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Oklahoma Sad Place For Females

Downtrodden Women

By Frosty Troy

Despite lip service, Oklahoma is one of the least hospitable states in America for women.

It's tough enough being a woman but it's twice as difficult since it consists principally in dealing with men.

Oklahoma is No. 1 in the incarceration of women, No. 1 in domestic violence, No. 4 in women murdered by men, No. 4 in the divorce rate, No. 6 in teen births, 41st in employment and earnings, 42nd in women's overall health and 47th in women with health insurance.

When you add up the negatives Oklahoma is the third worst state for women. It's especially bad if the woman is an African-American – twice as likely to die of breast cancer.

Of the 2,112 females in prison, 79% are suffering from untreated mental illness. Oklahoma ranks No. 1 in the percentage of the population mentally ill and 47th in funding.

One of the heaviest burdens carried by Oklahoma women is watching their babies die – Oklahoma is 40th nationally in infant mortality.

A meeting held in the Capitol's Blue Room addressed the soaring violence against girls on dates – one in four are abused either verbally or physically or both.

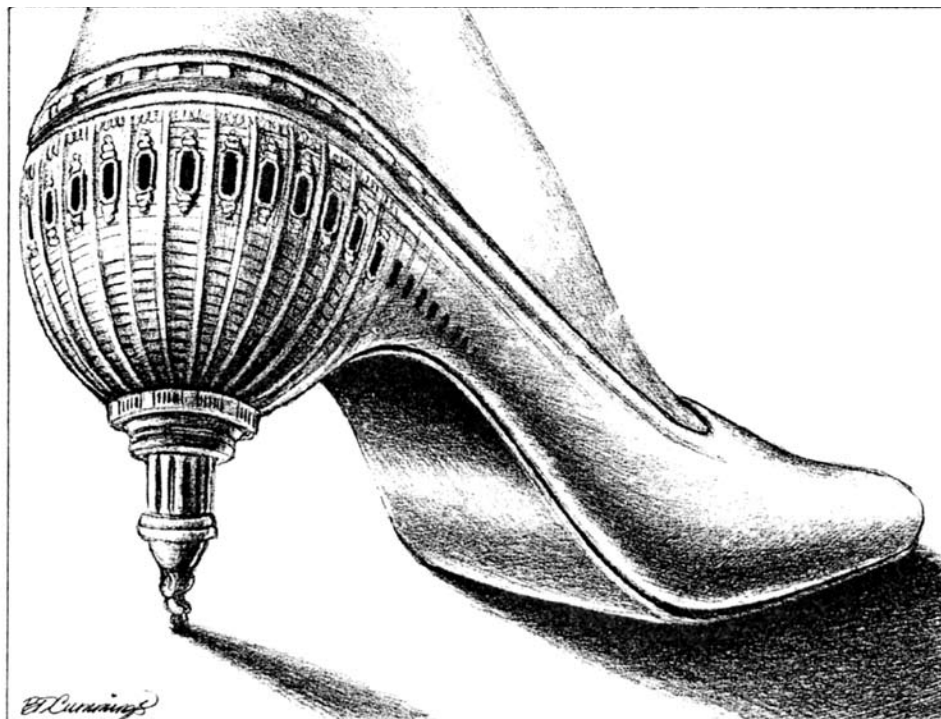
Poorest of the poor in Oklahoma are elderly women – an issue being addressed in the current legislative session by the Oklahoma Women's Coalition.

Only 15% of Oklahoma women receive counseling on the 16 measures for prenatal care. Also, 12.9% of Oklahoma women 21-64 have a disability; 24.5% of families with children under 18 are headed by women.

State Sen. Jonathan Nichols, R-Norman, is carrying legislation to make the first offense in domestic abuse a felony when a pattern of abuse is established.

"An abuser faces only a misdemeanor the first time they are convicted," said crusading Sen. Debbe Leftwich, D-OKC. "It's a felony to own a fighting rooster but only a misdemeanor when a man gives his wife a black eye."

Last year there were 23,400 domestic-related crimes in Oklahoma but



too many women are afraid to come forward, she said.

More than 340,000 Oklahoma women are beaten on a regular basis, according to the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

In 2006 the state ranked seventh nationally with 33 domestic violence homicides. It has reached as high as 75 in one year.

Oklahoma has the dubious distinction of being 10th nationally in the rate of women murdered by men.

House Bill 1739, by state Rep. Ron Peters, requires state courts to presume a child should be placed with a non-abusive parent in any case where there is clear evidence the other parent has engaged in domestic violence, stalking, or harassment.

"During divorce or custody disputes where domestic violence has previously occurred, the violence often escalates to the point of murder," said Peters, R-Tulsa. "We don't want the state of Oklahoma to force any woman or child to risk their lives."

According to the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, 50% of domestic violence homicides occurred during a child exchange.

In addition, the board reports, Oklahoma averages 75 deaths per year from domestic violence. Children witnessed the death of a parent as the result of domestic violence in 37% of cases in 2004.

"The data clearly show that violent spouses or partners remain a threat to the safety and well-being of both the child and non-abusive parent," Peters said.

"It's time we require the courts to take violent behavior into greater account during custody disputes."

A prevailing myth is that women of misfortune are universally poor. Studies show that men with more education are less likely to engage in abuse but it happens at all social levels.

Oklahoma's per capita income is only 87% of the national income, ranking the state 39th. One-fifth of families with children live below the poverty level of \$20,650.

More than 50% of Oklahoma live births are the result of unintended pregnancies – victims of "abstinence-only" sex education in the public schools.

Net worth of the average minority household is just over half that of the

average white household. The average woman 65 or older struggles to survive on 50% of the average male's income.

The Oklahoma poverty level results in 650,000 Oklahomans – one in five – being without health insurance. These are often female-headed households.

An average of six babies are born each day to children. More than 50% of black births are out of wedlock – often leading to poverty.

One out of seven Oklahomans [14.6%] is classified as "food-insecure," with a third of that population both food-insecure and hungry. Food stamps are reaching more than 444,000 Oklahomans.

Many issues affecting women don't get the legislative attention they deserve. Oklahoma's Legislature is only 11.4% female – ranking the state 50th.

Even when a gifted woman rises through the ranks, as was the case of former Rep. Susan Winchester, R-Chickasha, she runs into a brick wall. Had the normal role of ascendancy happened she would have become speaker of the House. Instead, a man was picked. She didn't seek re-election.

Check Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential race for a continuing double-standard of verbal abuse. She inspired hundreds of women candidates – a 53% increase in women in elective office.

Today a woman earns 77% of what a man earns doing the same work – from common labor to boardrooms. Oklahoma ranks 4th in this category.

Oklahoma is one of nine states with an increase in the proportion of women in poverty last year. Oklahoma women rank fourth nationally – behind Mississippi, New Mexico and Minnesota.

If women are the majority, why do they continue to lag? There are a myriad of reasons, including the fundamentalist drive to "keep a woman in her place."

It's time Oklahoma women stood up and shouted, "I'm a woman and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

Observations

Ugly Attack

Senate Bill 834 passed the Senate 26-21 on a party-line vote and is in the House Education Committee before a final vote on the House floor.

Everyone should know the detriment this bill will have on public education. Supporters claim that turning current school districts into charter school districts will result in savings for the district and those savings will be passed on to school employees.

Check where those "savings" will be found:

- Salaries above the minimum no longer guaranteed.
- Minimum graduation requirements for students no longer required.
- Requirements that students miss no more than 10 days of instruction for school activities abandoned.

Senate Bill 834 is this year's so-called deregulation bill. It threatens teachers' right to negotiate a contract and would eventually deregulate all Oklahoma public schools.

In addition, teachers could lose the following rights: Due process, no class size limitations, no teacher quality, no bargaining a contract, no guaranteed salary.

The bill's author, Sen. John Ford, R-Bartlesville, would only keep the Minimum Salary Schedule, require participation in the teachers' retirement system, and continue current statutes regarding health insurance.

Teachers could still be dropped down to the minimum salary from the current step. That affects more than 31,000 teachers and would cost an average of \$4,600 per teacher per year.

The unspoken Republican goal is to promote vouchers and destroy the Oklahoma Education Association.

Teachers would be the collateral damage.

As for Ford, he has zero education background.

Huff 'n Puff

Fifty-nine percent of Oklahomans support a smoke-free environment for Oklahoma workers and families,

compared to just 37% who want to continue allowing smoking in public places.

Voters believe the rights of customers and employees to breathe clean air is more important than the rights of smokers to smoke and owners to allow smoking by a margin of 68%-23%.

Oklahomans understand that exposure to second-hand smoke is a health hazard. Fifty-nine percent see exposure to secondhand smoke as a "serious" health hazard; 22% say it is a "moderate" health hazard; and 13% say it is a "minor" health hazard.

Fifty-two percent of voters say they are more likely to vote to re-elect their state legislator if that legislator supports a smoke-free law, versus 26% who say they would be less likely to vote to re-elect a legislator who opposed a smoke-free law.

A smoke-free law would increase business for Oklahoma's restaurants and bars. Some have claimed it would hurt business in Oklahoma, but a smoke-free law would have the opposite affect: 18% of those surveyed say they would go out more often if restaurants and bars were smoke-free.

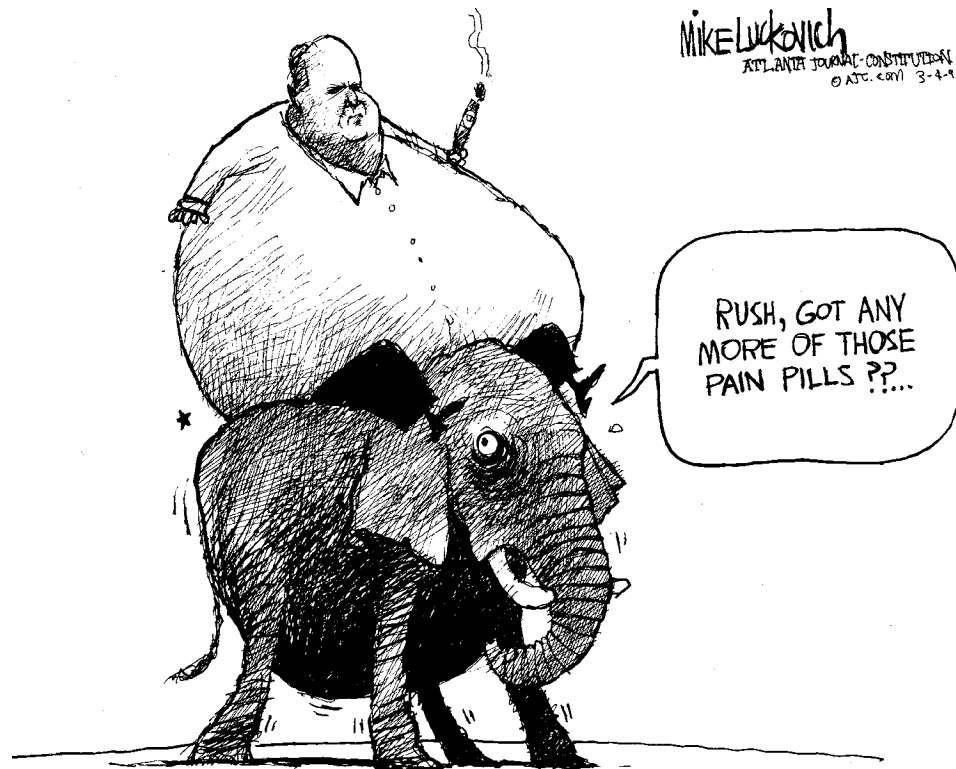
Gangs Hit

Gangs are a growing power in the larger communities of Oklahoma. As the Los Angeles tragedy proves, attempting to sweet talk gangs doesn't work.

House Bill 2080 authored by Rep. Paul Wesselhoft, R-Moore, would make committing a crime as a member of an organized gang in an attempt to benefit that gang a misdemeanor, calling for imprisonment in the county jail for up to 90 days, or by a fine of up to \$1,000 or both.

Knifings, shootings, robberies, home invasions, car thefts, and drug deals are on the rise. Gangs threaten the way of life in those neighborhoods where they have virtually taken over the streets.

The legislation defines "gang mem-



ber" and "organized gangs" and identifies the names of existing gangs that have demonstrated a pattern of criminal activity.

Currently, there are more than 10,000 gang members in Oklahoma. On May 31, 2008 six Oklahoma teens were shot in random drive-by shootings by gang members. In 1999, there were some 50 drive-by shootings. In 2005, drive-by shootings rose to 260.

A new problem is the presence of "baby gangsters" who are eight years of age and spreading graffiti to mark gang territory. At age 13, these kids can become full gang members.

When George W. Bush took those 100,000 cops off the streets, America began to pay a dear price in gangs. Let's hope the new administration restores the law.

Racist Rush

Rush Limbaugh basked in the conservative spotlight for more than an hour and a half, drawing boisterous, sustained applause from conference attendees with a speech reiterating his desire to see Obama "fail."

Look at Limbaugh's well-documented history of racial controversy. Limbaugh has, for example, mocked Obama as a "Halffrican-American" who should "become white."

He has called for a "posthumous Medal of Honor" for James Earl Ray, the assassin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

He told an African American caller, "Take that bone out of your nose and call me back."

This is a tiny sampling of the racism and bigotry spewing daily from Limbaugh. Those "dittoheads" who glory in his rhetoric are as sick as he is.

More Reform?

In his first address dealing with education, President Barack Obama proposed lengthening the school year and increasing pay for high performing teachers.

Contrary to the critics, the National Education Association has never been against merit pay - only when teachers are left out of the loop.

Obama did gild the lily when he said, "Despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we have let our grades slip, our schools

crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us."

America is nowhere near the top in resources for public education. At last count America ranked sixth in per child expenditures and 22nd in paying teachers.

Obama said the future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens. Yet the Bush Administration put public education on the back burner, starving it with unfunded mandates such as the disastrous No Child Left Behind law.

To fulfill this potential, Obama outlined a "cradle-to-career" plan that expanded early childhood programs [Oklahoma is No. 1] and gave more money to states that raised student standards, tracked student progress, and cut drop-out rates.

He made clear that his administration will put the full weight of the federal government behind the reforms, tripling funds for education in the 2010 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

We have our fingers crossed.

Blather

There are about 700,000 words in the English language, more than any other language. You would think the average politician would have mastered some of them, yet the flow of words in this session of the Legislature is pitiful.

The Bible [KJV] contains 773,746 words. Has your legislator read it? What does it say about prayer? What does it say about graven images? What does it say about Caesar?

Normally, a person speaks 26,800 words per day, enough to fill a 500-page book each week. Why do some legislators, such as Rep. Mike Reynolds, R-OKC, go over the average?

The average person uses 773,650,000 words in a lifetime of 75 years. Reynolds is on track to do it all in a couple of terms.

Words are important. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" [Proverbs 18:21]. God in heaven is listening carefully to our words on earth [Matthew 12:36-37]. Words have the potential to set "on fire the course of nature" [James 3:6].

As for prayer in school, explain to Sen. Tom Ivester, D-Elk City, that John says in the Bible not by words but by deeds.

End of sermonette.

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OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO: So then to all their chance, to all their shining golden opportunity. To all the right to love, to live, to work, to be themselves, and to become whatever thing their vision and humanity can combine to make them. This seeker, is the promise of America.

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

"Oklahoma makes The Flaming Lips song 'Do You Realize?' the most depressing state song ever." - Time magazine 3.16.09

Laurel: To the Oklahoma Bar Association for its fierce fight against Senate Leader Glenn Coffee's asinine bill to make bar dues voluntary. The Bar is none of Coffee's business.

Quick! Somebody send the Tulsa World poll to the Legislature - 49% want taxes kept at today's level. More than 58% think the \$720 million in tax cuts were unjust. You don't grow a state by tax cuts but by education and infrastructure. Even a dumb cluck knows that.

Dart: To the legislative Neanderthals supporting a constitutional amendment to make English the official language of state government. It's about as necessary as a fence around a cemetery but 88% of Okies favor it.

Newspapers and other news outlets covering Congress numbered 564 in 1985 but only number 160 today. - LA Times

Laurel: Despite Ada Republican Rep. Todd Thomsen's resolution in opposition to Oxford University's Richard Dawkins speaking on the campus, OU ignored it and heard his views on evolution. Thomsen stands for what he thinks the public will fall for.

More than a few bad laws have been written by the Legislature under the guise of "reform." This year's Republican tort bill is no exception - they want to cripple trial and comp attorneys because they usually donate to Democratic Party candidates.

