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# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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VOL. 39, NO. 18

An Independent Journal of Commentary

OCTOBER 10, 2007

## Sooner Party On The Ropes Sham Democrats

By Frosty Troy

Oklahoma's rank and file Democrats are concerned about the future of their party, ripped by an internal fracas that could shred it.

The party is already declining in numbers as a growing Republican Party commands corporate dollars and support from the state's fundamentalist majority.

In one corner is Democratic Gov. Brad Henry, closing out his second and last term. Opposite him is an unlikely crusader, Ivan Holmes, a 70-year-old passionate Democrat who has wrested control of what is left of the party apparatus.

The seething problem surfaced when Democratic State Treasurer Scott Meacham issued a broadside against Chairman Holmes after he was replaced as the Democratic Central Committee representative for statewide elected Democrats.

Meacham is Gov. Henry's obvious choice to succeed him. The Elk City banker is Henry's closest political ally and is an invited guest at all of the governor's numerous dog-and-pony shows.

Meacham is a Democratic no-show at party affairs and admitted at a Republican sponsored campaign fundraiser for him that he only registered Democratic because there were "more Democrats than Republicans in north-west Oklahoma."

Since the day he took office, Henry has distanced himself from the Democratic Party, refusing to raise any funds for it and appearing only at state conventions long enough to be on television.

Since he took office, Republicans have taken the Oklahoma House for the first time in 86 years and the Senate is dead even at 24-24.

It was the precipitous decline of the party that brought Holmes, a retired college dean, into the fray. He is trying to win back unions, attorneys and educators - once the mainstay of the party.

Long a political activist, including campaigning for Henry and campaign manager for Labor Commissioner Lloyd Fields, Holmes said he was distraught by the decline of the party.

His attempt to breathe life back into the party was so obviously ignored by

the Henry Administration that the governor has refused to meet with Holmes since he was elected chairman. Holmes keeps calling.

Holmes said not one member of the Central Committee supported his election to head the party but he holds no ill will.

"It was rank and file Democrats across the state who were tired of seeing the party go down who elected me," Holmes said. "I ran because I didn't see anybody who was willing to step up for all Oklahoma Democrats."

He is working without pay for the dead-broke party and has only volunteers and three workers paid for by the Democratic National Committee.

His goals: A solid financial footing, recruiting strong candidates and holding two critical State Senate seats.

Holmes said he has crisscrossed the state, speaking to thousands of fed-up Democrats who want a revived party wrested from the do-nothings.

Meacham went ballistic when he was dumped, despite the fact that in two years he has attended only one Central Committee meeting and has yet to raise a dollar for the party while

wooing Republican donors.

Henry's take on the issue? He told a news conference it was not his job "to build a party, it's my job to build a state."

That is a startling window into the mentality of a governor whose self-centeredness is built around the word "bipartisan," the same word that Meacham uses.

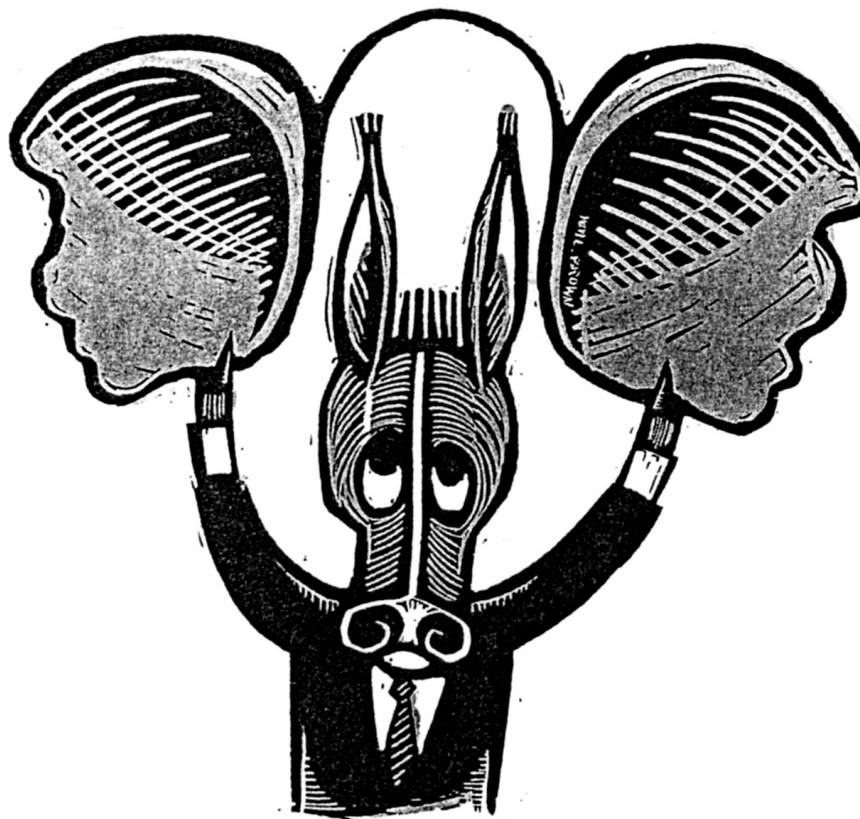
It's a euphemism for wooing Republican votes.

Had it not been for the intervention of George Krumme, ex-Gov. David Walters and State Committeeman Jim Frasier, the Democratic Party headquarters building would have been lost.

Meacham's remarks at his fundraiser hosted by Republican Burns Hargis were taped. Holmes showed up and the fireworks were launched.

The Meacham letter attacking Holmes is totally false, Holmes said, adding: "I am willing to take a lie detector test if he [Meacham] is willing to pay for it."

The Henry crowd sees Holmes "as a loose cannon" but Henry's party perfidy is a matter of record.



He did nothing to help his hand-picked party chairman, Lisa Pryor, Holmes' predecessor.

Henry raised \$3 million for his own re-election race - including donations from powerful corporate Republicans.

The newly elected labor commissioner, Lloyd Fields, took a hit from Meacham who told Holmes, "I must admit I was a little concerned when you were first elected Chair because of your affiliation with Commissioner Fields."

Meacham, a wholly owned subsidiary of Chesapeake's gas barons, has appeared in paid newspaper ads and TV commercials for Chesapeake.

Those are the same gas barons who funded the Swift Boat liars against John Kerry's heroic military record. These liars were fined \$299,500 by the Federal Election Commission.

Democratic Lieutenant Gov. Jari Askins has sided with Holmes, saying the selection of Fields to represent statewide elected Democrats "was a perfect choice."

Ironically, Meacham failed to appear at the elected Democrats' meeting he complains about. He sent an aide, as he usually does.

Holmes said Meacham typically shows up at Democratic functions, asks to speak first, then says he has to leave, careful not to be too identified with Democrats.

