by Florida Weekly.

Wachovia spokesperson Christine Shaw, at the bank’s headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., confirmed that the bank branch in Fort Myers had received a counterfeit \$100 bill. “It was turned over to authorities,” she said.

The U.S. Secret Service, the agency responsible for currency security, said they’d never heard of a Jay Leno image on a bill.

“That’s a first,” said John Joyce, special agent in charge of the Tampa office of the U.S. Secret Service. “I’d be curious to see it.”

Joyce, who hadn’t seen the bill as of Florida Weekly’s press time — it had been mailed to their office from the bank — said the Leno image may just be a matter of interpretation.

“We get a lot of counterfeit bills from Columbia,” he said. “They simulate the watermark — it’s often what looks like a cartoon picture of Benjamin Franklin.”

Joyce also said the special pens used to determine if a bill is genuine are not always accurate.

The iodine-based pen turns black (meaning the bill is counterfeit) when it hits a starch. That’s what’s found in paper products. U.S. paper currency, Joyce said, is made of high-quality cloth. When the pen hits real bills it shows a light brown color.

“For it to not turn black they would have had to have used pretty good paper,” he said.

That’s what the Columbian counterfeiters may be using, Joyce said.

“They run offset printing presses and they use high-quality paper that doesn’t register with the pen.” ■

## How To Tell If It's Counterfeit (as of Florida Weekly's press time):

### >>PORTRAIT

**Genuine:** Face appears lifelike. It stands out sharply from the fine screen background of regular, unbroken lines. Lines in the face, hair, and clothing are distinct.

**Counterfeit:** Lines are blurred and may blend into the background, which itself may be too light or dark. Face and eyes may appear lifeless.

### >>PAPER

**Genuine:** Special, very high quality rag paper with small red and blue threads throughout is used. It has a distinctive texture and color.

**Counterfeit:** Paper may feel different or may be a different white than genuine paper. Red and blue lines may be drawn on to imitate the fibers.

### >>SEAL

**Genuine:** Saw tooth points are sharp and evenly spaced.

**Counterfeit:** Saw tooth points may be broken, blunt, or uneven. Seal may also be unclear.

### >>SERIAL NUMBER

**Genuine:** Figures are sharp and evenly spaced. On Federal Reserve Notes, the prefix letter agrees with the District letter in the seal.

**Counterfeit:** Poor impression may make the numbers too light or dark, or may be blurred. May also be unevenly spaced or out-of-line.

### >>BORDER

**Genuine:** Scroll work has fine crisscrossing lines which are sharp and unbroken.

**Counterfeit:** Lines may be blurred and are often broken.

### >>What To Do If You Find One...

- Do not return it to the passer. Keep it and write your name and the date on it so you can identify it later.
- Notify the nearest Secret Service office or police.
- Record who gave it to you along with where and when you got it. If you can, write down a description of the person who passed it, as well as information such as the license number of any vehicle used.

### >>What Happens Next?

The counterfeit will be confiscated by the Treasury Department to remove it from circulation, and as evidence in the event of prosecution of both the counterfeiters and the counterfeit passers. This means that the discoverer loses the face value of the counterfeit turned in. Anyone who is convicted of passing counterfeit currency can receive up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$10,000. Thus it is wiser to turn in a counterfeit bill, rather than try to pass it on to someone else. Only when everyone in the economy is concerned and willing to do their part in maintaining the currency’s integrity will the circulation of counterfeits be stopped...and our currency’s value insured.

### >>Speaking Of Counterfeits...Did You Know?

- that more than half of a bill is considered legal tender?
- that only the front of a dollar bill is valuable? If you were able to separate the front of a bill from the back, only the front half would be considered “money”
- That until 1929 our currency measured 7.42 x 3.13 inches. Since then currency has measured 6.14 x 2.61 inches-an easier size to handle and store.

Source: Bankersonline