Dart: To more than 27,000 hospitals, nursing homes and doctors that owe more than \$2 billion in unpaid taxes even though they still collect Medicare money. - U.S. Government Accountability Office

Half of the 600,000 Oklahomans without insurance are between ages 18-32. Single insurance coverage averages \$4,700. - Kaiser Family Foundation

Laurel: To Newsweek magazine for reminding us that J.C. Watts called two civil rights leaders "race-hustling poverty pimps." If he's thinking of a GOP race for governor he had better think again.

If you fail, try, try again. That's Sen. Debbe Leftwich's motto. The Oklahoma City Democrat finally won her fight making it a crime to serve 3.2 beer to minors under the social host law.

Dart: To the foremost hypocrite in Congress, Oklahoma's GOP Sen. Jim Inhofe. He inserted \$53 million worth of pork in the budget bill while railing - and voting - against the bill. He was the state's No. 1 congressional pork barreler.

Public school teachers don't need any enemies as long as they have Sen. John Ford, R-Bartlesville, and Sen. Clark Jolley, R-Edmond.

Laurel: To Reps. Doug Cox, Phil Richardson and Paul Roan for coming up with a plan for each county, ensuring ambulance service. The bill passed the House 85-15.

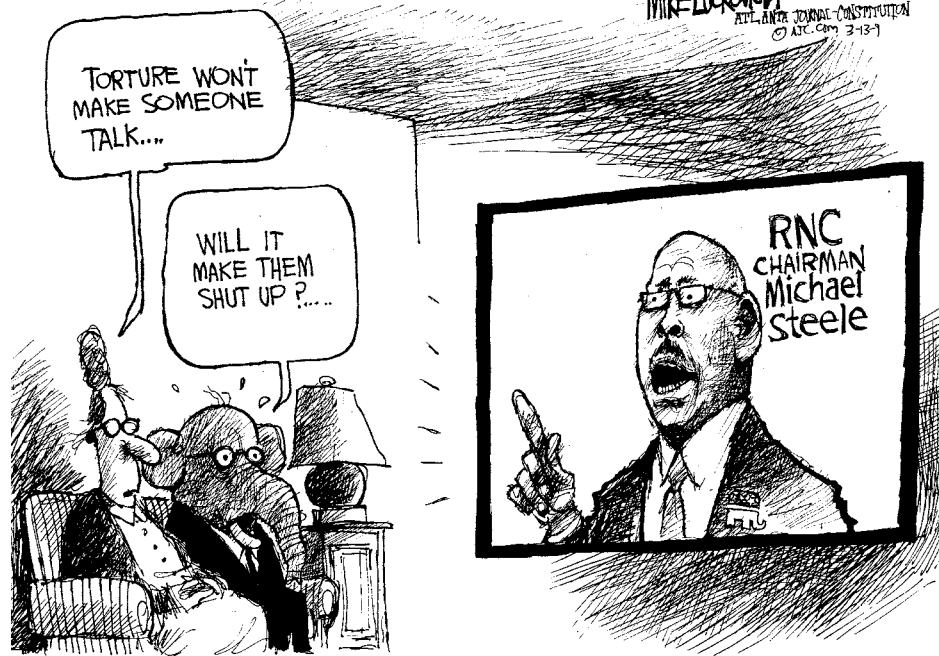
The 424,000-member AARP of Oklahoma opposes three bills that would raise electric rates to pay for multi-billion nuclear power plants. Bravo!

Dart: To wingnuts such as Sen. Steven Russell, R-OKC, who claim Oklahomans are over-taxed. Huh? We have in hand the most recent figures - Oklahoma is 50th in combined state, local and federal taxes.

What rehabilitation? Two-thirds of those leaving American prisons are rearrested with three years. - The Atlantic magazine

Laurel: The high school graduation rate is more than 80% in suburban Oklahoma City and 76% in Tulsa's suburbs. Urban areas should be targeted for help.

We were sorry to see the Oklahoma Press Association close its bureau in the State Capitol Press Room. It has been manned in recent years by Jim Campbell - a superb reporter.



Dart: To the legislative Republican leadership, continuing to pass tax cuts while Oklahoma is dead last in the quality of children's health care.

Only 39% of church-going Americans believe in Darwin's theory of evolution. Nearly 74% of those who accept the theory have post-graduate degrees.

Laurel: To Time magazine for reporting that one of the hurdles facing public education is that 30% of middle and high school classes for math, English, science and social studies are taught by teachers who didn't major or come close to their fields.

Thanks to lousy salaries, the number of male teachers in public schools is at a 40-year low. In elementary schools only 9% are men, down from 18% in 1981.

Dart: To parents who don't protect prescription drugs in the home. Consequently Oklahoma ranks second in the abuse of such drugs by kids 12-17.

Finally! A bill by Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, that we can agree with. He would deport the 511 illegal aliens in state prisons - saving taxpayers \$3 million. The House vote was unanimous.

Laurel: To ex-client Karla Beatty and others for unmasking Rep. Daniel Sullivan, a walking conflict of interest. He's carrying so-called tort reforms in direct violation of the state Constitution, Section 24 Article V.

It was hilarious to watch chest pounding by GOP legislative leaders on the rescue of OSU Medical Center in Tulsa. They were stoutly opposed until the business heat was turned up.

Dart: To Rep. Paul Wesselhoft, R-Moore, for a bill that would require travel accountability by the Commission on Teacher Preparation and the state Education Department. When an amendment sought to include the Legislature, he laid the bill over.

Don't let the rhetoric fool you - Oklahoma's mental health system is a tragedy, including the fact that 80% of kids afflicted with mental illness and substance abuse are without treatment for lack of state funds.

Laurel: To OETA, the public television operation, winning four national awards for programming. Their 6:30 p.m. newscast is the state's best.

Remind those voting for a Ten Commandments display on the Capitol grounds that the Bible has 2,000 verses dedicated to the poor - and none to graven images.

Dart: To ex-Congressman Ernest Istook, leading a national campaign to head off a congressional bill that would stop employers from harassing and firing those forming unions.

In the 43 legislatures meeting this year, there are 274 bills relating to reproductive health. They are invariably sponsored by Republicans. - Guttmacher's updated report

Laurel: To Rep. Ron Peters, R-Tulsa, for his handling of the DHS budget and subsequent legislation to correct some of the agency's problems. "There's enough blame to go around," he said. Amen!

Nearly one of every two Native American children develops diabetes by age 50. That's why a number of tribes are partnering with the state's effort to open an Oklahoma Diabetes Center.

Dart: To Rep. Rex Duncan, R-Sand Springs author of the venomous bill to outlaw head scarves for driver's licenses - aimed squarely at Muslim women and it would have to include Catholic nuns.

Think Wall Street doesn't impact Main Street? Teachers retirement has a dropped from \$9.4 billion in reserves to \$6.7 billion - down 29.17%.

Laurel: To Philip Tetlock for his study of 82,361 predictions by 284 pundits from all shades of the political spectrum. Guess what? Most of the time they were guided by ideology or just plain ignorance.

We note the passing of Bob Buford, 80, and Ed Montgomery 91, two remarkable friends of The Observer - Bob helped with advertising and Ed watched our back at the Capitol Press Room.


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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Soccer Mom Palin and Boss Limbaugh – what a pair to draw to. The GOP must have a death wish.

Tom Birbilis
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Your Observerscope [3.10.09] crack citing Paul Harvey as an early version of Rush Limbaugh caught me by complete surprise, as I thought I was the only one in the country who felt that way.

Many years ago when the northeastern part of the U.S. was under severe winter storm conditions, far worse than normal, Paul Harvey stated that “you can now throw away your global warming books.”

First of all, if Harvey had made the slightest attempt to study global warming he would have known that one of the predictions calls for unusually wide swings in weather conditions, so that an unusually severe winter storm would not be evidence against the theory. But even worse, instead of pointing out evidence against the theory, Harvey chose to belittle the theory, certainly not the act of a legitimate newsman.

It was at this point that I realized that Paul Harvey was an entertainer, much as Rush Limbaugh is, and could be expected to say anything whether it has any validity or not. In many ways Paul Harvey was more dangerous than Rush Limbaugh, as Harvey hid behind a veil of respectability whereas Limbaugh makes no attempt to be respectable.

Lee Matthesen
Grove

Editor, The Observer:

An open letter to Rep. Frank Lucas:
Our healthcare delivery system is in need of urgent reform. As the profits of HMOs and the salaries of their CEOs increase each year, so do the number of Americans who are dying and falling ill because they lack healthcare coverage.

Below are some frightening facts:

- At least 18,000 Americans die each year from lack of healthcare coverage.
- 80% of Americans who lack healthcare coverage are families with one or more jobs.
- More than 50% of bankruptcies occur due to medical bills and half of those had private medical insurance at the time the illness/injury occurred.
- Of all nations, the U.S. spends the most on healthcare, 14.6% of GDP.
- At 60%, the U.S. has the highest

rate of people who believe their health system should be reformed.

• The spiraling costs of healthcare are negatively impacting American businesses making it difficult to compete globally.

Interestingly, we're already paying for a national healthcare system; we're just not getting it. History will not look kindly upon elected officials who put corporate profits above the public health.

I urge you to co-sponsor HR 676, The United States National Healthcare Insurance Act, sponsored by Rep. John Conyers. I'm an active voter who is among the majority of Americans who want a national healthcare system, and I'll remember your position on this issue next Election Day.

Ron du Bois
Stillwater

Editor, The Observer:

I think I would be willing to donate my Walkman to a clinic so the patient can listen to music while the doctor is describing the ultrasound. There is nothing in the law that says you can force the patient to watch the ultrasound or listen to the doctor.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

I am tired of the ultra conservatives' criticism of the Economic Stimulus Package. Many compare it with the New Deal during the Great Depression, saying an economic stimulus never worked, and will not work this time. Right-wing think tanks and talk show hosts are bent on revising the history of the New Deal. The CCC alone provided over 2.75 million jobs during the nine years of its existence. In each of the nation's 3,073 counties, there was at least one PWA [Public Works Administration] project. Before the PWA was phased out in 1939 it had constructed 583 municipal water systems, 368 street and highway projects, 622 sewer systems, 263 hospitals, 110,000 public libraries and schools. The PWA provided money for railroad improvement. California got massive new dock facilities, which served the country well during World War II. The Chicago Sanitary District got a waste treatment complex; 1,667 parks and playgrounds were constructed or repaired. Many counties got new courthouses, including my home county. The courthouse is still in use today. Three important Bridges were built across the Mississippi River. Over 75,000 bridges of all sizes were constructed, and the concrete piers for the Oakland-San Francisco Bay bridge was poured by the PWA.

PREFERRED STOCKS



The PWA and WPA employed an average of 2.8 million people each year. When FDR became president much of the United States was what we would call a Third World country today.

Poverty pervaded much of the nation. Beggars could be seen in most Oklahoma towns. With a population of about half of what it is today the projects of the New Deal, the PWA, WPA, CCC and others provided over eight million jobs, and overhauled the nation's infrastructure for the first time. Other accomplishments included the establishment of the FDIC, the SEC, and the TVA. Probably the most important, Social Security, and the GI Bill, which passed later, were opposed by most conservatives. I know of no state that needs an infrastructure overhaul more than Oklahoma and most of our congressional delegation voted against Oklahoma.

Verdine Trout
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

With the hubbub of the 2008 elections winding down, I hope that members of both parties [as well as independents] will consider throwing their support behind Union Station and the issue of rail transit in Oklahoma. While it may not be the most thrilling of topics, it is one of great importance for not just Oklahoma City, but the entire state of Oklahoma.

Union Station is a state asset – it does not just belong to Oklahoma City. For Oklahoma City, a transit hub would attract residential and business development to downtown and Midtown. Within Oklahoma City, Union Station provides valuable connections to the state Capitol, the OU Health Sciences Center, the Zoo, the Omniplex, Remington Park, and Will Rogers World Airport.

For Norman, think of the possibilities just for OU game days. If football fans could take the train to Norman on game days, there would be fewer cars in town and no need to worry about parking or drunk drivers.

Moreover, the rail yard at Union Station has tracks going in six directions. Expansion of passenger rail from Union Station could provide access to all major towns and cities throughout the state, which would increase local travel and, in turn, help local economies.

Some argue that there is only one choice to be made: Crosstown or Union Station. This is simply untrue. It is not a choice between Crosstown or Union Station as Crosstown can

be relocated without destroying the Union Station rail yard by building two overpasses and moving the highway 200-250 feet south into land already owned by ODOT. It is also not a choice between MAPS/Core-to-Shore and Union Station. In fact, a mass transit hub at Union Station would greatly enhance both Crosstown and MAPS/Core-to-Shore.

This is not a partisan issue; it is an issue that affects all Oklahomans. For more information on how you can help, please visit <http://www.ontracok.org/home/>.

Stephanie Bates
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

It is not difficult to learn the priorities of many of Oklahoma's governmental leaders by reading three articles in the Oklahoman [3.11.09]. On page one is a story by Steve Lackmeyer with the headline “New convention center is priority” which shares the information that an organization called Conventions, Sports & Leisure [surprise!] joins with the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber [surprise again!] in urging the construction of a new \$400 million convention center to replace the Cox Convention Center. The story also reminds us that Mayor Cornett has been suggesting “that any MAPS 3 should include” such a building project.

Contrast that story with one on page 12A by Heather Warlick-Moore carrying the headline “5,952 kids found homeless in state.” That story contains information about Oklahoma's rank among the 50 states in its performance in four areas affecting children – all of those rankings being near the bottom.

Then on page 7A under the headline “Schools might face fewer mandates” is a story by Barbara Hoberock about SB 834 which was passed by the state Senate. If that bill were to become law, public schools would be freed from [1] having to keep class sizes at levels which benefit students, [2] offering advanced placement courses which also benefit students and [3] providing all-day kindergarten which gives young students a better preparation for elementary school.

It is clear to me from these three articles that our children rank very low on the priority list of many of our state's leaders. How sad! And how damaging for our state and its children.

Rolan Decker
Edmond

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A Perfect Storm

Medicaid and other government agencies, the drug industry, and health-care providers all play a part in a fragmented mental health system that uses taxpayers' dollars to pay for treatments and drugs that too often don't work.

Oklahoma ranks at the top in the percentage of seriously mentally ill but nothing much is done to correct the tragedy. That's 13% of the state's population.

You've said it all when the Oklahoma County Jail is the largest mental hospital in the state. The Legislature simply won't adequately fund mental health and it has no effective lobby.

Particularly sad is the lack of treatment for the state's young. Too many are condemned to the back of the budget bus. That leads to anti-social behavior and even suicide. Many wind up in prison.

Lagging budgets, convoluted reimbursement rules and conflicting funding agencies have helped create a perfect storm of waste, needless deaths, and ineffectiveness.

Tragically, this has diverted scarce resources from proven, recovery-oriented programs such as "supported employment" that promotes a guided return to work, or integrated "dual diagnosis" treatment for the 50% or more of seriously mentally ill people who are also substance abusers.

Medicaid hasn't given much attention to mental health reform. Funding vested interests to suck profits out of the system rather than helping the patient is the status quo.

All told, financing policy plays a central role in a system that President Bush's own New Freedom Commission on Mental Health declared six years ago to be in "shambles."

Medicaid and the broader public system of health care for people with mental illness is an uncoordinated mess.

A study by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors reached a shocking conclusion: Mentally ill adults who receive treatment in the public health system die 25 years sooner, on average, than Americans overall.

More than 210,000 Medicaid recipients, many with mental illness, were forced into for-profit managed-care plans as part of a "free-market" Medicaid experiment in Florida's Broward and Duval counties, along with three other rural counties.

Yet this federally-supported showcase for corporate-run Medicaid flexibility and efficiency, promoted by former Gov. Jeb Bush, turned into a nightmare for some patients, according to the state inspector general.

The primary HMO provider, StayWell, was raided last October by FBI agents investigating it for fraud.

Given such abuses and chaotic care, it is especially ominous that the life expectancy of seriously mentally ill Medicaid patients has sharply dropped since the early 1990s.

"What other group in America has lost years of life expectancy in the last decade and a half?" asks Joseph Parks, chief clinical officer for the Missouri Department of Mental Health and lead author of the 2007 report by the state mental-health program directors.

It partly blames the lack of coordinated care serving the mentally ill for the

Trashing Kids

A fallacious report that Oklahoma student test results may be skewed was immediately blistered by the normally docile State Board of Education as nothing less than false.

Without the slightest hint of checking the "facts" in the report by a fat-cat organization known as the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition, House Speaker Chris Benge praised it.

The report said that the vast majority of public school students are ranked proficient in subjects on Oklahoma's state-mandated tests "but very few achieve the same rating on comparable national tests such as the National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP]."