Why would a good Democrat want to be featured at a fund-raiser hosted by hard partisan Republican Burns Hargis?

Former Democratic Govs. David Boren and George Nigh have signed on in support of GOP Speaker Lance Cargill's unofficial campaign for governor - the so-called 100 Ideas promotion. Walters declined.

Leadership is not a zero sum game. Ivan Holmes isn't the issue, it's the total lack of party support by the likes of Henry and Meacham and too many counterfeit Democrats using the party like a rental.

Ivan Holmes may be all riled up, but at least he's a ray of hope, which is more than you can say about the sham Democrats hastening the day of a fundamentalist Republican Oklahoma.

# Observations

## Stay Tuned!

The current distress of the Oklahoma State Democratic Party ought to alarm all Oklahomans, not just Democrats. The stakes are much higher than personalities or internal politics.

As we note in our cover story, too many Democrats seeking public office are treating the party like a rent-a-party vehicle – use it and then walk off.

All of Oklahoma has a stake in a revived party because the prime movers in today's Republican Party are not the likes of Henry Bellmon or even Dewey Bartlett.

House Speaker Lance Cargill typifies the radical wingnuts who have gained control of the GOP. They are bought and paid for by the wealthiest Oklahomans and the religious right [which is neither].

We don't mean Democrats should vote in lockstep as do the crowd controlling today's Legislature. But when it goes to the heart of Democratic principles, there should be no question.

Look at the flood of unwarranted tax cuts. Look at the attack on public education and bedrock social programs.

It is a disgrace that so many legislative Democrats are putting their ambition ahead of principles. It is happening far too often and we plan to mount an all-out drive to tell you who the turncoats are in the 2008 session.

## Nursing Homes

Oklahoma's nursing home problems seem to be eternal. They have taken another lump from Oklahoma Health Department inspectors after they checked a national survey.

Surprise! Surprise! The quality problem is an employee problem.

Oklahoma has one of the lowest rankings for quality care in the country. How many times are we going to hear the same story – nursing and other staffing levels are too low and employees are paid too little?

Latest national black eye is from

Public Citizen, a highly respected independent consumer advocacy organization that ranked all the states.

Public Citizen's Ranking of State Medicaid Programs ranked Oklahoma's Medicaid program 47th among the states.

Deficiencies found in Oklahoma nursing homes as reported to federal Medicare/Medicaid officials are about the facilities' environment – sanitary storage and preparation of food, housekeeping and maintenance services, and the prevalence of accident hazards.

Oklahoma's rate for bed sores is 24% higher than the national average. Residents physically restrained in Oklahoma is 10.5% compared to the national average of 5.7%.

The average nursing home facility in Oklahoma employs 1.3 registered nurses full-time, compared to the national average of 2.17 registered nurses.

Oklahoma nursing homes would need a 67% increase in registered nurses to reach the national average.

We don't question for a minute that most nursing home operators and their employees want to do a good job. Problems will continue as long as the Legislature fails to address adequate reimbursement.

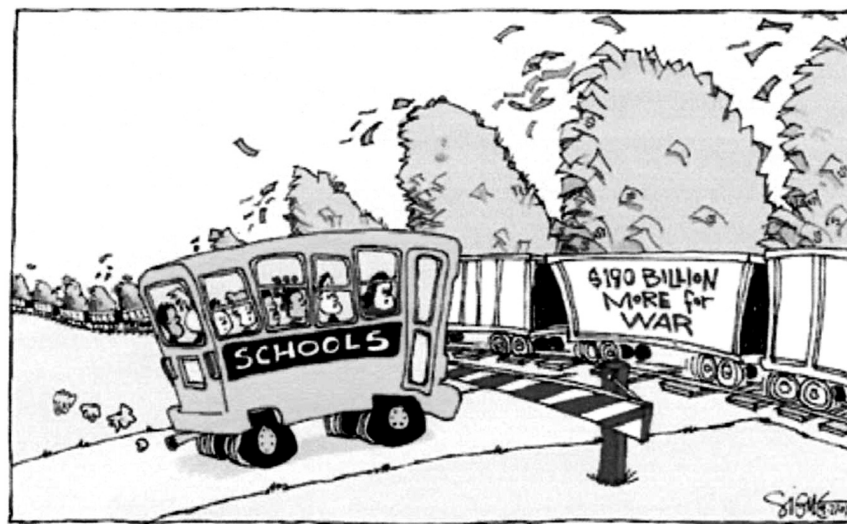
## Sexual Assaults

Roughly one in seven of America's active-duty military soldiers is a woman, but an investigation found that sexual assault and rape are widespread.

One study of National Guard and Reserve forces found that almost one in four women had been assaulted or raped. Last year alone, almost 3,000 soldiers reported sexual assault and rape by other soldiers.

Many don't report the assaults for fear of how it will affect their careers. The shocking phenomenon has a label: military sexual trauma, or MST.

So what is the Pentagon and the "family values" Bush Administration doing about it? Nothing.



## Rice's Race

We keep hearing some Democrats say that state Sen. Andrew Rice, D-OKC, is on a fool's errand in seeking to oust Republican U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, a national joke.

They talk about Rice's lack of experience, but look how Inhofe's experience has made him [and Oklahoma] a national laughingstock.

We often remind first-time candidates that Abraham Lincoln went bankrupt in 1831 and lost five successive elections before winning the presidency.

You can't fail unless you quit. Rice is solid on the issues and even thinking Republicans should be supporting him. If he stays true to Democratic principles, he will be a force in Oklahoma politics.

## Say What?

No telling what is tucked in the various corners of the state budget, but the latest revelation is one for the books.

Seems the state has put up \$1.9 million a year since 1982 for a program that pairs first-year teachers with a committee made up of a mentor teacher, principal or assistant principal and an education professor.

Only problem is the law's effectiveness has not been checked a single time since its inception. That's the responsibility of the State Department of Education but they've never done their job.

## Good Ethics

The new ethics rule is working. The Tulsa Metro Chamber had to cancel a weekend feast for legislators because of the new rule that a lobbyist principal can't spend more than \$300 a year in gifts.

Fat cat lobbies such as the Tulsa Chamber, the State Chamber and banking and oil industries have been showering free food and gifts on legislators for years.

One of the biggest offenders is the far right American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC]. They not only fly legislators to fabulous resorts all expenses paid, they pass out bill drafts that end up becoming laws supported by the far right.

The Oklahoma Ethics Commission ought to adopt the Kansas rule – no gifts period. Wining and dining have gotten completely out of control.

Legislative leaders have to keep schedules so events don't conflict. At one time a legislative leader of our acquaintance moved out of Oklahoma

City because he was tired of attending lobby functions.

It's not wholly the fault of the legislators. They don't dare snub an important lobby. As one said, "No wonder we don't have time to read all the bills."