The report said State Superintendent Sandy Garrett ought to turn the testing issue over to another source. Since none of the media carried the State Board's refutation, read it here:

"There are so many errors, innuendoes and unproved research in this report, it is unproductive to comment extensively. The document appears to have been put together in a hurried manner and it relies on unnamed sources and findings.

"Its authors admit there is no data to prove that their study's recommendations would be effective changes for Oklahoma.

"It is impossible to ascertain whether those interviewed had hidden agendas or were even the most appropriate or knowledgeable people to provide commentary because all sources are anonymous.

"Education Week annually analyzes state accountability systems and policies, and is nationally recognized for doing so, and came up with far different conclusions about Oklahoma standards and accountability just one week ago.

"The ACT is also a valid, external benchmark for student achievement and is highly correlated to our Algebra I End-of-Instruction exam. In general, state ACT results mirror the scores of Oklahoma's other EOI exams."

This is the first time they have attacked Garrett, who doubtless would be delighted to meet the authors face to face. Why anonymous sources? Why create another level of education bureaucracy? Can you prove that Oklahoma ACT and state-mandated tests are invalid measurements?



drop in life expectancy. The side effects of the new generation of "atypical" drugs – primarily dangerous weight gain and diabetes – are a contributing factor to the sharp rise in early deaths for people with mental illness.

The industry-funded hype and research to promote these costly drugs seems to have created a public health and financing crisis for programs serving the mentally ill. Only now are state officials and psychiatrists starting to seriously address the problems.

Most psychiatrists can't believe they were hoodwinked, but they're reluctant to change. The new drugs are generally no safer or more effective than older, cheaper drugs.

They were just ballyhooed more through industry funding of researchers. The new medications were as much as 20 times more expensive than the old drugs, leading to billions in extra profits for the drug companies that raided Medicaid's coffers.

The drug manufacturers responsible are facing tens of thousands of lawsuits by irate consumers. Eli Lilly alone has reported paying over \$1 billion to settle 30,000 lawsuits from patients claiming they developed diabetes and other illnesses.

Two dozen state attorneys general launched investigations and filed lawsuits, asserting that the drug companies improperly marketed these drugs, leading to increased medical costs.

The \$11 billion spent annually on these dubious atypicals, often for unapproved uses, also has another dire effect: Drugs now take up as much as 25% of Medicaid's mental-health budget, siphoning off money needed for direct services to people with mental illness.

The \$11 billion is more money than the income of all 47,000 U.S. psychiatrists combined, and more than enough to pay for 150,000 additional case managers who could help provide intensive evidence-based services.

The "miracle atypicals" that were supposed to be the saviors of the mentally ill now appear to have drained Medicaid funds, proved relatively ineffective, and possibly helped kill off their patients years early.

It's all based on false advertising. We spend billions on ineffective medications, and we won't spend a few million to get people back to work and off of the Social Security rolls. Does that make any sense?

Key federal agencies have previously urged states to use two of the programs under attack, Medicaid's rehabilitation option and targeted case management.

Too often the seriously mentally ill end up inappropriately in jail, on the streets – or dead. The Medicaid agency and other federal agencies, largely to save money, still throw regulatory roadblocks in the way of recovery-oriented programs, such as supported employment.

Up to 90% of people with serious mental illness are unemployed for life, absorbing \$25 billion annually in disability payments.

Based on the research, supported employment is the single most effective mental-health treatment, using a "job coach" as part of an integrated clinical team that can help most of the seriously mentally ill return to work and lead fulfilling lives.

Sadly, less than 5% of people with disabling mental illnesses are even enrolled in such a program – while Medicaid lavishes billions on near-useless "day treatment" programs to warehouse the mentally ill.

They get the services that are billable – not the services they want or need. These Kafkaesque absurdities play out with grave consequences to physical and mental health.

For instance, although a woman who was sexually abused needed private counseling, they put her in a group so the therapist can charge all 10 at once for an hour each.

It's barbaric ignorance reinforced by a Medicaid reimbursement policy that pays for certain services, regardless of quality, with virtually no incentives for effective outcomes.

If you're a believer you have to think God will get us someday for ignoring the seriously mentally ill – hundreds on a waiting list for treatment.

Religion Masquerading As Science Is Costly

By Richard E. Broughton and Victor H. Hutchison

SB 320, the "Science Education and Academic Freedom Act," authored by Sen. Randy Brogdon, R-Owasso, failed by one vote recently in the Senate Education Committee, but we will likely see more proposals to question well established science or to promote non-scientific alternatives in science classrooms [e.g., HB 1001, the "Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act" by Reps. Mike Reynolds and Sally Kern, both R-OKC].

Such bills have significant potential to harm the education of our students and the future economic security of our state by casting doubt on science as a valid way of understanding the natural world.

Brogdon's bill contained the following language: "The Legislature further finds that the teaching of some scientific subjects, such as biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, and human cloning, can cause controversy, and that some teachers may be unsure of the expectations concerning how they should present information on such subjects ... teachers shall be permitted to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories pertinent to the course being taught."

So what harm is there in teaching "strengths and weaknesses?"

THE EARTH IS ROUND

First, promoting the notion that there are scientific controversies regarding these subjects is just plain dishonest. There certainly are social, political and/or moral controversies regarding several of these topics, but in all cases the scientific evidence is clear. Evolution is listed first and would appear to be the primary target but there is no scientific controversy whatsoever that evolution has occurred. This is universally accepted by an overwhelming majority of scientists around the world and is as well established as the fact that the Earth is round.

Second, there really are no scientific "weaknesses." If one looks to the sources of these alleged weaknesses, we find they are phony fabrications, invented and promoted by people who don't accept evolution, mostly for religious reasons. Note also the use of the vague term "weaknesses." There is no mention of evidence refuting, conflicting with, or inconsistent with evolution. Yes, there are minor areas of disagreement among scientists regarding the mechanisms of evolution, such as the relative importance of natural selection versus neutral change, but these have no bearing on whether evolution has occurred.

Fabricating "scientific" doubts about biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming, or human cloning is common among those who do not like the implications. But just because something may be perceived to have negative moral or economic implications does not mean the science is controversial; it is rather, the application of that science.

For example, one may not agree with the use of atomic weapons but that does not mean that there is some controversy over the physics or that one may simply reject the science as false.

MISREPRESENTING SCIENCE

Promoting false controversies in the classroom teaches our children that science is not always a valid way of understanding the world – that it may be good for some things, but if you don't happen to like the outcome you can simply ignore those parts you don't like.

Incorporating creationist arguments into the science curriculum will effectively condone their tactics and teach students that acceptable science involves: promoting untestable ideas, ignoring opposing evidence or denying that it exists, selectively misquoting scientists to support a point, supporting hypotheses with intuition [rather than evidence], and assuming that the popularity of ideas among the public is verification of their scientific validity.

This will not only confuse students' understanding of science, it will undermine their entire education.

Discussing the alleged strengths and weaknesses is a clever tactic to open discussion to a so-called alternative to evolution, creationist-inspired "intelligent design." Although dressed in scientific language, intelligent design is not a scientific idea and should not be called a theory.

To be scientific, an idea must be falsifiable, i.e. evidence must be able to show that an hypothesis is incorrect. The notion of a designer cannot be falsified and is therefore beyond the realm of science. Intelligent design proponents claim to be performing research on intelligent design. Yet not one iota of scientific evidence supporting intelligent design has ever been provided. In fact, no means for obtaining such evidence has even been proposed.

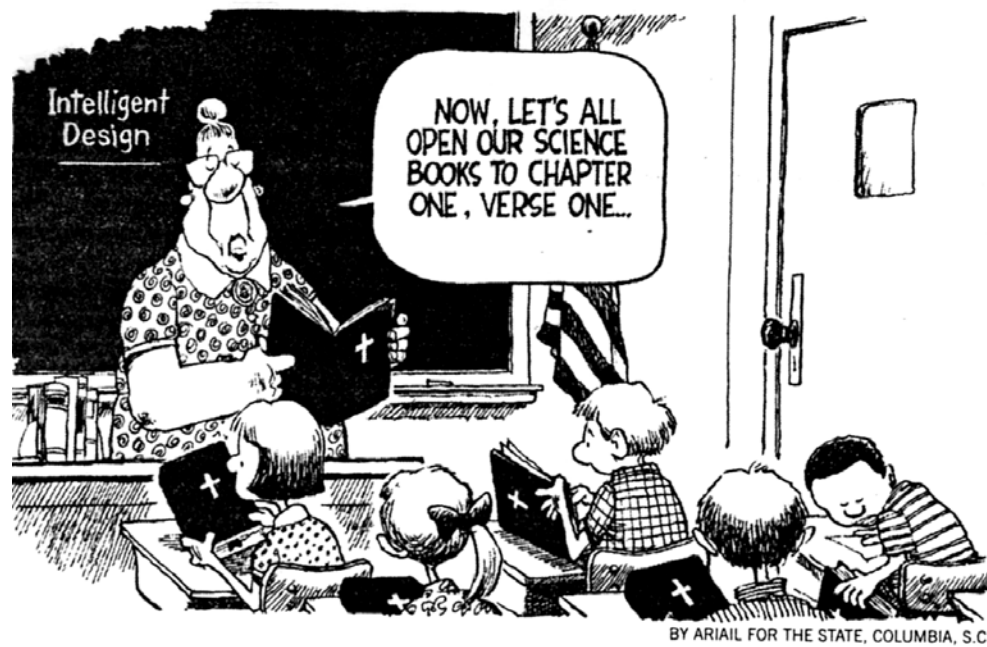
WHAT CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE, RELIGION?

Intelligent design is by definition an idea based on personal belief, unsuitable for science classes.

Promoting intelligent design through politics effectively bypasses scientists who actually work in the relevant fields, and appeals directly to state legislators, school boards, and the general public. The intelligent design movement implicitly exploits an unnecessary dichotomy between religious faith and science. This relies on the common misconception that to accept scientific evidence [for topics such as evolution] one must necessarily be an atheist.

Ironically, the vast majority of religions of the world, including most forms of Christianity, find no inherent conflict between science and religious belief.

Opposition to SB 320 or other bills aimed at teaching supernatural topics in science courses should therefore not be interpreted as anti-religious. There is



certainly no problem teaching the cultural and historical aspects of religion in courses in philosophy, religions of the World and other social sciences, as long as they are not presented in science classes, or in a way that promotes one specific religion over others.

NO PROBLEM WITH GRAVITY, QUANTUM THEORY

If the proponents of such bills were really interested in clarifying students confusion over science, one wonders why they focus on evolution but seem to have no problems with topics such as gravity and quantum theory. In fact, we know much less about the mechanism of gravity than for any of the topics listed in the bill.

Similarly, quantum entanglement undermines Einstein's theory of special relativity. Shouldn't our students know about the strengths and weaknesses of the fundamental forces of the universe? In the interest of academic freedom should we let the children decide for themselves? Frankly, few if any high school [or younger] students are prepared to weigh the merits of quantum theory or mathematical population genetics.

In our view, students should learn about the nature and methods of science and about well established scientific theories, not about vague fabricated weaknesses designed to cast doubt on the practice and value of science.

A few years ago the major controversy over attempts by the State School Board

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Hurting Oklahoma Kids Get No Help

Tens of thousands of children are needlessly suffering from mental and addictive disorders because Oklahoma doesn't provide funding for access to treatment or prevention services.

That's according to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

The report, supported by children's behavioral health advocates, is a snapshot of the issues that face Oklahoma children who have a mental or addictive disorder.

Mental health support has been lagging in the Legislature, where the leadership prefers to cut taxes rather than help Oklahomans in need.

ALL 50 STATES COMPARED

The Every Child Matters Education Fund – which compared all 50 states on the basis of 10 key indicators of child well-being, including infant mortality, child poverty, child abuse fatalities and per-capita child welfare spending – ranks Oklahoma 47th in the nation for child well-being.

More than 10% of Oklahoma youth ages 9-17 have a mental illness and an additional 10% have a substance abuse issue.

An assessment of children in foster care found that more than 85% met the criteria for mental health disorders.

SUCH CHILDREN TAKE A TOLL ON SOCIETY

Children and youth with untreated serious emotional disturbances are the least likely to graduate from high school, to vote, to live on their own and to find employment. They are also the most likely to be arrested.

In Oklahoma, suicide is higher than the national average and the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-19.

Nearly 60,000 Oklahoma children are being raised by their grandparents, because their parents are incarcerated, not able to mentally or physically care for their children, or are unavailable in some other way.

ALCOHOL INTERRUPTS EDUCATION

Every year, more than 6,500 students drop out of Oklahoma's colleges and universities because of problems related to alcohol.

House Is Two-Faced On School Mandates

House Republicans have displayed inconsistencies in their level of concern for state control over school districts, according to Rep. Richard Morrisette, D-OKC.

He said that the House passed a bill that compels schools to inform parents about school clubs and organizations, but refused to hear a bill that would inform parents about their children's health.

"If my colleagues are willing to let the state tell school boards what to do regarding extracurricular activities, why are they so unwilling to apply the same standards with something so important as children's health?" he asked.

"I sense hypocrisy in how they're willing to apply the law. As usual, inconsistent application of the majority's position on less interference from the state is the normal method around here."

Morrisette opposed HB 1826, which would require school districts to notify parents of all student clubs and organizations to give them the opportunity to withhold permission for their child to join.

Republicans Choose Viagra Over Autism

House Republicans voted to kill an amendment to make clear that the Legislature prioritizes children's health care at least as much as sexual pleasure.

Democratic Floor Leader Mike Brown, D-Tahlequah, proposed an amendment to HB 1028. The bill adds provisions to how insurers time and process insurance claims.

Brown's amendment added a requirement that no Oklahoma insurance carrier can provide coverage for erectile dysfunction unless they also provide coverage for autism spectrum disorders.

The amendment was killed in a strict party-line vote, 59-37.

"The notion that every Republican member of the House who was present in the chamber voted, without blinking an eye, to declare insurance coverage for children with autism is less important than coverage for sexual pleasure appalls me," Brown said.

"They would rather insurers pay for Viagra than pay for autism treatments. That's a pretty outlandish set of priorities."

Brown said that this is the second time this session that House Republicans have treated children with autism as second-class citizens.

Earlier this month, one bill he introduced, HB 1312, known as "Nick's Law," died in committee along a 9-5, party-line vote. It would have required Oklahoma insurance companies to end the practice of excluding autism treatment from coverage.

See AUTISM Page 14



Most adults with substance abuse addiction initiated their use as children. Oklahomans start young. One out of every four high school students reported drinking alcohol before age 13 and one in 10 had tried marijuana.

Like many physical health issues, avoiding or delaying appropriate behavioral health treatment only allows the disease to worsen. This requires more invasive and costly treatment options at a later point.

The earlier an effective intervention can be introduced into a child's life, the better the chance for averting negative outcomes now and in the future.

Addressing the behavioral health needs of Oklahoma's children and youth is imperative if our state is going to prosper and thrive.

Is Gov. Brad Henry listening? Is the Legislature listening?

However, his own legislation, HB 1699 – which would require school districts to help identify children with significant health risks – was refused a hearing.

He said that the reason many of his colleagues opposed his legislation was that it would constitute micro-managing of district policies.

"They've told me it would be Big Brother again," he said. "However, many of those same colleagues voted in favor of [HB 1826]."

"I understand someone opposing too much state oversight of school districts, but I would ask them to show consistency in their opposition," he said.

"In fact, if they were to make an exception to their opposition, I would imagine it would be to protect children's health not the other way around."

"These inconsistencies make their opposition disingenuous. It makes it appear their methods are politically motivated, not philosophical."

"I just wish my colleagues would have chosen to stand up with me for children's health. We have so many challenges with children's health in our state, and I will continue to press for good legislation to address these problems."

GOP Would Padlock Courthouse Door

A 228-page bill that systematically stacks the deck of the judicial system against innocent individuals passed the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

House Bill 1603 takes away numerous remedies granted to people who are the victims of serious wrongdoing. By taking away these rights, the bill instead shields individuals and corporations who are guilty of negligence and intentional misconduct.

"What this comes down to is a simple matter of priorities. Which do we value more: people or profits?" said Rep. Ryan Kiesel, D-Seminole. "Those who voted against this bill sent a strong message that profits should not come at the expense of the safety, health and dignity of Oklahomans."

THE WAY IT HURTS OKLAHOMANS

House Democrats outlined the layers of ways in which this bill deprives Oklahoma citizens of their rights, but protects individuals and corporations guilty of wrongdoing.

"We're told this bill is good for business, but the only businesses that benefit are those who are guilty of negligence," said Rep. Scott Inman, D-Del City.