The Ethics Commission should ignore all the attacks and stick to what is right.

## No! Not Again!

Here we go again. The Corrections Department has finalized its budget request for the fiscal year beginning July 1 – \$572 million, with an increase of \$90 million.

How many times have we heard this tune – a desperately underfunded agency pleads for help and ends up being shorted by millions?

Its budget was shorted \$40 million this fiscal year – as it has been in the past. Republicans were in control this year and they pledged real fiscal conservatism. They were a bigger joke than Democrats of the past.

Our prisons are at 98% of capacity, nearly 25,000 prisoners – yet the need for 2,500 new beds is ignored by both the governor and the Legislature.

The Board of Corrections is also trying to deal with 1,600 prisoners backed up in county jails.

Never mind that prison staffs are overworked and underpaid, the Legislature would rather pass more tax cuts, and the governor keeps saying they are unnecessary but he keeps on signing them.

Oklahoma is in dire need of genuine political leadership. At present there is none.

## Rush Jr.?

Will Oklahoma public education survive its mindless critics? Latest example is a screed published in the Oklahoma Gazette under the byline of attorney Jason Reese.

How in the world did he pass the bar, given his limited research when he spouted off about public schools, cheering GOP Speaker Lance Cargill's call for "merit" pay?

First, he skipped the basics: Oklahoma's teachers are the 47th lowest paid in America; Oklahoma ranks 47th in what it spends on a child's education; one in five students gets free or reduced lunches.

He cites Minnesota, which averages \$52,000 a year for its teachers compared to \$40,250 in Oklahoma.

Nobody wants to skip merit pay for teachers who win national board certification, teach special ed and obtain advanced degrees. Oklahoma has all three.

# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

www.okobserver.net

FOUNDING PUBLISHER • Helen B. Troy [1970-2006]

[ISSN 0030-1795]

The Oklahoma Observer [USPS 865-720] is published the 10th and 25th of each month, except July 25th and Dec. 25th, by AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plymouth Xing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK 73125.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1-Year [22 issues] \$30. Send check to The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Online: Visit www.okobserver.net to use a credit card.

UPDATE ADDRESSES: Please notify us at least two weeks before your move to ensure uninterrupted service. E-Mail to subscriptions@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

LETTERS TO EDITOR: E-mail to letters@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

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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

If anyone is owed an apology, it's Anita Hill. David Boren said the worst vote he cast during his tenure in the U.S. Senate was to confirm Clarence Thomas.

**Dart:** To Senate Co-Leader Glenn Coffee, beefing about Gov. Brad Henry going fishing with trial attorneys while remaining mum about GOP Speaker Lance Cargill's alleged ethics law violations.

Oklahoma is one of only 14 states to make gains in both grades four and eight from 2005 to 2007. Read details of the new National Assessment of Education Progress in this issue.

**Laurel:** To Canadian County Democrats, funding two scholarships to Redlands Community College and Canadian Valley Technology Center, both in El Reno.

The cost of living is 7.8% below the national average in Oklahoma City, 7.4% in Tulsa. Cost of Oklahoma housing continues to be among the five lowest in America.

**Dart:** To Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, peddling the bogus garbage that Oklahoma taxes are too high. The non-partisan Tax Foundation reports we are dead last in combined federal, state and local taxes. Terrill proves all squirrels don't live in the trees.

Our battered penal system is undergoing a wasteful \$800,000 outside audit, but the outside firm has been told by GOP Speaker Lance Cargill to quit talking to the Corrections Department leadership.

**Laurel:** To award winning KFOR-TV's Linda Cavanaugh, celebrating 30 years with the OKC station. Among her achievements are 11 Emmy awards. She is among the last of real pros in Oklahoma TV news.

Oops! We incorrectly attributed authorship of the Sept. 25 article on Sally Frasier's Heart of the Party Woman of the Year honor. The writer actually was Christie Breedlove, a top Tulsa Democratic activist.

**Dart:** To a Republican-dominated Legislature for cutting taxes [and considering more] rather than restoring funding for Henry Bellmon's House Bill 1017 education reforms – including elementary class size.

What has Sen. Mike Mazzei been drinking? This dipstick Tulsa Republican wrote in the Daily Disappointment that legislatures of the past catered to teachers' unions. Then why are they 47th in pay, 47th in what is spent on a student's education? Duh!

**Laurel:** To the Christian Science Monitor for their poll showing 70% of Americans want a president with strong religious beliefs. Just so the wall stays eternally intact.

Oklahoma's economy continues to boom, thanks to the oil and gas industry and casino gambling. Income tax thus far has provided \$163 million but the GOP wants to repeal it without an alternative revenue source.

**Dart:** To Urban Tulsa Weekly for public school bashing – featuring disgraced "journalist" Patrick McGuigan and homeschooler Brandon Dutcher [whose far right Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs connection was not identified in his anti-public education screed].

The 2007 Strategic Survey shows America has suffered a significant loss of power and prestige worldwide since George Bush assumed the presidency. Duh!

**Laurel:** To the 103 Department of Human Services employees who are foster parents. Any of the brass at the Daily Disappointment do likewise?

Of more than \$12 billion of U.S. currency shipped by the Federal Reserve to Iraq \$9 billion has gone missing. Read the current issue of Vanity Fair for sickening details.

**Dart:** To the Republican-controlled Legislature for failing to address the growth of gambling addicts – an estimated 37,000 but only three counselors.



One of the comeback stories in recent Oklahoma history is taking place in Tulsa – now leading the state in new jobs and addressing serious street problems.

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma Commerce Secretary Natalie Shirley for confronting Oklahoma's most serious problem – 17% of the population lives below the poverty line. Thanks to a GOP-controlled Legislature, the rich get richer.

Remember when the Enid News was an outstanding newspaper? Their most recent editorial attack on the Oklahoma Education Association was wholly false. OEA said first reach the regional average, then discuss merit pay with teacher input.

**Dart:** To Sunshine Patriot U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe for his cheap shot at Ted Kennedy and other senators for opposing the Iraq war because they haven't visited it. We know Inhofe is a loon but we haven't visited the inside of his brain.

Happiness will be seeing the Bush Administration in our rear view mirror.

**Laurel:** To Alan Greenspan, respected former head of the Federal Reserve, for telling all in his new book – Bush is an economic disaster.

Oklahoma's malpractice condition is grossly exaggerated, according to Physicians Liability Insurance Co., which is owned by the Oklahoma Medical Association. Oklahoma ranks seventh per capita in practicing doctors – up 8% between 2002-2006.

**Dart:** To Oklahoma's so-called leadership, failing to provide a semblance of drug treatment to control an epidemic among Oklahoma's youth. At a recent job fair, out of 200 applicants, 190 failed a drug test. [Oklahoma Commerce Department report]

Know why the Bush Administration is the most incompetent in American history? Bush has employed 150 graduates from Pat Robertson's Law School in key positions. It is as much fundamentalist indoctrination as legal education.