"Good businesses who follow the law and have the best practices aren't the ones we're going to attract to Oklahoma – we're going to attract businesses who think negligence and carelessness is acceptable. That is an egregious disservice to the people of our state."

See PADLOCK Page 14

House Executes An Assault On Liberties

The Oklahoma House of Representatives passed four bills that are not only unnecessary, but are in effect an assault on Oklahomans' civil liberties.

It started with House Bill 1037, introduced by Rep. Sue Tibbs, R-Tulsa. This bill is also known as the Voter ID Bill and will require voters to present a government-issued photo ID before voting.

This bill will disenfranchise women, minorities, elderly, disabled, homeless, and veteran Oklahomans. Voting is a fundamental right, and charging individuals to vote is an illegal poll tax. HB 1037 passed on party lines, 59-39.

"If election reform is going to have any integrity, it must be bi-partisan," said Tanya Cox, American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma Program Director and Legislative Counsel.

"It should include same day registration and opening the polls earlier. This bill had none of this. Its only purpose was to create obstacles for people to vote."

THOUSANDS WITHOUT PHOTO ID

Over 78,000 Oklahomans do not have an ID card, and many that do will still be unable to vote because their driver's license has expired.

If HB 1037 passes in the Senate, those without a voter ID card, or those that don't want to show it, will have to vote by provisional ballot. Over 80% of the November election provisional ballots were rejected. [For more on this issue, see page 14.]

Then came passage of House Joint Resolution 1042, the "English Only" measure, authored by Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore.

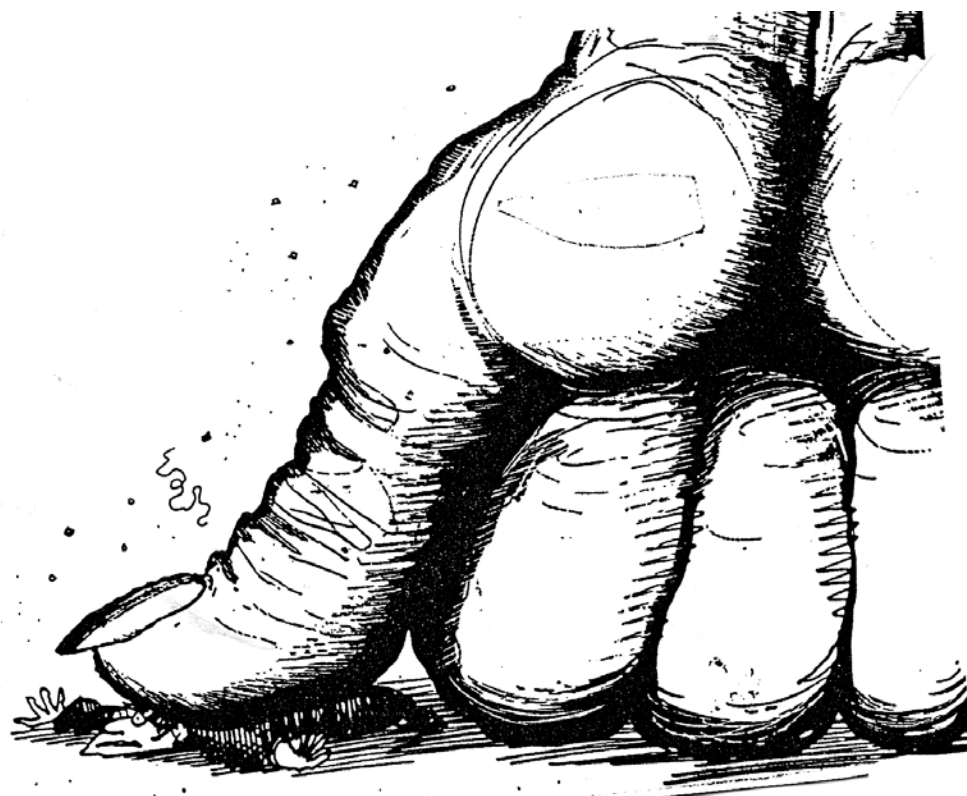
HJR 1042 would require all government communications to be in English, with few exceptions. The bill, containing extremely divisive language, passed by a vote of 66-32.

Another unnecessary measure, HB 1330, would lead to erection of a Ten Commandments monument on the Oklahoma State Capitol grounds. It was authored by rookie Rep. Mike Ritze, R-Broken Arrow, who is quickly bidding to become the Legislature's preeminent theocrat.

TAXPAYERS WOULD FOOT LEGAL BILL

If the constitutionality of the monument were to be challenged, state taxpayers would have to fund litigation and fee awards.

A state agency would also have to oversee installation and upkeep. HB 1330 is



similar to *McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky*, where the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Ten Commandments display was unconstitutional and violated the Establishment Clause.

Finally, HJR 1009, the resolution to oppose the Federal Freedom of Choice Act, by Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC, passed on a 77-12 vote.

Kern's bill is a complete waste of time and money. The Freedom of Choice Act is not pending in Congress. This irrelevant resolution has no legal weight and is only a legislative attempt to distract Oklahomans from real issues.

"We hope the Senate will do a better job of protecting the civil liberties of Oklahomans," said the ACLU's Cox, "and refuse to hear these bills or add liberty protections."

House Approves Measure That Invades Privacy

By Tanya Cox

The Oklahoma House of Representatives has passed HB 1595 – a fiscally irresponsible and extremely invasive bill introduced by Rep. Daniel Sullivan, R-Tulsa.

It shows that the Oklahoma House condones invasion of privacy for a woman already forced with making a difficult decision.

HB 1595 requires medical professionals to ask a lengthy series of questions of a female patient, many of which, such as, "Reason given for abortion," have nothing to do with higher health care needs.

If these questions are not asked, the bill allows for a cause of action to be brought against the doctor by family members, guardians, the district attorney, attorney general, and any licensed healthcare professionals of the female patient.

FRIVOLOUS LITIGATION

This will become frivolous litigation. It is odd that Sullivan, who had a tort reform bill pass out of the House, introduced this bill that will cost \$281,285 initially and \$256,285 for subsequent years.

In a time when Oklahoma is already facing a budget crisis, this bill unnecessarily increases the cost to taxpayers.

Also, the reporting of the answers to questions asked of these patients will be posted on the Internet. While names will not be included with this posting, sta-

tistics like county of residence, age, race, and marital status will be reported.

This makes a woman living in small town Oklahoma very identifiable. The Legislature is once again interfering in the doctor/patient relationship. This bill is medically and fiscally unnecessary.

ONLY FOUR VOTED NO

Out of 97 House members voting, only four opposed the bill.

The ACLU of Oklahoma would like to recognize Rep. Jeannie McDaniel, D-Tulsa; Rep. Al McAffrey, D-OKC; Rep. Ryan Kiesel, D-Seminole; and Rep. Mike Shelton, R-OKC, for their recognition of a woman's right to privacy and a brave vote of "no" on HB 1595.

"A woman's brain doesn't disengage during her pregnancy," said McDaniel. "And between a woman's uterus and her brain is her heart."

McDaniel also spoke about Oklahoma's bottom-rung status when it comes to women's health issues, women's incarceration percentages, and the health of infants in our state.

Sullivan responded to her list of facts by saying that all of these statistics were true because of the passage of *Roe v. Wade*. The ACLU of Oklahoma is not sure where Sullivan got this "fact."

– The author is legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma

Campaign Against Dating Violence

Mary Kay Inc. and non-profit partner Break the Cycle are encouraging legislation supporting teen dating violence prevention education in Oklahoma schools.

Also joining the effort are the Oklahoma Coalition to End Domestic Violence, local members of the Mary Kay independent sales force and the legislative Black Caucus.

The Capitol was packed recently as women met with state legislators to discuss the importance of educating middle and high school students about healthy dating and relationships.

Nationally, one in three teenagers will deal with physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse in a relationship and two-thirds of them will never report it to anyone.

EDUCATING LAWMAKERS

The organizations are lobbying Oklahoma lawmakers to introduce pre-emptive legislation to educate students about domestic violence and healthy relationships.

Sen. Constance Johnson and Rep. Anastasia Pittman hosted the meeting and

said language will be introduced in a variety of bills.

Such legislation would also require schools to implement guidelines and discipline procedures for responding to incidents of teen dating violence on campus.

Only Texas and Rhode Island currently have a statewide statute with such a requirement for schools.

HELPING END DATING VIOLENCE

"Mary Kay is hopeful that we can help end teen dating violence," said Mary Kay Inc. Vice President of Government Relations Anne Crews.

"Mary Kay has an ongoing commitment to ending domestic violence and we're encouraging legislators nationwide to pass laws supporting teen dating violence education."

"Break the Cycle, one of the nation's leading organizations addressing teen dating violence, is launching this national effort to pass state legislation aimed at helping youth recognize that they have the right to safe and healthy relation-

See DATING Page 14

Few Paroled

Oklahoma Prisons Top \$518 Million

While Oklahoma ranks among the nation's leaders at putting criminals behind bars, the state is less effective in utilizing probation, parole and other community-based sentencing, according to a national study.

Oklahoma ranks No. 2 among all 50 states, with 55% of the correctional population in prison or jail, according to the study by the Washington, DC-based Pew Center on the States.

"There's been a significant shift in Oklahoma, a shift toward imprisonment," said Adam Gelb, director of the Pew Center's Public Safety Performance Project. "The state has moved from 19th to second in terms of the percent of its correctional population behind bars."

One out of every 92 adults is currently on probation or parole in Oklahoma, ranking the state 43rd, the report notes.

COST IS SOARING

Just as the state's correctional population has spiked dramatically over the last 25 years, so has the amount of money spent on offenders, increasing from \$113 million to \$518 million, according to the report, which includes spending on state offenders in jail and federal prisons.

With Oklahoma and other states grappling with shrinking budgets, Gelb says now could be the time for legislators and policymakers to examine alternatives to locking up offenders in expensive prison cells.

"Violent and career criminals need to be locked up, and for a long time," Gelb said. "But our research shows that prisons are housing too many people who can be managed safely and held accountable in the community at far lower cost."

According to the report, for every dollar spent on prisons in 2008, Oklahoma spent six cents on probation and parole.

OKLAHOMA BUDGET CUT

While other states are looking at expanding alternatives to incarceration, Oklahoma has cut its budget for community sentencing, said Sharon Neumann, deputy director of community sentencing for the Department of Corrections.

The program's \$5.5 million budget last year was reduced to \$5 million for the current fiscal year, she said.

"Oklahomans are really addicted to locking up both juveniles and adults," Neumann said. "We seem to think that's the best bang for our public safety dollars."

Community sentencing, currently in place in 53 of the state's 77 counties, serves as a buffer between probation and prison in which offenders must follow



strict guidelines or face imprisonment.

It costs about \$4.88 per day per inmate, and Neumann says the program has shown remarkable success in the six years since it was implemented.

SUCCESS RATE CITED

"We lose about 20% of people to prison during the program, but of the ones who do complete the program, after three years only 11% have gone to prison," she said. "When I go to national meetings with my peers, those results are pretty phenomenal."

But given the budget shortfall, Neumann says she's not optimistic that lawmakers will look to expand alternative sentencing programs like community sentencing.

"Unless there is interest at the legislative level to say we want to target diversion programs, we'll continue to see cuts," she said. "It's kind of demoralizing."

Former Republican state Sen. Ged Wright, now a member of the Oklahoma Sentencing Commission, said lawmakers have been hesitant to tout alternatives to incarceration out of fear of being labeled soft on crime.

"There are individuals who believe what they are doing, that we should be locking up people for a long period of time," Wright said. "Frankly, sometimes these legislators are just mad at people that commit crimes, and being angry usually results in bad law."

Corrections Growing Industry In America

One in every 31 U.S. adults is in the corrections system, which includes jail, prison, probation and supervision, more than double the rate of a quarter century ago, according to a report released by the Pew Center on the States.

The study, which said the current rate compares to one in 77 in 1982, concluded that with declining resources, more emphasis should be put on community supervision, not jail or prison.

"Violent and career criminals need to be locked up, and for a long time. But the research shows that prisons are housing too many people who can be managed safely and held accountable in the community at far lower cost," said Adam Gelb, director of the Center's Public Safety Performance Project.

The United States has the highest incarceration rate and the biggest prison population of any country in the world, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Justice.

PEW REPORTS ON GROWTH

Most of those in the U.S. corrections system – one in 45 – are already on probation or parole, with one in 100 in prison or jail, the Pew study found.

Those numbers are higher in certain areas of the country, and Georgia tops all states with one in 13 adults in the justice system. The other leading states are Idaho, where one in 18 are in corrections, and Texas, where the rate is one in 22. In the nation's capital, Washington, DC, nearly 5% of adults are in the city's penal system.

This was the first criminal justice study that took into account those on probation and parole as well as federal convicts, Pew said.

The numbers are also concentrated among groups, with a little more than 8% of black adults in prisons or jails or on probation or parole, as opposed to some 4% of Hispanics and 2% of whites.

STATES COULD TRIM CORRECTIONS

"Among the many programs that are competing for scarce taxpayer dollars, there is one area of the state budget that could use some trimming, and that area is corrections," said Susan Urahn, the center's managing director.

"The bottom line is that states are spending too much."

Penitentiary systems have been the fastest-growing spending area for states after Medicaid, the healthcare program for those with low incomes.

Over the last 20 years their spending on criminal justice has increased more than 300%, the study found. [Oklahoma has gone from 5,000 in prison to 25,000, costing \$518 million a year.]

During the last 25 years prison and jail populations have grown 274% to 2.3 million in 2008, according to the Pew research, while those under supervision grew 226% over the same span to 5.1 million.

America Turns Corrections Into Profit Centers

– Page 11

It estimated states spent a record \$51.7 billion on corrections in fiscal year 2008 and incarcerating one inmate cost them, on average, \$29,000 a year.

The average annual cost of managing an offender through probation was \$1,250 and through parole \$2,750.

"The huge differences between states are mostly due not to crime trends, or social and economic forces," Gelb said. "The rates are different mostly because of choices that the states have made about how they respond to crime."

"New community supervision strategies and technologies need to be strengthened and expanded, not scaled back. Cutting them may appear to save a few dollars, but it doesn't."

Some states have begun experimenting with ankle bracelets, Global Positioning Systems, and even kiosks akin to cash machines in order to track those on probation for less, he said.

Oklahoma has been funding drug courts that are very successful. Also budding is the mental health court.

Children's Poverty Increases

Student poverty has increased in Oklahoma for the current 2008-09 school year, according to State Superintendent Sandy Garrett.

The Low Income Report reflects the number of students meeting federal qualifying criteria for receiving free or reduced-priced lunches.

According to the 2008-09 report, statewide the percentage of students meeting that criteria rose about 1%, to 56.25% of the student population, or 362,697 students out of the 644,758 enrolled as of Oct. 1, 2008.

The state's second largest school district, Oklahoma City Public Schools, experienced an even more dramatic climb in student poverty: up to 85.5% of all students enrolled, as compared to 81.9% last year.

The Low Income Report indicates the state's largest school district, Tulsa Public Schools, experienced a decline in student poverty – down to 76.9% from 82.86% last year.

However, Garrett and Education Board members questioned whether a reduction in student poverty had really occurred in Tulsa or perhaps not all of the paperwork required of their parents had been submitted.

BOOKS

Bear Stearns Heralded World Economic Plunge

By Tim Rutten

HOUSE OF CARDS

A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess on Wall Street

By William D. Cohan

Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group

480 pages, \$27.95

It seems almost achingly quaint to recall those warm and hazy days when “banker” was a synonym for sobriety and propriety – a time when those who worked in finance, as well as those who reported on it, believed that a pinstriped suit connoted one thing and a chalk stripe something else entirely.

Anyone who still retains such antique illusions will lose them in fewer than 10 pages into William D. Cohan’s masterfully reported account of the collapse of Bear Stearns, the investment banking house whose implosion a year ago this month signaled the beginning of the worst global financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Cohan, a former senior investment banker who has turned into one of our most able financial journalists, is the author of 2007’s *The Last Tycoons*, a highly regarded history of Lazard Frères & Co., Wall Street’s most storied investment bank. In this new book, he deploys not only his hands-on experience of this exotic corner of the financial industry but also a remarkable gift for plain-spoken explanation. That’s essential, because it may be that only quantum physics defies the descriptive powers of ordinary language quite so completely as the derivatives markets whose meltdowns have devastated Wall Street.

The other great strength of this important book is the breadth and skill of the author’s interviews. Essentially, with pauses for needed explanation, he has used them to construct a staccato narrative of the frantic 10 days in March of 2008 that began with the first doubts about Bear Stearns’ liquidity and ended when the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury forced the firm to sell itself at a fire-sale price to JP Morgan Chase. That and the subsequent bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the sale of Merrill Lynch, the collapse of insurance giant AIG and the virtual incapacitation of much of the banking sector, including behemoths Bank of America and Citibank, marked the end of Wall Street’s second Gilded Age and the onset of the current global financial crisis.

Essentially, then, what Cohan has given us is a day-by-day, conversation-by-conversation account of a financial debacle equivalent to the failure of Credit Anstalt, the Vienna bank whose default signaled the globalization of the Great Depression.

At the time of its collapse, Bear Stearns was one of the world’s largest and most aggressive investment banks, securities traders and brokerage firms. It employed more than 15,000 people in offices around the world and, just a year earlier, Fortune had recognized it as “America’s most admired securities firm.” It also was the company most heavily invested in various forms of mortgage-backed securities, the novel financial instruments that subsequently sucked the world financial system down into a whirlpool of illiquidity, as American real estate inflation slowed and, then, declined.

That was Bear Stearns’ undoing because, as Cohan explains, “Unlike a bank,

SCIENCE

From Page 6

in Kansas to place creationism into science courses led then-Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and presidents of Kansas colleges to state publicly that the publicity was seriously hampering their ability to attract scientists and high-tech industries.

DERAILING OKLAHOMA’S PROSPERITY

Undermining science education will have similar detrimental effects on the prosperity of Oklahoma. A scientifically literate population can make informed decisions on important issues of our time such as on healthcare and the environment. Students who receive a solid science education can contribute to efficient discovery and use of energy sources, provide for competitive advantages in agricultural production, and make advances in biomedicine. This leads directly to increased economic growth and will help attract additional high-tech, energy-based, and med-tech industries to Oklahoma.

If SB 320 or similar bills were to become law, Oklahoma is likely to see major lawsuits on the grounds of constitutional separation of church and state. In Dover, PA, the local school board tried to place creationist “intelligent design” into science courses [Kitzmiller vs. Dover School Board]. In December 2005 Judge John E. Jones in a Federal District Court in Pennsylvania ruled that “intelligent design” was religion and was not science. The Dover School District is now paying \$1 million dollars in court costs.

Ultimately, forcing teachers to present the “strengths and weaknesses” will force them to pretend that we know less than we really do about the natural world and to present ideas that have emerged from a religious think tank as if they were science. The issue here is not about fairness or free inquiry; it is about science vs. nonscience. SB 320 and others like it make the completely baseless association between academic freedom and freedom to cast doubt in students’ minds where no scientific doubts exist.

Appropriate academic freedom is already present in our schools. This proposal would not promote academic freedom, but academic deception.

– Broughton is Associate Professor and Hutchison is George Lynn Cross Research Professor Emeritus, Department of Zoology, University of Oklahoma


which is able to use the cash from its depositors to fund most of its operations . . . pure investment banks such as Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns had no depositors’ money to use. Instead they funded their operations in a few ways: either by occasionally issuing long-term securities, such as debt or preferred stock, or most often by obtaining short-term, often overnight, borrowings in the unsecured commercial paper market or in the overnight ‘repo’ market, where the borrowings are secured by the various securities and other assets on their balance sheets. These fairly routine borrowings have been repeated day after day for some 30 years and worked splendidly – until there was perceived to be a problem with either the securities or the institutions backing them up, and then the funding evaporated like rain in the Sahara. The dirty little secret of what used to be known as Wall Street securities firms – Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns – was that every one of them funded their business in this way to varying degrees, and every one of them was always just 24 hours away from a funding crisis.”

That crisis came to Bear Stearns when analysts and other Wall Street players began to raise questions about the liquidity implications of the huge positions in mortgage-backed securities – particularly subprime mortgages – that it was carrying on its books.

Cohan does a brilliant job of sketching in the eccentric, vulgar, greedy, profane and coarse individuals who ignored all these warnings to their own profit and the ruin of so many others. It’s impossible to do justice to his reportorial detail in a brief review, but suffice to say it’s slightly horrifying to learn the importance bridge played in Bear Stearns’ internal culture.

The precise structural causes of the current catastrophe still may be obscure, but former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, now 81 and an economic advisor to President Obama, said he was confident that we won’t “revert to the kind of financial system we had before the crisis.” The future, he predicted, will hold not only more stringent regulation of the entire banking system – particularly with regard to risk management – but also of hedge and equity funds. To the remaining Wall Street smart guys who argue that re-regulation will stifle the


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PUBLIC FORUM

Workers Unite! Health Reform Depends On It

By Sharon Martin

What if the job you keep for your insurance is making you sick? Do you make employment decisions based not on what's good for you and your family, but on access to health care?

You are not alone, and it is time for all of us, insured and uninsured, to get active and force our so-called representatives to give us what we deserve – access to health care regardless of our employment situation.

What can we do? By ourselves it may seem that we are pitting David against Goliath, but the numbers of employees exceed the numbers of employers. If we band together and make our voices heard in chorus, we can do something about the predicaments in which we find ourselves. It's time for activism.

A PERSONAL HORROR STORY

For the past nine years I taught school. I dropped our individual policy because the rates went up exponentially. I picked up the state health insurance. It went up, too. In fact, the year I earned my master's degree, my take-home actually went down because the increase in insurance premium exceeded the increase for a graduate degree.

At the age of 56, I chose to retire. The small retirement check would just about cover my insurance.

Then, after I had completed the packets of paperwork, gotten the necessary endorsements and seals, and mailed everything back to the state office for teacher retirement, I received the bombshell letter.

TEACHERS TREATED DIFFERENTLY

Perhaps I had worked long enough to retire, but I hadn't worked long enough to keep my insurance, although retirees pay all but a hundred dollars of the premium. State employees must work eight years to keep their insurance on retirement. Teachers must work 10 years.

Aren't we state employees, too?

I had choices: find another teaching job, though my heart was no longer in a profession where coaches were more important than reading specialists; find a job in another field and keep it for the next 10 years; or find private insurance and do what I quit to do, teach literacy workshops and write.

At the moment, my insurance future is uncertain.

I have a policy, but will it pay?

HOME AT RISK?

Because of childhood polio, I'm in a position that could cost me my home along with my health.

Join me, won't you, in writing letters to our representatives. And tune out the lies the media feed us on the dangers of "socialized medicine."

What lies, you say?

U.S. Turns Corrections Into Profit Centers

By Pat Galloway

I am more than a little incensed with all the federal government bailouts for the white-collar criminals like Lehman Brothers who have been pouring money into the latest "growth industry" developed because of the brotherhood of political crooks, cronyism and greed – namely the warehousing of human flesh, better known as the Private Prison Industry.

Our nation is spending millions of dollars each year locking up non-violent offenders whose crimes pale in comparison to the billions of dollars that have been stolen by professional thieves. [Yes, stolen.]

I believe the law considers maliciously taking from another person, or persons, especially with no intention of repayment, stealing.

Every day more and more crimes are made public, showing Wall Street executives passing multi-million dollar homes and other holdings to their families and friends.

To date, I have seen no arrests [except Bernard Madoff], only plans to give those well-manicured crooks more taxpayer money.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

What is wrong with this picture, and where is the backbone of the American public to allow these things to continue?

Our state of affairs looks like a giant jigsaw puzzle, with a lot of missing parts. I don't know about the rest of America, but I am totally confused.

If history is repeating itself, as it has always done, we will wake up one day under a dictatorship; our liberties gone, our politicians still making and breaking promises and our people with their heads still in the sand.

Wake up, America! Where the lobbyists have succeeded, we have legislators coming into the state houses focused on creating more laws to be broken so we can send more people to prison for longer and longer sentences in order to keep feeding power, money-hungry executives, and political bedfellows.

MEDIEVAL HUMAN WAREHOUSING

Instead of medical and psychiatric treatment, too many men and women suffering from various mental illnesses – schizophrenia, bi-polar, etc. – are filling prison money pits. State Departments of Corrections all over this nation are finding it impossible to secure enough funds to keep these human warehouses functioning. In many correctional institutions, supplies have already been cut to the quick; food and medical services are almost medieval.



A news channel ran a story in which an Australian man decried a system in which he could not get his teeth fixed in a timely manner.

The story laid the blame on Australia's national health system. An Australian friend just shook her head, saying, "We have health insurance, but not dental insurance. Of course, he couldn't get his teeth fixed for free."

That point was missing from the "news" story.

FREE OF BANKRUPTCY FEARS

Every American deserves the right to medical treatment without fear of bankruptcy. Every doctor deserves to be paid for the treatment he provides. Every person deserves the best preventive care available so catastrophic costs decline. Doctors need to shift to the business of keeping us healthy not in bringing us back from death's door.

Our representatives need to be working with us and for us to make this happen. If your representative tells you that the economy needs fixing before we tackle health care reform, tell him that the economy would be well-served by a healthy healthcare system.

Stratospheric health care premiums hurt businesses, too. Look at General Motors.

Join me, please. Write that letter. Have your friends write a letter.

Let's make our voices heard.

– The author lives in Oilton

Instead of building more prisons to warehouse the poor, uneducated and mentally challenged, how about Mr. Wall Street building hospitals to treat these diseases, bring back educational programs in prisons, work with families toward rehabilitation and reduce crime?

Per inmate costs in most private prisons average \$50 to \$70 per day, for basic oversight; many locked down 23 hours out of each day with no jobs, no rehabilitation programs, and no hope.

PRIVATE PRISON PROFITEERS

Let's not run the risk of restoration programs that might possibly reduce the prison population, let's just build more private prisons, so more private corrections corporation's CEOs, wardens, lobbyists, etc., can continue taking home millions each year in outrageous salaries and bonuses.

Meanwhile the poor, sick, and ill-advised who mostly out of ignorance and a dependence upon public defenders vs. high-price lawyers, are going to keep those prisons full [read Jeremiah 5:26 – And I saw men in cages like birds] and upper-class culprits in their \$13 million homes, traveling in corporate jets, and stealing 401[k] retirements from old people will manage to maintain their unrealistic lifestyles.

The Enron tragedy was just the tip of the iceberg; it is heartbreaking to watch those who have worked long and hard believing that one day they would retire with a nice monthly income, only to find their accounts pillaged by the above mentioned white collar deviates of our society.

POLITICAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

It's time for ordinary people to wake up to the fact that about 55% of the people locked up could be released, or recycled to alternative treatment programs; and crooked Wall Street tycoons could fill their cells.

Pass a law where every elected legislator – on sentencing committees – would be required to spend at least one night and one day in a real prison cell. Let the ordinary people rise up and get laws on the books to stop political conflicts of interest.

It just might make a huge reduction in the more than two million people in U.S. prisons today. Allow those who have paid for their mistakes to return to society and be given opportunity to rebuild their lives and restore families.

– The author, an advocate for restorative justice, lives in Pencil Bluff, AR

Tragic American Legacy

'Support The Troops' Means Protect Them

By Sheila Samples

Sometimes it's hard to come to grips with the truth – especially if that truth is about our own country, and is in direct opposition to everything we've been taught since childhood. Patriotism is in our genes, and through the years it has been a national conviction that, if our country needed us, serving in the military to protect our freedom was not only the right thing to do, but also the only thing to do.

We still believe that. We still leap to our feet at the first beat of a drum at a military parade, clutch our hearts at the sight of the Stars and Stripes, weep at the refrain of the National Anthem.

However, far too many of us succumb to the pomp and pageantry of war, of Mission Accomplished, with little concern for the human beings who made that possible – what they went through, what they're still going through – so we can maintain our arrogant national pride.

KISSINGER'S CAVALIER ATTITUDE

From the beginning, those in the military have served their country with unswerving loyalty. They continued to march even after Henry Kissinger belched out the truth that Duty-Honor-Country is a one-way street because, "Military men are dumb, stupid animals to be used" as pawns for foreign policy.

And it has long been a dead-end street for those captured or left behind on foreign soil, for those who return from battlefields maimed both mentally and physically, and for those who are innocent victims of malicious life-destroying experiments who have no chance of the extent of their injuries being recognized and are refused the necessary health care.

The most ghastly experiment the military ever conducted was Operation Crossroads, a series of "Manhattan Project" tests requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1946 to study the effects of nuclear weapons on ships and equipment. After bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki the year before, U.S. officials knew the effect of massive radiation on human beings and animals. They had to know. So what else were the thousands of Navy personnel positioned on ships from five to eight miles from the Bikini Atoll bomb site in the central Pacific if not guinea pigs?

SAD TALE OF ANTHONY GUARISCO

One young sailor stationed at the Bikini Atoll in 1946 was Anthony Guarisco who, like thousands of others, has suffered horribly for the last 63 years as a result of radiation poisoning and, like those others, has been denied the proper health care. Guarisco is the founder of both the National and International Alliance of Atomic Veterans.

In 1994, Academy Award-winning team Vivienne Verdon-Roe and Michael Porter produced a documentary, *Experimental Animals*, featuring Guarisco who, very calmly, describes the horrors of that 1946 July. [Note: Ecological Options



Network has just re-released *Experimental Animals* on-line and as a DVD, because EON filmmaker/activist Jim Heddle says, "We think it's as relevant today as it was when it was produced."]

The first bomb – Able – was dropped from a B-29 on July 1. As a health precaution, military personnel in the area were told to "cover their eyes." Guarisco said it was awesome. He said it immediately "came home to me what happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I could see how 55,000-65,000 people could die in 1½ seconds."

But the second one – Baker – was beyond awesome. Guarisco said it was detonated beneath the ocean from a depth of 90 feet, and "sucked a target array of approximately 100 ships into the air like little toys. I saw the USS *Arkansas* soar into the air about 200 feet and come down in two pieces. I saw aircraft carriers just flinging around as if they were toys."

EXPOSING TROOPS TO CONTAMINATION

According to the Navy's historical report, "The inability to complete inspections on much of the target fleet threatened the success of the operation after Baker. A program of target vessel decontamination was begun in earnest about 1 August. This involved washing the ships' exteriors using work crews drawn from the target ships' companies under radiological supervision of monitors equipped with radiation detection and measurement devices. Initially, decontamination was slow as the safe time aboard the target ships was measured only in minutes. As time progressed, the support fleet itself had become contaminated by the low-level radioactivity in marine growth on the ships' hulls and seawater piping systems."

See TROOPS Page 13

Fighting Back In America's 30-Year Class War

By Jim Hightower

David Brooks was upset. You can tell when this conservative and rather-professional columnist for *The New York Times* gets upset, because his words almost sag with disappointment – you can practically hear the tsk-tsks and the heavy sighs in each paragraph. When most commentators on the right see things that offend them, they get snarling mad; Brooks gets sad.

What saddened Brother Brooks this time was Barack Obama's budget. In a recent column, he noted that the \$3.6 trillion total is "gargantuan" [we columnists are paid to make keen observations like that], but what really upset him was that the tax burden to finance universal health care, energy independence and other big initiatives in Obama's budget "is predicated on a class divide."

With heavy sighs, Brooks expressed great despair that "no new burdens will fall on 95% of the American people," adding with a tsk-tsk that "all the costs will be borne by the rich and all benefits redistributed downward."

A FUNDAMENTALLY UN-AMERICAN BUDGET?

Leaving aside the fact that such things as health-care coverage for every American and a booming green energy economy will benefit the rich as well as the rest of us, Brooks' column was echoing a prevalent theme in all of the right's attacks on Obama's economic proposals: Class War!

Indeed, the *Times*' columnist even suggested [sadly] that Obama's budget was fundamentally un-American: "The U.S. has never been a society riven by class resentment," he sniffed.

Whoa, professor, get a grip! Better yet, get a good history book [Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* would be an eye-opening place to start].

While our schools, media and politicians rarely mention it, America's history is replete with class rebellions against various moneyed elites who act as though they're the top dogs and ordinary folks are just a bunch of fire hydrants.

HISTORY OF CLASS REBELLIONS

Check out the Tenant Uprisings of 1766, Shay's Rebellion in the 1780s, the Workingmen's Movement of the 1830s ... on into the post-Civil War populist movement that confronted the robber barons, the bloody labor battles at Haymarket and Homestead in the late 1800s, Coxey's Army in 1894, the Bonus March of 1932, the Penny Auctions by farmers in the 1920s and '30s, the rise

of the CIO in the Depression years ... and right into modern-day fights involving environmental justice, fair trade, women's pay, workplace safety, tenant rights, janitors, farmworkers, union-busting, bank redlining, consumer gouging, clean elections and so forth.

If Brooks & Co. are so isolated as to imagine that our citizenry harbors no class resentment, they should go to any Chat & Chew Cafe across the land and listen to the locals express their innermost feelings about today's greedheaded Wall Streeters who wrecked our economy for their own enrichment.