**Laurel:** to Stephanie Canada, Shawnee physical education teacher named Teacher of The Year. That means \$50,000 in cash and prizes, including a Toyota Prius for a year.

Mexicans make up 29% of the American foreign born group, and 30.7% of all foreign-born workers.

**Dart:** To OKC's MidCity Advocate, shill for the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs – worst Oklahoma basher in modern state history.

America spends an average of \$7,000 per capita per year on health care – 28% more than any other industrialized country even after adjusting for relative wealth. [McKinsey Global Institute]

**Laurel:** To Rep. Al Lindley, D-OKC, for his relentless defense of Oklahoma's constitutional prohibition against funding any or all religious programs. Read Section 11-5 of the Oklahoma Constitution.

Talk about a fool's errand, California rightwinger Ward Connerly is car-petbagging in Oklahoma for an initiative petition to ban affirmative action. The only law ever passed here was thrown out.

**Dart:** To the Bush Administration for privatizing air traffic control, hiring Lockheed-Martin to operate the system. OU picked up a \$132 million contract to train controllers. Thirty-six flight service centers have been closed, including McAlester and Wichita.

A quiet revolution is taking place in Oklahoma – 40,000 Sooners now employed in the bioscience field, compared to 8,000 10 years ago.


**Laurel:** To OU President David Boren, hammering the tax happy GOP-controlled Legislature for poor higher education funding. He said 30 years ago higher ed received 42% of its funding from the state. Now it's 21.5%. Thus, huge tuition hikes.

Turnover rate in Oklahoma's Corrections Department is 57% within the first 18 months of employment. Staffing today is at 82%.

**Dart:** To former Democratic Govs. George Nigh and David Boren for serving on the board of GOP Speaker Lance Cargill's 100 Ideas Foundation – clearly his campaign for governor. The donor list is mostly secret.

Kudos to Dr. Edna Manning, Dr. Bert Corr and Dr. John A. Ludrick, named to the Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Isn't it interesting how upset all the Republicans are about the MoveOn.org ad in the New York Times?

Oddly, they were not the least bit offended when Swift Boat Veterans for Truth [sic] slandered American war hero and Purple Heart recipient John Kerry.

Where was their outrage when Rove and Bush attacked Sen. Max Cleland as being unpatriotic and ran ads linking him to Osama bin Laden?

Neither Bush, Rove or Cheney could find Vietnam on a map, but Cleland lost three limbs in that war. Look at how they've derided Sen. Jim Webb, a former Marine and Vietnam War hero. Webb won the Navy Cross, Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. His only crime was coming to his senses and joining the Democratic Party.

What this says to me is go fight for your country and when you get back the Republicans will attack and vilify you. All this phony concern about the reputation of Gen. Patraeus is sickening.

Deborah Lewis  
Garland, TX

Editor, The Observer:

Forty-one years ago I took an oath and was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the United States Marine Corps. I swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States and to obey my superior officers up to and including the Commander-in-Chief. In return, I expected truth, honesty and a genuine concern for my well-being and safety. Those expectations are as valid now as they were then.

I spent the TET Offensive of 1968 at an obscure place called Khe Sanh. Four decades have passed and I still think of my friends whose names are engraved on The Wall. I still ponder whether their dying had a purpose.

It is intolerable for the Bush Administration to use spin tactics, half-truths, and out-right lies to promote this "just war." For the brave men and women serving and dying, the war in Iraq is not just a "comma" in the book of world history. Credibility is based on trust and trust is based on truth. Motives for the Iraq War lack credibility and this administration has violated the trust of the brave men and women serving in our Armed Forces. Unquestioned loyalty cheapens our patriotism. Thirty-eight hundred Americans and thousand of Iraqis have died in this long war. Those that survive will carry their experiences with them forever. The Iraq War veterans will have their "Wall." Forty years from now they will still question the motives

for this war and if their friends died in vain. Enough! End this war now.

Ron Wasson  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Frosty Troy's article The Color of Crime [9.10.07 issue] suggesting there is no judicial or police bias involved in the treatment of blacks involved with our Criminal [in]Justice system sent chills down my spine, and is preposterous. As I read the article it left me feeling a deep sense of outrage as a person of color, and one who knows that your analysis and the case study you cited, The New Century Foundation's The Color of Crime, is flawed.

I would like for you to acknowledge another perspective on the Color of Crime, featured in The Oklahoman [9.21.07], Leonard Pitts Jr.'s syndicated column [from the Miami Herald], No Justice in 'black justice.' Blacks receive very little justice in this country, regardless of where they live, but especially if they live in Oklahoma!

The Criminal (in)Justice System is solidly built not only on judicial and police bias against blacks, it is sustained and maintained by intentionally seating all "white" juries.

Loyce Newton-Edwards  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I have read your excellent article entitled The Color of Crime in which you prove the falsehood of the myth that minorities are more likely to be railroaded to prison because police and judges are universally biased.

I believe your article is very accurate and needed. It is needed because too many people subscribe to the myths that you discuss.

Bill Graves  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I am a big fan of The Observer, and I typically read the laurel and dart section first because it is usually both right-on and hilarious. However, I about choked when I read that you awarded a laurel to Ben Fenwick of the Gazette for "the most comprehensive article" he wrote concerning the proposed Red Rock power plant.

I would like to point out that Janice-Francis Smith [Capitol reporter of the Journal Record] has been reporting on the issue since June 14, and has written almost a dozen articles since, including a special 2,800-word, comprehensive-as-its-gets-before-it-becomes-a-book article that ran on Aug. 30, detailing everything you could ever have wanted to know about the pros and cons of coal vs. natural gas,



plus an analysis of all the major players involved.

Frankly, she could write circles around any of the Gazette's people and does so on a routine basis. She was on top of this issue long before the Gazette and did a much better job! I've attached her best one if you don't take my word for it.

Sarah Clough  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Thank you for a great cover story on CareerTech. It has done - and can do more - for business development and economic development than anything else we have in Oklahoma. I will be pushing for more support for it this year.

Danny Morgan  
Prague

Editor, The Observer:

Noted your small piece in a recent edition of the Observer re: the cleaning up of American History to kids in schools - at all levels. Thought you might like to check out a book *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen, professor emeritus at the University of Vermont. The book I read is a 1995 edition. Via e-mail he told me he had produced a second work in, I believe, 2003, and unfortunately nothing has changed.

One of the critical points he makes is one that has been well known for years and matches yours. Texas and California dominate the information in so-called academic history books.

Loewen also did major work entitled "Sundown Towns" which describes the history of towns and counties outlawing African Americans after sundown. Makes you sick to read it.

I have pressed for improved history instruction for along time. Should be two years at least. Even when I graduated [1942] we never got past World War I and to think of what has happened in the meantime makes the challenge even more critical. That's my message for today. Enjoy the Observer despite the heavy [for obvious reasons] load of Oklahoma stuff.

Jack McKee  
Kingfield, ME

Editor, The Observer:

When you go vote November 2008 for president, you will have two choices: Republican or Republican Lite. At least I will get to vote for a Democrat in the primary.

Al Engel  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

A new series for TV this fall is a program called "Kid Nation." The question that needs to be asked is, since we are already being governed by an administration that is exactly like a "Kid Nation," why do we want to watch a fictional version of this crisis?

We are in a war brought by an irresponsible George Bush that loses money and weapons as fast as they can make them. Plus the people that caused this mess are already making the Democrats responsible!

Greg Scroggins  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

How to be a democrat.

Sorry, I couldn't find a better word. Note the small "d," but it occurs to me as I see the political mess we have stirred up in Iraq that this area, with some of the oldest beginnings of our civilization, seems to have great difficulty learning the concept of "democracy."

With a history of having law-and-order, political activities, public services, etc., "bestowed" on their country by a ruler or "ruling power," there appears to be a "learning curve" required for a successful democracy ... for a do-it-yourself government.

Learning Democracy 101 [Your list would probably be better than mine...]:

- A 'free election' is the smallest part of a self-ruling democracy.

- The 'Rule of the Majority' won't cut it. [Remember the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat?"]

- Our own system has been characterized more as The Protection of the Minority than the Rule of the Majority. [After all, they say that in 1936 a free election in Germany would have given Hitler a smashing victory!]

- In a Democracy, your religion is as important as mine.

- In a Democracy, every citizen is as important, and as subject to the law, as any other.

- In a Democracy, if you let me speak, I've got to let you speak, and vice versa.

- But the hard part in a Democracy is understanding that everyone will have to agree with all of the above!

Now, are all of these things necessary for a proper democracy? Maybe not, but if many of these are missing, and you're looking for stability, you'd probably be better off looking for an all-wise beneficent dictator!

Democracy, anyone?

Bob Axworthy  
Oklahoma City

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## Frosty's Notebook

# Theocracy?

If you think the religious right consists mostly of fundamentalist freaks who will lose their drive to turn America into a theocracy, guess again.

Sixty-five percent of Americans believe that the nation's founders intended the U.S. to be a Christian nation and 55% believe that the Constitution establishes a Christian nation.

The State of the First Amendment 2007 national survey was released by the First Amendment Center and carries some scary findings for America's religious pluralism and a free press.

The survey found that 71% of Americans would limit the amount a corporation or union could contribute to a political campaign, with 64% favoring such a limit on individual contributions.

Sixty-two percent would limit the amount a person could contribute to his or her own campaign. Support for such limits increased from the 2000 survey.

More than 56% believe that the freedom to worship as one chooses extends to all religious groups, regardless of how extreme – down 16 points from 72% in 2000.

More than 58% of Americans would prevent protests during a funeral procession, even on public streets and sidewalks; and 74% would prevent public school students from wearing a T-shirt with a slogan that might offend others.

Some 34% think the press “has too much freedom,” but 60% of Americans disagree with the statement that the press tries to report the news without bias, and 62% believe the making up of stories is a widespread problem in the news media – down only slightly from 2006.

The survey reveals that 25% said the First Amendment “goes too far in the rights it guarantees,” well below the 49% recorded in the 2002 survey that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 but up from 18% in 2006.

“Americans clearly have mixed views of what First Amendment freedoms are and to whom they should fully apply,” said Gene Policinski, vice president and executive director of the First Amendment Center.

“To me the results of this year's survey endorse the idea of more and better education for young people – our nation's future leaders – about our basic freedoms.”

The right to practice one's own religion was deemed “essential” or “important” by nearly all Americans [97%]; as was “the right to speak freely about whatever you want” [98%], and to “assemble, march, protest or petition the government” [94%].

“Still, Americans are hard pressed to name the five freedoms included in the First Amendment,” he said. Speech is the only one named by a majority of respondents [64%], followed by religion [19%], press and assembly [each 16%] and petition [3%].

While the survey shows Americans highly value religious freedom, a significant number support favoring the religion of the majority, especially in public schools.

## Taxing Food

If taxes are to be cut again – Republicans know the price of everything and the value of nothing – let it be Sen. Jay Paul Gumm's crusade to eliminate the state sales tax on food.

The Durant Democrat said there is a “moral imperative” for Oklahoma's working families to remove the state sales tax on groceries, estimated at \$250 million to \$300 million.

The “moral imperative” is to quit cutting taxes for the wealthy and fat cat corporations – tax cuts favored by Gumm.

It will be the third year he will try to end collection of the 4.5 cents on groceries. It is the single most regressive tax anywhere in the United States – paid disproportionately by the poor and everybody else.

The exemption would not extend to alcoholic beverages or tobacco. Gumm's proposal would allow municipalities and counties to continue collecting the grocery sales tax unless each jurisdiction individually makes the decision to honor the exemption.

Two years ago a bill to cut the grocery sales tax was denied a hearing in the House of Representatives' Revenue and Taxation Committee, effectively killing it. Last year Gumm's proposal was denied a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee.

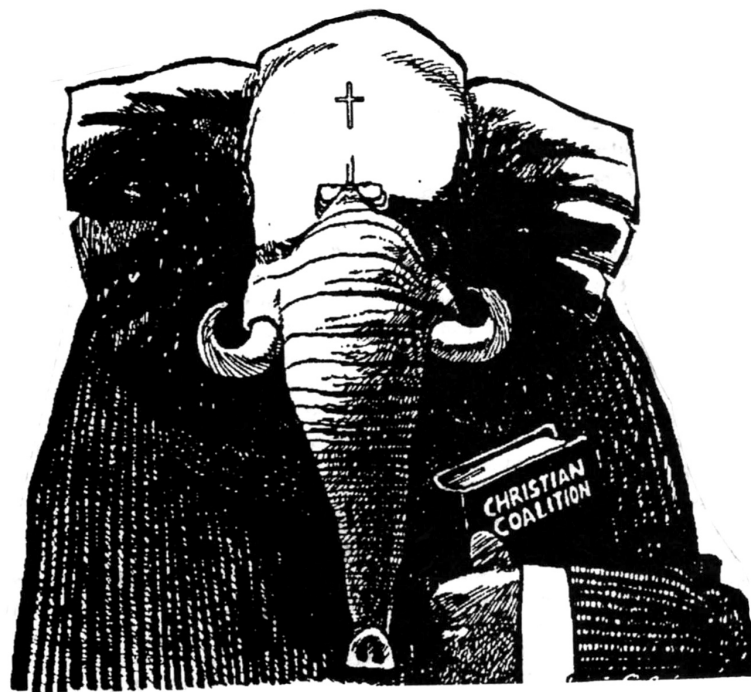
Instead, the GOP-controlled Legislature cut taxes \$33 million, mostly for corporations. It was undeserved because the cost of doing business in Oklahoma is 85% of the national average. The Miliken Annual Cost of Doing Business Index ranks Oklahoma 40th.