There is a fury in the countryside toward these plutocratic purse-snatchers who are being allowed to keep their exalted executive positions, draw fat paychecks and get trillions of dollars in bailout money from common taxpayers.

People don't merely resent them, they yearn for the legalization of tar-and-feathering!

THE POOR PLUTOCRATS

Yet, Brooks and his political brethren are now bemoaning the plight of the plutocrats, assailing the "redistributionists" who talk of spreading America's wealth. In his column, Brooks cried out for a conservative vision of "a nation in which we're all in it together – in which burdens are shared broadly, rather than simply inflicted on a small minority."

Do we look like we have suckerwrappers around our heads? Where were these tender-hearted champions of sharing throughout the last 30 years, when that same "small minority" was absolutely giddy with redistributionist fervor – redistributing upward, that is?

With the full support of their political hirelings from both parties, this minority created tax dodges, trade scams, corporate subsidies, deregulation fantasies, financial hustles, de-unionization schemes, bankruptcy loopholes and other mechanisms that turned government into a redistributionist bulldozer, shoving wealth from the workaday majority into their own pockets.

Brooks might have missed this 30-year class war, but most folks have been right in the thick of it and are not the least bit squeamish about supporting a national effort to right those wrongs. After all, even a dog knows the difference between being stumbled over – and being kicked.

\$2.4 Billion

Oklahoma To Feel Impact Of Stimulus

Oklahoma will receive \$2.4 billion in an immediate, tangible impact from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, President Barack Obama's nationwide effort to create jobs, jump-start growth and heal the economy.

The plan will help Oklahoma businesses create jobs and families afford their bills while laying a foundation for future economic growth in key areas like health care, clean energy, education and a 21st Century infrastructure:

- Creating or saving 42,300 jobs over the next two years. Jobs created will be in a range of industries from clean energy to health care, with over 90% in the private sector. [Source: White House Estimate based on Romer and Bernstein, The Job Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan – Jan. 9, 2009]

TAX CUT COMING FOR WORKERS

- Providing a making-work-pay tax cut of up to \$1,000 for 1,380,000 workers and their families. The tax cut will make a down payment on the President's Making Work Pay tax cut for 95% of workers and their families, designed to pay out immediately into workers' paychecks. [Source: White House Estimate based on IRS Statistics of Income]

- Making 53,000 families eligible for a new American Opportunity Tax Credit to make college affordable. By creating a new \$2,500 partially refundable tax credit for four years of college, this plan will give 3.8 million families nationwide – and 53,000 families in Oklahoma – new assistance to put college within their reach. [Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of U.S. Census data]

UNEMPLOYMENT INCOME

- Offering an additional \$100 per month in unemployment insurance benefits to 96,000 workers in Oklahoma who have lost their jobs in this recession, and providing extended unemployment benefits to an additional 16,000 laid-off workers. [Source: National Employment Law Project]

- Providing funding sufficient to modernize at least 108 schools in Oklahoma



so our children have the labs, classrooms and libraries they need to compete in the 21st Century economy. [Source: White House estimate]

In addition to this immediate assistance for Oklahoma, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan will help transform our economy by:

- Doubling renewable energy generating capacity over three years, creating enough renewable energy to power six million American homes.

- Computerizing every American's health record in five years, reducing medical errors and saving billions of dollars in health care costs.

- Launching the most ambitious school modernization program on record, sufficient to upgrade 10,000 schools.

- Enacting the largest investment increase in our nation's roads, bridges and mass transit systems since the creation of the national highway system in the 1950s.

TROOPS

From Page 12

Ironically, although the ships were towed out of the area just 10 days after the blast where the work could be done in uncontaminated water, no warning was given to the human experimental animals, who were allowed to swim in contaminated water, walk barefoot on beaches and breathe poisonous air.

WELTS, URINATING BLOOD

Guarisco said, "We went back into the ground zero area immediately after each of the detonations, and I spent a total of 67 days in the Bikini lagoon within one mile of the epicenter. And I became ill after the second detonation, approximately four or five days after that ... I had symptoms similar to having a bad case of influenza. I had welts on my body – I broke out with welts – and it was scary for me. I was urinating blood, I was very sick."

And Guarisco wasn't the only one who became ill. In a 1998 National Radio Project interview with Michael O'Rourke, who monitors veterans' health issues for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Guarisco said, "Other people on my ship were also feeling very sick. And for many, many years I thought that, well, certainly if there was anything wrong surely they would let me know."

"But I found out many years later that's not how it is. You know, the government and the U.S. military are not about to say anything about anybody who's exposed to high levels or low levels of radiation. It was hard for me to come out of denial, to understand that I was dealing with people who really were not interested in anything else but waiting for me to die."

A PREVIEW OF WORLD WAR III

Guarisco says that, in one – two – blinding flashes, "we saw what World War III will look like. We have seen the firestorm, we have been witness to the sacrilegious devastation that nuclear weapons put forth, and we have seen our brother and our sister veterans die from being exposed to this terribleness."

He says the bottom line of nuclear weapons is the bottom line of the profit margin – that "deterrent" or "first strike" are fear code words used to keep the population at bay and to pave the way for the nuclear industry to keep building more expensive [profitable] weapons.

In his March 2008 tribute to both of his parents, Guarisco's son, Vincent, goes into greater detail about his father's lifelong battle, not only with the effects of radiation but with the nuclear industry and government itself. For more than 60 years, both Anthony and Mary Guarisco were out there, militant activists armed with the truth, relentlessly attempting to derail the nuclear train before it goes over the cliff, taking human survival with it.

The United States has more nuclear weapons than any other nation. Although we have avoided the instant, negative repercussions of another Nagasaki or Hiroshima, we have nevertheless managed to contaminate most of the world with Depleted Uranium.

In 2006, Japanese professor Dr. K. Yagasaki, by using the known amount of uranium used in the Hiroshima bomb – about the size of a two-liter milk container – calculated that a ton of DU used on the battlefield results in the equivalent of 100 Hiroshima bombs worth of radiation released into the atmosphere.

So, when it was reported that 2,000 tons of DU were dropped on Iraq from 2003 to 2006, we need to understand that what was released in the Iraqi atmosphere, and then spreading worldwide, was the equivalent of 200,000 Hiroshima bombs.

The total amount of DU the U.S. has used since 1991 is approximately 4,600

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tons [1,000 in the first Gulf War, 800 in Kosovo, 800 in Afghanistan and a further 2,000 tons in the second Iraq war.] This amounts to approximately 460,000 Hiroshima bombs – 10 times the amount of radiation released into the atmosphere from all previous nuclear testing worldwide.

And it's important to note this calculation was three years ago. Since that time, we've had three more years of non-stop DU bombing.

Throughout the '60s, the US conducted numerous toxic and chemical weapons tests on its military personnel. In July 2008, Nic Maclellan, journalist, researcher and development worker in the Pacific, wrote: "Under Project SHAD, the U.S. Navy conducted six tests in the Marshall Islands and off the coast of Hawaii between 1964-68. Pentagon documents released in 2002 show the U.S. Defense Department sprayed live nerve and biological agents on ships and sailors, and sprayed a germ toxin on Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands."

"These Cold War-era experiments to test the Navy's vulnerability to toxic warfare involved about 4,300 U.S. military personnel, mostly from the Navy. Most were never informed that the tests were being conducted, breaching all ethical principles about informed consent for test subjects."

PROTECT THE TROOPS

It's time that we, as a nation, not only face the truth – but come to grips with it. Those who serve with such trust and loyalty cannot imagine that they are, at best, "experimental animals" to be used and cast aside by ruthless corporate thugs.

How many generations of Anthony Guariscos must we lose before we realize that "support the troops" means protect the troops? Like Guarisco said, we must stand up, stand together and demand the abolition of all nuclear weapons if human beings on this planet are to survive.

It's time for the madness to stop. Before we are all atomic veterans.

– The author is an Oklahoma writer and a former civilian U.S. Army Public Information Officer. She is a regular contributor for a variety of Internet sites. Her blog can be found at <http://sheilastuff.blogspot.com/>. She may be contacted at rsamples@wichitaonline.net.

COLLAPSE

From Page 10

"creativity" of the American financial sector, the sober old central banker had a dismissive rejoinder: The most heralded of these financial "innovations" – like credit default swaps and asset backed securities of the sort that brought Bear Stearns and so many others down – have created little but fees for their originators.

The only banking "innovation" that has been of real importance to the vast majority of people over the last three decades, Volcker pointed out, is the automatic teller machine.

As Cohan's remarkable new work of financial journalism shows, the current mess began when the investment bankers began to treat everyone else's finances like their private ATM.

© Los Angeles Times

Photo ID Winning In Half The States

Requiring voter ID, and more specifically photo-based verification, is the most controversial issue in election administration, igniting partisan passions.

Democrats and Republicans have battled over the requirement in state legislatures, newspaper op-eds and courthouses. It has been supported in Oklahoma by the GOP-dominated Legislature. [See story, page 8]

Democrats, almost universally, loathe voter ID rules, viewing such measures as attempts to disenfranchise voters for no logical reason.

"They are making it an issue because they want to suppress the vote," said Sen. Chris Dodd, D-CT, of a federal bill calling for mandatory photo verification at polls.

Republicans say such measures are necessary. Presenting ID is a standard procedure at airports, libraries, schools and even video stores.

"By refusing to set a minimum federal standard requiring photo IDs before voting, the Senate failed to seize an opportunity to safeguard the integrity of elections for the future," according to Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-KY.

DEMOCRATIC SENATE SAYS NO

The Senate rejected his amendment to make photo ID federal law.

The trend has been toward requiring more verification photo and otherwise at polling places. The proposal is something of a slam-dunk for supporters of voter ID.

The number of states requiring all voters to show some sort of verification before casting a ballot in a polling place has increased from 11 in 2000 to 25 in 2007.

As well as having more states requiring one of a number of forms of identification, three states – Indiana, Georgia and Florida – require all voters to show an ID with a photo.

Just as they have consistently lost battles in state legislatures when trying to thwart Republican majorities seeking to introduce universal voter ID or strengthen existing ID laws, Democrats have also had little success in courts.

NO NEW RESEARCH ON EITHER SIDE

While legislatures have been actively debating the issue, no new research has served to further illuminate the debate.

Each side has their story to tell, neither side has produced much that could be considered definitive.

Republicans have not presented much evidence of polling-place voter fraud, and Democrats have a hard time producing plaintiffs who have been unable to vote because they did not have necessary verification to vote.

U.S. District Judge Harold Murphy dismissed a case in Georgia because the plaintiffs "failed to uncover anyone" who could not vote because of ID laws.

Two reports commissioned by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission [EAC] might have been envisioned as providing more clarity, but did little to change battle-hardened stances among Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives.

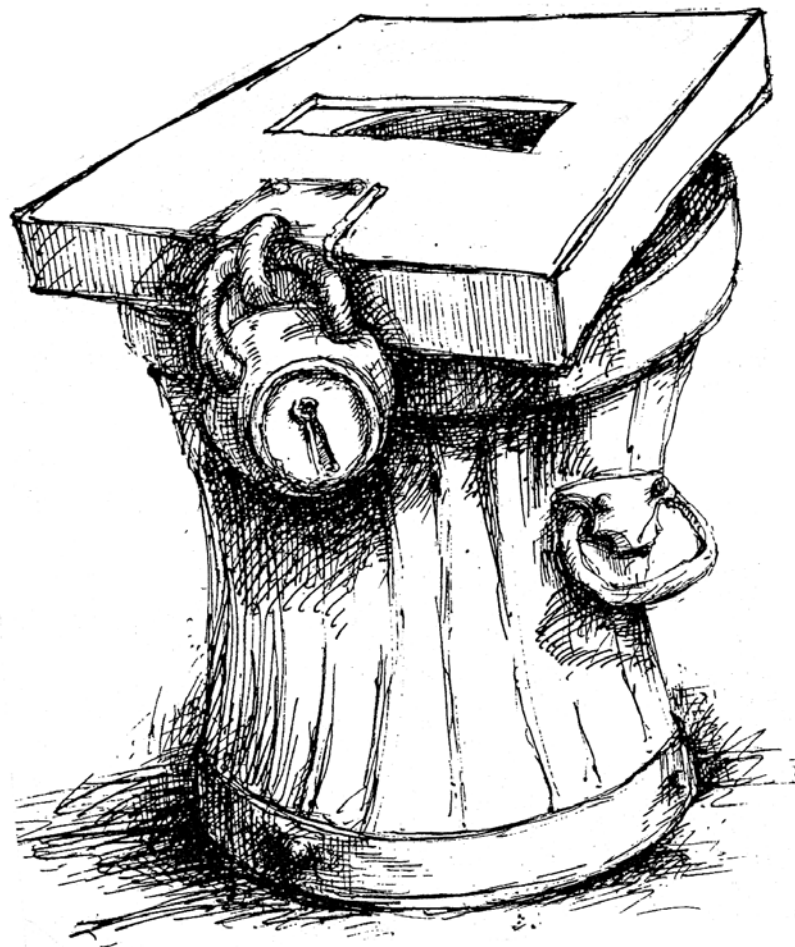
MORE EVALUATION NEEDED

First, researchers from Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute presented a report to the EAC. Their findings, discussed at a February 2007 EAC meeting, provided recommendations to evaluate future voter ID requirements.

The Eagleton report found states with the maximum requirement for photo identification had turnout rates nearly 5% lower than in states with the minimum requirement – stating one's name at the polls.

The data suggested caution when imposing new requirements at the polls, said Thomas O'Neill, one of the Eagleton researchers, in testimony to the EAC.

"We believe that sound policy on voter ID should begin with an examination of the tradeoffs between ballot security and ballot access.



"The existing evidence on the incidence of vote fraud, especially on the kind of vote fraud that could be reduced by requiring more rigorous voter identification, is not sufficient to evaluate those tradeoffs," O'Neill said.

"The EAC's recent study of election crimes found, for example, that there has never been a comprehensive, nationwide study of voting fraud and intimidation.

STATES SHOULD MOVE CAREFULLY

"Without a better understanding of the incidence of vote fraud and its relationship to voter ID, for now best practice for the states may be to limit requirements for voter identification to the minimum needed to prevent duplicate registration and ensure eligibility."

A second report was almost never released at all, at least in its original form, and required congressional intervention to be available to the public.

Tova Wang, democracy fellow at the Century Foundation, and Job Serebrov, an Arkansas-based attorney, submitted an EAC commissioned paper on voter ID and fraud in June 2006.

According to Wang, the conclusions in that report were "revised by the EAC, without explanation or discussion with me, my co-author or the general public."

The original report, once released, stated that "there is widespread but not unanimous agreement that there is little polling-place fraud, or at least much less than is claimed, including voter impersonation, 'dead' voters, non-citizen voting and felon voters."

The fight over voter ID is far from over. Research from the Heritage Foundation offered a further analysis – or "reanalysis" – of the Rutgers study and had markedly different findings than the New Jersey-based researchers.

Paul Gronke, head of the Early Voting Information Center at Reed College and a consultant to Pew's Center on the States, notes that, in the wake of the troubled 2000 vote, "many states have expanded their election systems to include convenience options." Those include both early voting and no-excuse absentee voting.

DATING

From Page 8

ships," said Break the Cycle Executive Director Marjorie Gilberg.

"The education system is the best vehicle to implement teen dating violence prevention and intervention programs and the greatest way to help end teen dating violence before it starts."

IT TAKES ONE PERSON AT A TIME

As part of this effort, Mary Kay Inc. and Break the Cycle are encouraging in-

PADLOCK

From Page 7

"This is a monstrous bill, and it's difficult to read – but it's even more difficult to read when you understand what it says," said Rep. Samson Buck, D-Armore.

"When you talk about a tort, it's not an accident or a misunderstanding – it's a wrong. The only people this bill helps are those who insure those who break the law and are trying to avoid taking responsibility. And the people it harms are injured, fault-free victims."

Rep. Terry Harrison, D-McAlester, added, "What's so hypocritical to me is that this is a big government bill, pushed through our Legislature by folks who claim to believe in small government."

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dividuals to demonstrate support for this effort by signing an online petition at www.enddatingviolence.com.

The petition gathers electronic signatures supporting teen dating violence prevention and awareness programs in schools nationwide.

Mary Kay first partnered with Break the Cycle to sponsor Ending Violence, Break the Cycle's latest educational tool – an innovative, interactive DVD program developed from the organization's evidence-based curriculum.

Already expected to revolutionize dating violence prevention education, the Ending Violence Interactive DVD and accompanying resource package was developed to educate youth ages 12-18 about the dynamics of dating abuse, how to build healthy relationships, and their legal rights.

AUTISM

From Page 7

"My amendment asked a simple question: can we, at the very least, agree on the notion that children's health should be at least equal in importance to medications and surgeries to increase sexual pleasure?"

"Well, ask a simple question, get a simple answer, I suppose – and the Republicans' answer was 'no,'" Brown said.

Vets Lose Faith In Veterans Department

By Rick Maze

A new report about Veterans Affairs Department employees squirreling away tens of thousands of unopened letters related to benefits claims is sparking fresh concerns that veterans and their survivors are being cheated out of money.

VA officials acknowledge further credibility problems based on a new report of a previously undisclosed 2007 incident in which workers at a Detroit regional office turned in 16,000 pieces of unprocessed mail and 717 documents turned up in New York in December during amnesty periods in which workers were promised no one would be penalized.

"Veterans have lost trust in VA," Michael Walcoff, VA's under-secretary for benefits, said at a hearing. "That loss of trust is understandable, and winning back that trust will not be easy."

JUST ONE PROBLEM

Unprocessed and unopened mail was just one problem in VA claims processing mentioned by Belinda Finn, VA's assistant inspector general for auditing, in testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Auditors also found that the dates recorded for receiving claims, which in many cases determine the effective date for benefits payments, are wrong in many cases because of intentional and unintentional errors, Finn said.

The worst case uncovered by auditors involved the New York regional office, where employees testified that managers told staff to put later dates on claims to make it appear claims were being processed faster.

HALF OF DATES INCORRECT

A review found that 56% of claims had incorrect dates, although no evidence was found of incorrect or delayed benefits payments. Finn said workers reported that this practice had been used for years.

The new report comes as VA is trying to resolve an earlier controversy involving documents essential to the claims process that were discovered in bins awaiting shredding at several regional offices.

Kathryn Witt of Gold Star Wives of America said survivors trying to receive VA benefits have long complained about problems getting accurate information and missing claims.

"When they call to check on the status of the claim, they are often told that the VA has no record of their claim and that they should resubmit their paperwork," she said.

SUBMITTED PAPERWORK THREE TIMES

In one case, a woman claimed she had to submit paperwork to VA three times to prove she was married and had three children, Witt said.



And having to resubmit the same claim, she added, does nothing to reduce the backlog that already forces survivors to wait six to nine months for simple claims to be approved.

"It is impossible not to be shocked by the numbers from Detroit," said Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-AZ, who chairs the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's oversight and investigations panel.

"Shredding documents or burying them in the bottom drawer is a breach of trust. Whether that breach of trust comes as a consequence of inadequate training or negligent or deliberate behavior, Congress must not and will not tolerate it."

A permanent solution is to have a fully electronic claims process to establish a record of when documents are received and their status as they move through the process. A fully electronic system will not be in place before 2011, VA officials said.

Kerry Baker of Disabled American Veterans said a short-term answer can be to scan all documents related to claims into computer systems.

Baker, DAV assistant national legislative director, said this could be done at one or more large-scale imaging centers that would transform paper into electronic records.

High Court Appointments, Needed Or Not

By Danny M. Adkison

When it comes to thinking of ideas for modifying our constitutional system, legal experts can be the best. Did I say "the best?" I meant "the worst."

Exhibit A would be the recent proposals for modifying the Supreme Court issued by legal experts in a letter to Congress. The letter contains four proposals each signed by a dozen or so experts on the judiciary.

One proposal is called "Regular Appointments to the Supreme Court." It seems that the experts believe that the appointments to the Supreme Court are not made frequently enough. On average a president appoints a new member to the court about every four years. The Constitution stipulates that members of the court will serve for "good behavior" which has come to mean they will serve until they die, resign, or are removed following impeachment.

APPOINTMENTS EVERY TWO YEARS

The experts propose making an appointment every two years [whether or not there is a vacancy on the court]. What happens when the membership grows? Not to worry. Older justices will become "inactive." They will still be on the court; they just won't be "real" justices.

What is the rationale for this proposal? Here is how it is stated in the letter: "Appointments to the court are made so infrequently as to diminish the likelihood that the court's many important policy decisions will reflect the moral and political values of the contemporary citizens they govern."

Another so-called reform goes under the heading "The Office of Chief Justice." Just as the group thinks members serve long beyond their usefulness, the same goes for the justice holding the title of chief justice. They would limit that to seven years because of the "numerous other political, administrative, and non-judicial roles" modern chief justices have had to exercise. This, in spite of the fact that no modern chief justice has ever complained of the duties involved in serving as the court's leader.

POWER TO DECIDE CASES IT WILL HEAR

Finally, the "experts" are upset that the court is in control of the cases they hear. For the non-expert this is called certiorari [which translated literally means "to be informed"]. Almost all cases reach the court by a writ of certiorari. It's true that this gives the court literally total discretion over which cases they will hear. But this should be placed in context. Last term the court was asked to hear over 8,000 cases. It managed to give full opinions to about 65 cases.

This last statistic is one thing causing the "experts" to write letters to Congress. They are upset that so few cases are being heard by the court. One would

think that given the criticisms routinely leveled against the Supreme Court, insisting that they decide more cases would not be a high priority for reformers. But think about this. It is true that from around 1930 to the early 1990s the court was deciding about twice as many cases a term as it has since. Yet, during that entire time the court had nearly total control on granting certiorari. The explanation for why the court has been hearing fewer cases in recent years has nothing to do with the court's control over certiorari.

EXPERTS CAN'T AGREE ON REFORMS

Here are a few final thoughts on the "reforms" proposed by these "experts." The Washington Post noted that while the letter listed 33 constitutional lawyers or jurists, there wasn't unanimity on any of the proposals. The fact is that not even a simple majority of those signing the letter agreed with all of the proposals.

Also, as if engaged in a game of judicial poker, the "experts" note that if their proposals seem unconstitutional, you could entice members to exit the court by offering them "large bonuses" to leave. [Note: they also say that fairness dictates that these bonuses, if used, should be offered to all federal district and appeals court judges!] Or, as an alternative, they propose returning to the dreaded 19th Century practice of requiring Supreme Court justices to engage in circuit riding. It was this practice that for years kept the court from being an attractive career move.

Finally, one should always ask, when basic changes are made in the institutions created by our Constitution, what would Publius Valerius Publicola think? Publius would find all of these proposals unwise, and for some ideas he did not hesitate to use such adjectives as ridiculous and insidious.

- The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

Baby Boomer?

A man boarded a plane with six kids.

After they were settled in their seats, a woman sitting across the aisle leaned over to him and asked, "Are all of those kids yours?"

"No," he replied. "I work for a condom company. These are customer complaints."

- Thanks to Darla Reynolds-Sparks for this gem

College Grads Face Grim Job Market

By Laura Fitzpatrick

Smith College's career office sent its jittery job-hunting seniors a letter with a reassuring message: "There ARE jobs, and you can find employment."

Unfortunately, there are far fewer jobs than anticipated, according to a report out from the National Association for Colleges and Employers [NACE].

The companies surveyed for the group's spring update are planning to hire 22% fewer grads from the class of 2009 than they hired from the class of 2008, a big letdown from the group's projections in October that hiring would hold steady.

Some 44% of companies in the survey, conducted last month, said they plan to hire fewer new grads, and another 22% said they do not plan to hire at all this spring, more than double last year's figure.

IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD

"If you were a student and were out there [interviewing] in the fall, you probably had a decent chance of getting a job," says Edwin Koc, director of strategic and foundation research at NACE. "But frankly, the spring does not look good."

Job prospects for college grads, which had been on the rise since 2004, dropped in virtually every sector this year. The most dramatic decline was, not surprisingly, in finance, which hemorrhaged 71% of expected job openings.

Less expected but equally troubling is the 37% decline in hiring for professional services, which include accounting and engineering.

DEPTH OF THE RECESSION

"Poor hiring estimates from this area speak to the depth of the recession in the college labor market for the class of 2009," the report says.

Government is essentially the only industry planning to hire more new grads this year than last, as the new administration expands and a graying workforce retires. [The only other sector with plans to increase hiring – that of distribution, transportation and utilities – had too few respondents for the projection to mean much.]

The uptick in government recruiting is obvious to students. Last year, notes Dorothy Kerr, executive manager of Rutgers University's career services, there were just 15 government and nonprofit employers at the annual Big East Career Day in Manhattan's Madison Square Garden.

FEWER FROM PRIVATE SECTOR

Others were kept out to make room for 135 private-sector employers. This year, just 80 private companies signed up for the March event, where federal agencies were on hand accepting resumes.

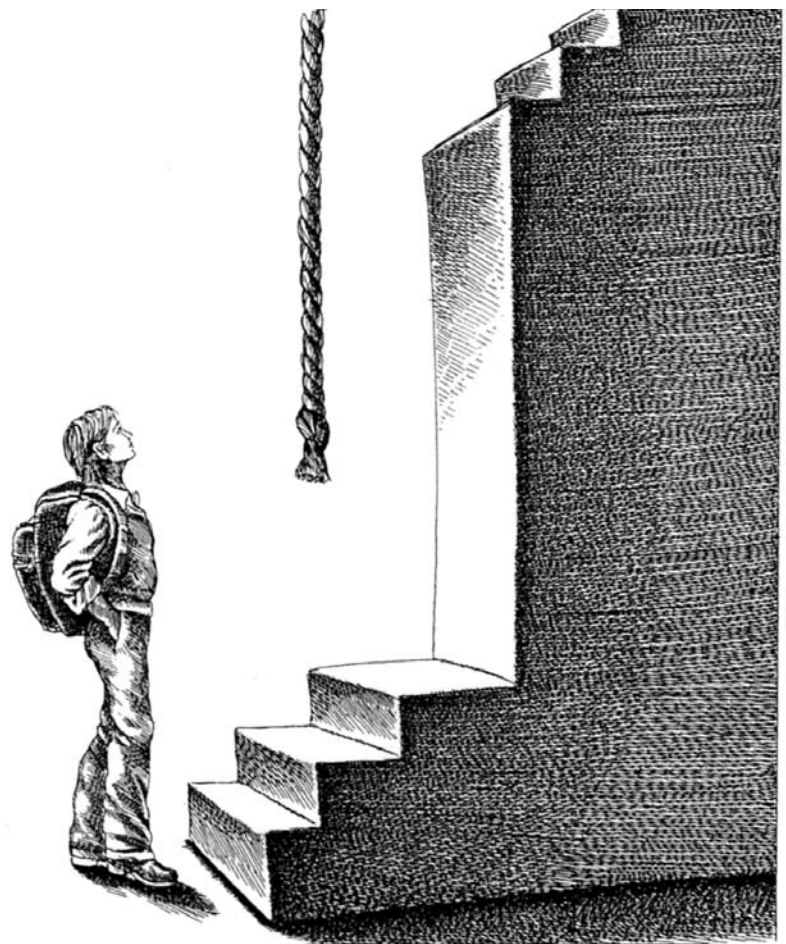
"The good news is, the federal government is definitely hiring," Kerr said.

Still, according to the NACE report, the projected increase is less than 6%.

Not only are fewer companies hiring, but also more of those with openings are offering internships instead of full-time spots. Only a third of on-campus recruiters this year are looking to sign both full-time employees and interns, the report found, down from an average of two-thirds for the classes of 2007 and 2008.

And 16% of employers will be hiring only interns, nearly double the percentage that did so last year.

Experts say more college grads may seek employment in fields that require



comparatively little education.

"Even if you're surviving by being a coffee barista, it's still better than just staying home," says Kerr. "With the job market as difficult as it is, I don't think that students have much of a choice."

Still, serving lattes for minimum wage plus tips is a painful prospect to the average college student, who graduates \$21,000 in the red.

Tuition costs could also explain why graduate schools, traditionally a refuge in tough economic times, have seen uneven application numbers this year.

GRAD SCHOOLS ONCE POPULAR

Lance Choy, director of the career development center at Stanford, notes that grad schools were a popular backup a few years ago during the dotcom bust, but applications are flat this year.

Schools are pulling out the stops to help students beat out the competition. Counselors are encouraging students to turn to their alumni networks for help.

The University of Maryland has conducted workshops with an emphasis on networking. The career office shared by Haverford and Bryn Mawr recently gave each senior 50 business cards listing their name and major.

For students who have already managed to snag an offer, they might want to keep their business cards handy. According to NACE, as many as 8% of employers will be forced to rescind at least some of the offers they made in the fall.

"In this economy, we don't even use the terminology 'sewn up' anymore," says Jaye Roseborough, Middlebury's executive director of career services. More like coming apart at the seams.

Pro-Union Workers Are Illegally Fired

More than one-fourth of all union-representation elections in the 2000s have been marred by an illegal firing of a pro-union worker, according to a new report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research [CEPR].

The paper, *Dropping the Ax: Illegal Firings During Union Election Campaigns 1951-2007* by John Schmitt and Ben Zipperer, finds a significant increase in the current decade in the share of union-representation elections where workers have been fired for supporting the creation of a union.

"Aggressive actions by employers – often including illegal firings – have significantly undermined the ability of U.S. workers to unionize their workplaces," said Schmitt, CEPR senior economist and lead author of the report.

"The financial penalties for illegal actions, including firing pro-union workers, are minimal, so it makes perfect sense for employers to break the law to derail union-organizing efforts."

STUDY COVERED 2001-07

The study finds that pro-union workers were fired in 26% of union election campaigns over the period 2001-07 [most recent available data].

The 26% rate is up from about 16% in the last half of the 1990s. The share of elections in 2001-07 with an illegal firing was almost as high as the historical peak for such activity – 31% during the period 1981-85.

This report updates an earlier report from January 2007, which found a steep rise in illegal firings of pro-union workers in the 2000s relative to the last half of the 1990s.

It updates the index of the probability that a pro-union worker will be fired in the course of a union election campaign, using published data from the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB].

ONE IN FIVE WILL BE FIRED

If we assume that employers target union organizers and activists, and that union organizers and activists make up about 10% of pro-union workers, our estimates suggest that almost one-in-five union organizers or activists can expect to be fired as a result of their activities in a union election campaign.

Since 2000, illegal firings have marred over one-in-four NLRB-sponsored union

elections, reaching 30% of elections in 2007.

The Center for Economic and Policy Research is an independent, non-partisan think tank that was established to promote democratic debate on the most important economic and social issues that affect people's lives.

CEPR's Advisory Board includes Nobel Laureate economists Robert Solow and Joseph Stiglitz; Janet Gornick, professor at the CUNY Graduate School and director of the Luxembourg Income Study; Richard Freeman, professor of economics at Harvard University; and Eileen Appelbaum, professor and director of the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University.

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I See How It Is ...

Three men decided to get married.

The first man married a woman from Ohio. He told her that she was to do the dishes and house cleaning. It took a couple of days, but on the third day, he came home to see a clean house and dishes washed and put away.

The second man married a woman from Michigan. He gave his wife orders that she was to do all the cleaning, dishes and the cooking. The first day he didn't see any results, but the next day he saw it was better. By the third day, he saw his house was clean, the dishes were done and there was a huge dinner on the table.

The third man married a girl from Oklahoma. He ordered her to keep the house cleaned, dishes washed, lawn mowed, laundry washed, and hot meals on the table for every meal. He said the first day he didn't see anything. The second day he didn't see anything, either. But by the third day, some of the swelling had gone down and he could see a little out of his left eye, and his arm was healed enough that he could fix himself a sandwich and load the dishwasher.

- Thanks to George Ballet for this gem

Holocaust Survivors Are Being Ignored

By Thane Rosenbaum

The Holocaust has always been marked by numbers. There was the numbering of arms in death camps and the staggering death toll where the words six million became both a body count and a synonym for an unspeakable crime.

After the Holocaust, Germany performed the necessary long division in paying token reparations to survivors. More recently, Swiss banks and European insurance companies have concealed bank account and policy numbers belonging to dead Jews.

Only with the Holocaust have dehumanization and death been as much a moral mystery as a tragic game of arithmetic. And the numbers continue, although now largely in reverse.

INCHING TOWARD EXTINCTION

After 60 years, Holocaust survivors are inching toward extinction. According to Ira Sheskin, director of the Jewish Demography Project at the University of Miami, fewer than 900,000 remain, residing primarily in the United States, Israel and the former Soviet Union.

Most are in their 80s and 90s. Unless immediate measures are taken, many of those who survived the Nazi evil will soon die without a proper measure of dignity.

According to Dr. Sheskin's data, more than 87,000 American Holocaust survivors – roughly half the American total – qualify as poor, meaning they have annual incomes below \$15,000.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of the North American Jewish Federations, determined that 25% of the American survivors live at or below the official federal poverty line. [The poverty figure in New York City is even higher]. Many are without sufficient food, shelter, heat, health care, medicine, dentures, eyeglasses, even hearing aids.