The bottom three-fifths of taxpayers – most Oklahomans – pay an effective tax rate of 11% for state and local taxes. The wealthiest Oklahomans pay an effective state and local tax rate of less than 9%.

Underfunded public schools, higher education, corrections, mental and public health would take a further hit if Gumm's bill becomes law without replacing the income.

What about the millions of dollars in bills the state owes? What about funding House Bill 1017 reforms?

The Legislature should consider removing the recent tax cuts for the wealthy and businesses in order to fund elimination of the sales tax on groceries. Don't hold your breath.



Four decades after the Supreme Court declared state-sponsored religious practices unconstitutional in public schools, 58% of respondents support teacher-led prayers and 43% favor school holiday programs that are entirely Christian.

Moreover, 50% would allow schools to teach the Bible as a factual text in history class.

The strong support for official recognition of the majority faith appears to be grounded in a belief that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, in spite of the fact that the Constitution nowhere mentions God or Christianity.

People define “Christian nation” in various ways – ranging from a nation that reflects Christian values to a nation where the government favors the Christian faith.

Almost a third of respondents appear to believe that the religious views of the majority should rule: 28% would deny freedom to worship to any group that the majority considers “extreme or on the fringe.”

First Amendment Center Scholar David Hudson said the survey results indicate the public does not have strong support for student expression – an unfortunate reality given that students may not appreciate our constitutional democracy if they live in an environment that does not respect their rights to freedom of expression.

We all would do well to remember the words of Justice Robert Jackson many years ago: “That boards of education are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual ...”

This survey seems to be telling us they don't trust it, either. While more than 9 of 10 do say the right to be informed by a free press is essential or important, significant numbers want to limit that freedom.

A third think the press has too much freedom and 60% believe the press is biased in its reporting or, worse, falsifies or makes up stories. These responses are far too chilling for a healthy democracy.

– *The First Amendment Center works to preserve and protect First Amendment freedoms*

## Tax Dollar

Here are the actual voting records of various Arabic-Islamic States which are recorded in both U.S. State Department and United Nations' records:

- Kuwait votes against the United States 67% of the time.
- Qatar votes against the United States 67% of the time.
- Morocco votes against the United States 70% of the time.
- United Arab Emirates votes against the U.S. 70% of the time.
- Jordan votes against the United States 71% of the time.
- Tunisia votes against the United States 71% of the time.
- Saudi Arabia votes against the United States 73% of the time.
- Yemen votes against the United States 74% of the time.
- Algeria votes against the United States 74% of the time.
- Oman votes against the United States 74% of the time.
- Sudan votes against the United States 75% of the time.
- Pakistan votes against the United States 75% of the time.
- Libya votes against the United States 76% of the time.
- Egypt votes against the United States 79% of the time.
- Lebanon votes against the United States 80% of the time.
- India votes against the United States 81% of the time.
- Syria votes against the United States 84% of the time.
- Mauritania votes against the United States 87% of the time.

### OUR FOREIGN AID LISTED

U.S. Foreign Aid to those that hate us:

Egypt, for example, after voting 79% of the time against the United States, still receives \$2 billion annually in U.S. Foreign Aid.

Jordan votes 71% against the United States and receives \$192,814,000 annually in U.S. Foreign Aid.

Pakistan votes 75% against the United States receives \$6,721,000 annually in U.S. Foreign Aid.

India votes 81% against the United States receives \$143,699,000 annually in U.S. Foreign Aid.

Perhaps it is time to give the tax savings back to the American workers who are having to skimp and sacrifice to pay the taxes.

# Speaker Snared In Ethical Web?

By Arnold Hamilton

The Oklahoma Ethics Commission's investigation into 2004 House Republican fundraising tactics hasn't just thrown a scare into Speaker Lance Cargill and his considerable political ambition.

It's also exposed a schism within the GOP that threatens to make 2008 even more dicey, legislatively and electively, for the party – even in a state as red as Oklahoma.

“What we need to be concerned about is there's an ongoing investigation and there may be some violations,” said state Republican Chairman Gary Jones. “Whatever the facts are, we need to deal with them.”

Nearly \$50,000 that current and former Republican lawmakers earmarked for the state party somehow ended up in an Oklahoma County GOP account to which the House Republican political action committee – headed by honorary chairman Cargill – apparently had access.

## SHENANIGANS HELPED FUEL HOUSE TAKEOVER?

The surreptitious transfers may have enabled Cargill and Co. to skirt state campaign laws and steer additional resources into key races, helping the party seize control of the House for the first time in more than 80 years.

In what can only be described as a carefully-worded statement, Cargill denies any wrongdoing, noting he “did not solicit, receive, deposit or expend any Victory Fund checks.”

What he didn't say was that as chairman of the House Republican PAC, he didn't have to. He was in position to set PAC policy and order it carried out, leaving colleagues and underlings to “solicit, receive, deposit and expend” the money.

Former House Speaker Todd Hiatt, for one, wasn't sure how his \$5,000 contribution to the state party ended up in the Oklahoma County GOP fund.

“That's a question for the PAC chairman [Cargill],” Hiatt told the Tulsa World. “He managed the finances for the Republican [House] caucus.”

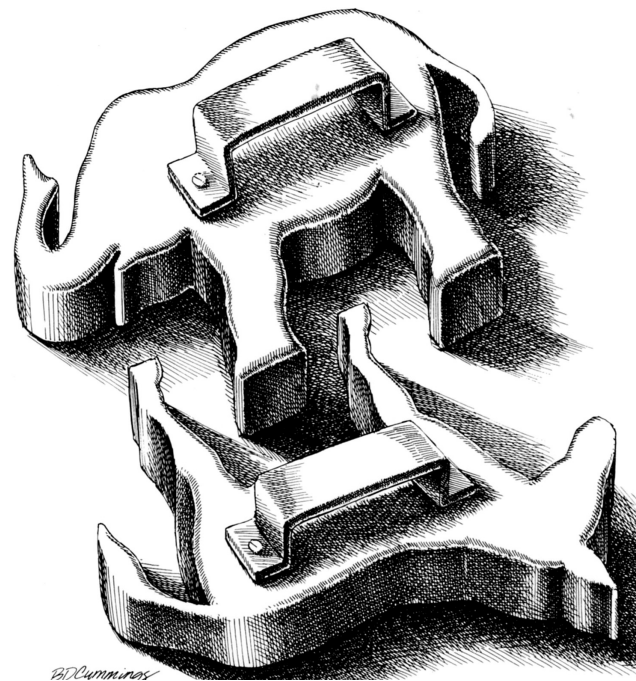
## INVESTIGATION COULD LAST LONG TIME

It's doubtful the inquiry into Cargill and Co. will be completed any time soon.