CONDITIONS BAD WORLDWIDE

Conditions worldwide are similar. It's a sad twist that the teenagers who mastered the art of survival so long ago have been forced, in their old age, to call on their survival instincts once again.

It doesn't have to be this way. Although the various global financial settlements represent only a small fraction of the Jewish property that was plundered during the Holocaust, they still amount to billions of dollars.

Which raises questions: Why aren't the funds being used to care for Holocaust survivors in whose name and for whose benefit these restitution initiatives were undertaken?

Why weren't survivors permitted to speak for themselves in the very negotiations that led to the recovery and distribution of their stolen assets?

Take the Swiss bank settlement, for instance. A federal judge in Brooklyn distributed 75% of the looted assets to survivors in the former Soviet Union, leaving only 4% for destitute survivors in the United States, even though roughly 20% of the world's Holocaust survivors live in America.

ASSETS ONCE AGAIN DIVERTED

Assets that had been stolen by the Swiss were once again diverted, this time by the charitable inclinations of a judge who, ignoring the voices of survivors, severed the connection between the victims of the theft and the proceeds of the recovery.

On the matter of insurance, a federal judge in Manhattan recently approved a

It's Bring Your Gun To Church Day

By Bill Berkowitz

The news media have reported that the Arkansas House of Representatives "approved a bill allowing concealed handguns in churches, despite hearing arguments that lawmakers should put their faith in God, not guns."

The bill, which easily passed in the House and is headed to the Senate, "removes churches and other houses of worship from the list of places where concealed handguns are banned," leaving only bars as "private entities where concealed weapons are banned."

Five days later, Jim Adkisson pleaded guilty to last year's shooting rampage inside the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church that killed two parishioners and wounded half-a-dozen others.

In the coming years, other state legislatures will no doubt debate the wisdom of allowing churchgoers to carry weapons inside of churches.

In the meantime, Jeff Hawkins, a former chief security officer for a worldwide Christian ministry, has founded the Christian Security Network [CSN], as a response to burgeoning violence against Christian churches, schools, ministries and missionaries.

"Christian organizations – churches, schools, ministries and missionaries – still struggle with concept of security and how it applies, if at all, to their institution and the Christian community as a whole," he said.

On their website, the Christian Security Network says that it's "a national organization dedicated to the advancement of security, safety, and emergency planning for Christian churches, schools, ministries, and missionaries."

"We address every day risks such as lawsuits and liability, medical emergencies, crime, disasters like fire and destructive weather, violent situations, 'active shooters,' and lost or abducted children; further we believe that by being proac-



settlement in which fewer than 5% of the life insurance policies that had been sold to Jews would be restituted, allowing the Italian insurer, Generali, to escape with more than \$2 billion in unjust enrichment.

By not requiring Generali to disclose the names of policyholders, the settlement amounts to a cover-up. Tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors are being kept from the truth and will likely be foreclosed from bringing individual claims against the corporation that defrauded them.

NO HELP FOR SURVIVORS

The Jewish Claims Conference, an organization established in the 1950s to recover and distribute Jewish property, has assets under its care estimated at \$1.3 billion to \$3 billion, which includes a vast inventory of cash, real estate and artwork.

Despite the urgency of human suffering, the conference insists that it cannot respond to the unmet needs of Holocaust survivors.

Meanwhile, it spent \$32 million last year on programs dedicated to "research, documentation and education." Some of those millions went to a program that paid \$700,000 to a "consultant" – a friend of the organization's president – who, in an interview with The Jewish Week, couldn't recall what he had been asked to consult on.

While the conference supports many worthy projects, it is controlled not by survivors but by surrogates, and operates with limited oversight and financial accountability.

HOLOCAUST OVERSHADOWS ALL

The Holocaust, so large an atrocity, has a way of overshadowing everything, including its survivors. In focusing on the past in order to prevent history from repeating itself, we have forgotten those who are the direct casualties of this crime.

Amid all the Holocaust hoopla the survivors have become secondary.

This neglect is widespread. Even the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has regarded itself as primarily a home for historians and a monument to history, but not as an institution that places survivors first. Yet without their anguished presence the museum would not exist.

One demonstration of its inattentiveness involves the imminent transfer to the museum of electronic copies of Germany's Bad Arolsen archives, which hold 50 million documents pertaining to the fate of more than 17.5 million victims.

See HOLOCAUST Page 18

tive, the Christian community as a whole can minimize these risks.

"We are not 'alarmists.' I do not believe in a 'knee-jerk' reaction to things that happen in our world by taking unrealistic and sometimes dangerous and liable measures. However, we are 'realists.'"

"The Christian community is at risk from all these things and as a whole is behind the curve compared to the secular world in terms of security and emergency preparedness. These situations will occur in the Christian church, in the Christian school, at the Christian ministry and against Christian missionaries."

Jim Hamilton, senior writer for Neighbor Newspapers, recently pointed out that there have been more than 20 people killed in church shootings in the past two years, and the Christian Security Network claims that it "has tracked over 100 criminal incidents in over 25 states against churches."

– The author is a freelance writer covering right-wing groups and movements

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A Dog Of A Movie

Following a woman with a dog out of the movie theater, a man stopped her and said, "I'm sorry to bother you, but I was amazed that your dog seemed to get into the movie so much. He cried at the right spots, moved nervously at boring spots, and laughed like crazy at the funny parts. Don't you find that unusual?"

"Yes," she replied. "I find it very unusual. Especially considering that he hated the book!"

Extremists Joining Army To Hone Skills

By David Holthouse

The racist skinhead logged on with exciting news: He'd just enlisted in the United States Army.

"Sieg Heil, I will do us proud," he wrote. It was a post to AryanWear Forum 14, a neo-Nazi online forum to which "Sobibor's SS," who identified himself as a skinhead living in Plantersville, AL, had belonged since early 2004. [Sobibor was a Nazi death camp in Poland during World War II.]

About a month after he announced his enlistment, Sobibor's SS bragged in another post to Forum 14 that he'd specifically requested and been assigned to MOS, or Military Occupational Specialty, 98D.

MOS98D soldiers are in high demand right now. That's because they're specially trained in disarming Improvised Explosive Devices [IEDs], the infamous roadside bombs that are killing and maiming so many U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Presumably, part of learning how to disarm an IED is learning how one is made.

HE REMAINS MUM

"I have my own reasons for wanting this training but in fear of the government tracing me and me losing my clearance I can't share them here," Sobibor's SS informed his fellow neo-Nazis.

One of his earlier posts indicated his reasons serve a darker purpose than defending America: "Once all the Jews are gone the world will start fixing itself."

Many analysts believe that Timothy McVeigh, mastermind of the 1995 Oklahoma City federal building bombing that killed 168 people, was radicalized during his experience as a soldier in the first Gulf War.

Sobibor's SS included enough biographical details in his various posts to Forum 14 over the years, including that he's a single father from the small town in southern Alabama.

He said that a military investigator with access to enlistment records in recent months should have little trouble determining whether the Army may actually be teaching a skinhead with genocide on his mind about tactical bomb-making.

But there's little reason to expect that will happen.

WHITE SUPREMACISTS ALARMING

Two years ago, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report revealed that alarming numbers of neo-Nazi skinheads and other white supremacist extremists were taking advantage of lowered armed services recruiting standards and lax enforcement of anti-extremist military regulations by infiltrating the U.S. armed forces in order to receive combat training and gain access to weapons and explosives.

Forty members of Congress urged then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to launch a full-scale investigation and implement a zero-tolerance policy toward white supremacists in the military.

"Military extremists present an elevated threat to both their fellow service members and the public," U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, an Alabama Republican, wrote in a separate open letter to Rumsfeld. "We witnessed with Timothy McVeigh that today's racist extremist may become tomorrow's domestic terrorist."

THE BRASS TOOK NO ACTION

But neither Rumsfeld nor his successor, Robert Gates, launched any systemic investigation or crackdown. Military and Defense Department officials seem to have made no sustained effort to prevent active white supremacists from joining the armed forces or to weed out those already in uniform.

Furthermore, new evidence is emerging that not only supports the Intelligence Report's original findings, but also indicates the problem may have worsened since the summer of 2006, as enlistment rates have continued to plummet, and the military has struggled to meet recruitment goals in a time of unpopular war.

Asked about the latest developments, military officials last fall declined to comment.

A new FBI report confirms that white supremacists are infiltrating the military for several reasons. According to the unclassified FBI Intelligence Assessment, "White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel Since 9/11," which was released to law enforcement agencies nationwide:

ENCOURAGED TO INFILTRATE

"Sensitive and reliable source reporting indicates supremacist leaders are encouraging followers who lack documented history of neo-Nazi activity and overt racist insignia such as tattoos to infiltrate the military as 'ghost skins,' in order to recruit and receive training for the benefit of the extremist movement."

The FBI report details more than a dozen investigative findings and criminal cases involving Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as well as active-duty personnel engaging in extremist activity in recent years.

For example, in September 2006, the leader of the Celtic Knights, a central Texas splinter faction of the Hammerskins, a national racist skinhead organization, planned to obtain firearms and explosives from an active duty Army soldier in Fort Hood, TX.

HE WAS A NEO-NAZI

That soldier, who served in Iraq in 2006 and 2007, was a member of the National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group.

"Looking ahead, current and former military personnel belonging to white supremacist extremist organizations who experience frustration at the inability of these organizations to achieve their goals may choose to found new, more operationally minded and operationally capable groups," the report concludes.



"The military training veterans bring to the movement and their potential to pass this training on to others can increase the ability of lone offenders to carry out violence from the movement's fringes."

Last May, Army Cpl. Adrian Petty, a member of the Vinlanders Social Club [VSC] skinhead gang, posted several photos to his MySpace page showing himself in uniform serving in Iraq.

One, depicting him riding in a Humvee, was captioned, "On Another VSC Recruiting Mission."

RACIST NUMBERS ARE GROWING

Currently, 46 members of the white supremacist social networking website Newsaxon.com identify themselves as active-duty military personnel. Six of these individuals are members of "White Military Men," a New Saxon sub-group.

The Army is currently investigating war crimes allegations leveled against Iraq combat veteran and active-duty Army soldier Kenneth Eastridge, 24, who in November was sentenced to 10 years in prison for the December 2007 murder of a fellow serviceman.

After Eastridge was arrested for that killing, National Public Radio publicized his MySpace page, which showed Eastridge displaying a tattoo of SS lightning bolts, a common neo-Nazi insignia.

Another member of Eastridge's company recently told Army investigators that Eastridge used a stolen AK-47 to fire indiscriminately at Iraqi civilians from his moving Humvee on the streets of Baghdad.

"The military is to some extent desperate to get people to fight, soldiers who

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HOLOCAUST

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Unfortunately, the museum has failed to commit to making the archives accessible on the Internet so that they can be accessed as easily by Holocaust survivors as by visiting scholars.

So what can be done to honor those who survived but who seem to have been forgotten?

First, all traceable assets held by the claims conference and the negotiated settlements with Swiss bankers and European insurance companies must be returned to their owners, with the remainder used for survivor needs.

Second, Congress should pass the proposed Holocaust Insurance Accountability bill, which would require insurers to publish the names of policyholders and allow survivors to resolve claims on fair and truthful terms.

ALL DOCUMENTATION SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE

Third, all Holocaust documentation, like the Bad Arolsen archives and the recently disclosed Austrian war records, must be made readily accessible. Survivors and their families must have easy access so family histories can be recovered and property claims verified. These archives cannot be just the province of scholars.

Finally, if both the World Jewish Congress and the claims conference fail to achieve transparency in their operations, then Congress or law enforcement should publicly account for the funds that have been controlled by institutions that survivors never elected and did not authorize.

Surviving the Holocaust, which was against all odds, is still a numbers game. The percentages are always against the survivors. Nearly murdered, shamefully defrauded and with the clock ticking, they wait for justice, accountability and, most of all, respect.

- The author is a professor of law at Fordham University and author of *The Myth of Moral Justice*

Jettison Abstinence

How Republicans Could Save Money

By Jodi Jacobson

Republicans these days are very, very deeply concerned about “wasteful government spending.”

House Minority Leader John Boehner complained about wasteful spending in the stimulus. Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana stated: “More big government spending ... won’t cure what ails the American economy.”

House Republican Whip Eric Cantor made the rounds of the Sunday talk shows talking “waste, waste, waste.”

The National Republican Congressional Committee launched ads blasting House Democrats on the stimulus bill, which it ridiculed as “chockfull of wasteful Washington spending.”

You know what? I agree. Let’s get rid of that wasteful Washington spending.

HERE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START

And I have a concrete suggestion that will save over \$200 million in cold, hard cash right away, plus billions of dollars in future healthcare and related economic costs!

Sound too good to be true? Really, it’s not a gimmick. It’s very simple: We just need to zero out funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the next budget cycle.

These programs don’t work to reduce sexual activity in teens, they don’t work to reduce sexually transmitted infections and they don’t work to reduce unintended pregnancies.

What is worse, they waste money both on the front end and the back end. The failure of these programs to effectively contribute to preventing unintended pregnancies and infections from the outset actually costs more money in the long run.

TEEN CHILDBEARING COSTLY

In 2004, for example, teen childbearing in the United States cost taxpayers at least \$9.1 billion, never mind the costs of sexually transmitted infections.

So by investing in abstinence-only programs, taxpayers actually are losing billions at a rapid clip. So it’s easy. Eliminate the funding and we all save money now and money later.

Given the general concern about wasteful spending, the desire to ensure the prudent investments of taxpayer funds in ways that yield positive benefits, concerns about rising health care costs, and the now-overwhelming evidence that abstinence-only programs don’t work, one might assume it will be easy to reach bipartisan agreement that abstinence-only programs, like the bridges to nowhere of the past, should just be cut.



A number of leading advocacy groups, including Advocates for Youth and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. [SIECUS] have launched campaigns urging President Obama to do just that.

Both point to promises made by Obama during the campaign and in his inaugural speech to put an end to these programs, and to ensure evidence drives public policy.

Candidate Obama, for example, “firmly oppose[d] federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.”

He also declared support for “comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate,” and asserted that providing “science-based sex education in schools is the right thing to do.”

As a senator, he was a co-sponsor of the Responsible Education About Life [REAL] Act, which would provide funding for comprehensive, medically accurate sex education, and the Prevention First Act which supports efforts to reduce unintended pregnancy and increase access to contraceptive services and information.

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EXTREMISTS

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are not fit, mentally and physically sick, but they continue to send them,” Eastridge’s attorney told Matthew Kennard, a graduate student at Columbia University’s Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism. “Having a tattoo was the least of [Eastridge’s] concerns.”

FOIA PRODUCES REPORTS

As part of the research for his thesis, “The New Nazi Army: How the U.S. military is allowing the far right to join its ranks,” Kennard used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain from the Army’s Criminal Investigative Division investigative reports concerning white supremacist activity in 2006 and 2007.

They show that Army commanders repeatedly terminated investigations of suspected extremist activity despite strong evidence it was occurring.

This evidence was often provided by regional Joint Terrorism Task Forces, which are made up of FBI and state and local law enforcement officials.

For example, one CID report details a 2006 investigation of a suspected member of the Hammerskins, a multi-state racist skinhead gang, who was stationed at Fort Hood, a large Army base in central Texas.

‘PROBABLE CAUSE’

According to the report, there was “probable cause” to believe that the soldier “had participated in a white extremist meeting and also provided a military technical manual 31-210, Improvised Munitions Handbook, to the leader of a white extremist group in order to assist in the planning and execution of future attacks

on various targets.”

The report shows that agents only interviewed the subject once, in November 2006, before Fort Hood higher-ups called off the investigation that December.

Another report, also from 2006, covers an investigation of another Fort Hood soldier who was posting messages on Stormfront.org, a major white supremacist website.

One CID investigator expresses his frustration at the muddled process for dealing with extremists. “We need to discuss the review process,” he writes. “I’m not doing my job here. Needs to get fixed.”

A third CID report, regarding a 2007 investigation, notes the termination of an investigation of a soldier at Fort Richardson, AK, who was reportedly the leader and chief recruiter for the Alaska Front, a white supremacist group.

According to the report, the investigation was halted because the soldier was “mobilized to Camp Shelby, MS, in preparation for deployment to Iraq.”

Editor’s Note: As this story went to press, Southern Poverty Law Center Chief Executive Officer Richard Cohen wrote Defense Secretary Robert Gates, reiterating the request that the Department of Defense adopt a zero-tolerance policy with respect to extremists in the military. As the article notes, a similar letter, addressed to Gates’ predecessor, Donald Rumsfeld, produced no action by the Pentagon.

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