The state Ethics Commission is perpetually short-staffed because legislative leaders – Republicans and Democrats alike – never funded it at levels necessary to fully enforce the laws. They recoiled at the idea of a strong, independent agency enforcing campaign finance laws, yet they coveted its existence to help create the illusion of strict adherence.

Consider the irony: Starving the Ethics Commission financially now means the inquiry probably will take longer than it should, leaving a dark cloud over the speaker and his party in an important election year when the GOP hoped to finally gain control of the deadlocked state Senate as well.

Moreover, the questionable transfers are likely to remain in the media spotlight throughout the 2008 legislative session thanks to a most unlikely source: Republican state Rep. David Dank of Oklahoma City.



Dank responded to news of the Ethics Commission inquiry by proposing an ethics reform package stunning in its breadth: Not only would it eliminate PAC-to-PAC contributions but it also would ban in-session fund-raising and put more teeth into punishment for violators.

The PAC-to-PAC ban is especially important because it would make it more difficult for special interests and candidates to skirt campaign limits and disguise who's giving how much to whom.

It's possible, however, that Dank's proposal could be something of a Trojan horse. It remains to be seen if it will get a serious legislative hearing.

## GOP'S FIERCE INTRA-PARTY SQUABBLING

The Cargill and Co. inquiry exposed fissures within an Oklahoma GOP already grappling with President Bush's precipitous decline in popularity – 59% of Oklahomans responding to a late September SurveyUSA Poll for OKC's KFOR-TV disapproved of his job performance – and Democratic Gov. Brad Henry's continued strong showing – 75% overall approval rating, including 72% among Republicans.

Word of the Ethics Commission inquiry set off a round of finger-pointing within the GOP. Former state chairman Chad Alexander accused state Rep. Mike Reynolds, R-OKC, of lodging the ethics complaint. Reynolds sidestepped the charge, but who could blame him if it were true? He was targeted for defeat in the primary by House GOP leaders.

The friction between Cargill and Co. and Reynolds was obvious during the last session. Reynolds did not bother to attend House GOP caucus meetings and he frequently voted in opposition to the speaker's positions on legislation.

In addition, by steering contributions away from the state party and into an Oklahoma County fund where they could access them, House leaders gave a no-confidence vote to state party chairman Jones. In effect, they didn't trust him to spend the money where they thought it could make the most difference.

When asked about it, Jones said, “I don't want to make any speculation. We did get some checks from candidates. It's not like every check didn't come here.”

# Terrill's Devotion To Voodoo Economics

By Arnold Hamilton

Voodoo, redux?

Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, is leading the charge yet again for more state tax cuts, despite projections that the cost of financing Oklahoma's basic services – much less its debts – could exceed revenues as early as next year.

The long-term impact is even more foreboding: The \$700-million-plus in already-approved tax cuts could leave the state with a crippling 18% revenue shortfall by 2036, according to research presented by the non-partisan Alliance for Oklahoma's Future and Washington's Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

With SQ 640 making it all but impossible to raise taxes, future lawmakers and governors could be left with draconian choices to make up the difference, such as eliminating Medicaid or slashing state spending on local schools 70%.

Even if legislators and voters could be persuaded to enact higher taxes, it would take a 40% hike in income taxes to bridge the gap.

## THE GOP'S BASS-ACKWARDS APPROACH

“We're going about this backwards,” says state Rep. Scott Inman, D-Del City. “We're talking about tax cuts before we know what our needs and liabilities are.”

Of course, Terrill and his government-hating colleagues won't be around – because of term limits – to deal with the chaos inflicted by their fealty to what former GOP President George H.W. Bush derided as “voodoo economics.”

And the truth is, they could care less: They are devoted to “supply side” economics, preaching the debunked gospel that slashing taxes actually generates more revenue.

Only in Alice in Wonderland.

Further, Terrill and Co. worship at Grover Norquist's anti-government shrine, where the bedrock philosophy is the simple-minded “starve government and drown the rest in the bathtub.”

## THE ULTIMATE GOAL: DESTROY GOVERNMENT

The reality is, supply side economics isn't even a plausible theory. It's a tool to destroy government – period.

Terrill, chairman of the House Revenue and Taxation subcommittee, has scheduled with the blessing of GOP Speaker Lance Cargill a series of hearings this fall

– seven in October and November – to consider future tax “relief.”

He feigns interest in a sober, intellectual analysis of taxes and spending. But at last month's first hearing, his questions of who warn against further cuts betrayed a mind already made up. His queries weren't framed to shed light, but to bolster his case for more cuts.

The GOP-controlled House's press office dutifully produced a news release – long before the more than three-hour hearing had ended – quoting only Terrill's hand-picked supply-side gurus from the misnamed Americans for Prosperity, national policy director Phil Kerpen and state director Stuart Jolly.

## AT THE BOTTOM IN BOTH SPENDING AND TAXES

Both asserted that Oklahoma is a high-tax state, hampering its ability to attract new businesses. The reality, though, is starkly different: Oklahoma is 50th in state spending and 45th in overall taxes.

“It's hard to say we're digging a hole on the spending side,” says David Blatt, public policy director for the Tulsa-based Community Action Project.

“That's the problem. We're under-funding everything and patching the pieces together the best we can.”

Terrill also dismisses the concerns of University of Oklahoma President David Boren – the former governor and U.S. senator is urging a moratorium on future tax cuts.

“That call is premature,” says Terrill, adding he believes tax cuts and targeted spending increases “are not mutually exclusive.”

## HOW ABOUT PAYING STATE'S BILLS FIRST?

Terrill incessantly repeats his claim that the tax cuts did not reduce any state services. But it's disingenuous spin that fails to acknowledge that declining revenues prevent the state from paying its bills – leaving public pensions, prisons, highways, bridges and schools hundreds of millions of dollars short.

And reviving prospects that state and federal courts eventually will get involved, setting public policy on corrections and education.

Terrill's affability can't conceal his core: He never lets the facts stand in the way of his political demagoguery. In his case, the cliché fits: The most dangerous place in Oklahoma is between Terrill and a TV camera.

# Oklahoma Report Card Is Improving

A national report card shows Oklahoma was one of 14 states to make gains at both Grade 4 and 8 mathematics and at Grade 4 reading. The state remained statistically unchanged in Grade 8 reading, but statistically at the national average.

State Superintendent Sandy Garrett reported results from the information in the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP].

In 2007, a sample of approximately 2,800 Oklahoma students took portions of each of the four NAEP exams. The sample was comprised of 40% minority students – 10% were black, 8% Hispanic and 2% Asian.

Approximately 52% of the sample qualified for free and/or reduced lunch, a federal poverty indicator. Oklahoma students who participated in NAEP did so sometime between late January 2007 and March 2007.

“NAEP is unlike any other assessment in which Oklahoma participates,” Garrett said. “It is a challenging exam that requires essay and short-answer responses. NAEP results can be helpful in pinpointing areas for additional instructional focus.”

## SCHOOLS WILL BE MINORITY MAJORITY

“Like the nation, we have had dramatic student demographic changes and soon should be a minority-majority state in terms of our student population,” Garrett said.

“The percentage of our students taking the test who are white has fallen while the percentage of American Indian, Hispanic and low-income test-takers has climbed. It’s helpful for us to look specifically at recent years to see if we’ve been responding effectively to greater and changing demands in the classroom.”

It is important to note that NAEP results for each state include only public school students while NAEP national results reported by the National Center for Education Statistics include both public and private school results.

## KEY FINDINGS ARE REPORTED

Key NAEP findings for Oklahoma on the 2007 mathematics assessment include:

- Oklahoma is one of only 14 states to make gains at both Grades 4 and 8 from 2005 to 2007.
- Oklahoma is one of only 23 states to make gains at Grade 4 and one of only 26 states to make gains at Grade 8 from 2005 to 2007.
- In 2007, Oklahoma came close to reaching the national average scale score in both Grade 4 and Grade 8.
- Oklahoma American Indian students [one out of every five Oklahoma students] are out-performing their peers nationally in 2007.

# Public Ed Haters Target Rural Schools

By Tom Ivester

In 2006 the Oklahoma Legislature passed a \$3,000 per teacher pay raise. However, the Legislature failed to fully fund the raise. This included failure to provide money for the retirement and tax costs and money for federally mandated positions. These were unfunded mandates.

We took care of that problem last spring but it was a battle. It greatly affected southwest Oklahoma. I was contacted by Frederick, Hobart, Elk City, Tipton, Sentinel, and many other schools about the hundreds of thousands of dollars that were mandated but not provided.

Practically speaking, the fix to the problem was being held up by those with other agendas. There is a much larger debate over school funding that has been going on for some time.

A dedicated group in the Legislature truly believes too much money is already being spent on education. Some Senators argue that our schools are not using the money they have wisely and should not be provided more.

## SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION IS PRIME STRATEGY

This same group believes school consolidation is one big way to save money.

The current strategy of this group is to slowly starve rural schools. They do this by either placing requirements they know cause financial hardship or directly reducing money to the schools.

This last example is the more subtle. The current school funding formula provides a sparsity factor. This helps supplement rural schools due to the costs of serving a large land area [an example of this is the Sentinel school system]. There is a strong movement to get rid of this sparsity factor in the formula. It is nothing more than a back-door attempt to starve out rural schools.

The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, a Republican think tank in Oklahoma City, states the argument for higher teacher pay is a myth. Further, this organization’s web site states the argument that smaller class sizes are better for students is also a myth.

## GOP WANTS TO ELIMINATE STATE ED DEPARTMENT

The Oklahoma State Republican Party platform calls for elimination of the State Department of Education.

The consolidation effort in Oklahoma seems to be an offshoot of these feelings.

Nationally we see people like Ann Coulter, a far right wing columnist and au-

See CONSOLIDATE Page 9



In Grade 4, they scored a 234, compared to 229 for their national peers. Moreover, while 28% of American Indian students scored Below Basic nationally, 20% of American Indian students in Oklahoma did.

For Grade 8, American Indian students scored a 269, compared to the 265 their national peers scored.

## BLACKS SAME AS NATIONAL REPORT CARD

There was no statistical difference between Oklahoma and the nation in black and Hispanic performance at Grade 4 and no difference at Grade 8 in black performance in the 2007 results.

Oklahoma students who qualified for free and reduced lunch in Grade 4 outperformed [230] students nationally living in poverty [227] and there was no statistical difference between the nation [265] and Oklahoma [264] at Grade 8.

In Oklahoma, the percentage of students who performed “at or above Basic” was not statistically different from that for the nation’s public schools in Grade 4 and came close to being considered statistically the same in Grade 8 [66% for Oklahoma, compared to 70% nationally].

Oklahoma has made steady gains in Grade 4 and 8 math since 2003, the year after NCLB took affect.

## READING REPORT CARD KEYS

Key NAEP findings for Oklahoma on the 2007 reading assessment include:

Oklahoma students have made gains at Grade 4 since 2003, but the scaled score at Grade 8 for Oklahoma, as well as that for the nation, has been statistically level.

Moreover, there is no statistical difference between Oklahoma’s scale score for Grade 8 and the nation’s score in reading.

See REPORT CARD Page 8

# House Plays ‘Chicken’ With Merit Pay

By Jay Paul Gumm

As children, we learn about the game known as “chicken.”

This is a game most of us learn on elementary school playgrounds, but it is also played in politics. A big game of “chicken” with serious consequences for Oklahoma’s children is underway.

Leaders in the House of Representatives declare there will be no more teacher pay raises without so-called “merit pay” being in the mix. They have the power to back up their threat because they can stop any teacher pay raise by bottling it up in a committee.

Many of us believe teachers have been historically underpaid. We have made progress in raising teacher salaries during the past few years, but we still have a ways to go.

## CONSEQUENCES FAR GREATER THAN SCHOOLYARD GAME

For those of us who believe teachers are underpaid, their declaration is no different than the schoolyard bully running at another child as fast as he can, daring him or her to “chicken” out. Sadly, though, the consequences of this game are far greater than a few bumps and bruises.

I do not like most merit pay plans out there. “Merit pay” – more often than not – uses standardized test scores as a key component of determining “merit.” We already over-emphasize standardized tests when evaluating schools.

At their core, merit pay plans that use tests are misguided and do not truly reflect teacher performance. Test scores fail to take into account one fundamental fact: school kids are different, each with different gifts, abilities and challenges.

Some students might have to endure difficult home lives; some might face challenges many of us can only imagine. Those challenges will affect performance.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS MUST EDUCATE ALL STUDENTS

Public education is the only institution that has to educate all children. Teachers should be able to focus on helping children become what God intended for them to become rather than just pushing for a high test score. How do we quantify when a teacher goes above and beyond the call of duty to help a student work through obstacles?

Those who support merit pay suggest that competition among teachers for merit pay dollars would improve performance. I do not believe that would happen. The real competition will be for high performing students – those who test well and, as a result, give the impression one teacher might be better than an-

See MERIT PAY Page 9

# Republicans Hiding Crucial Ed Report

By M. Scott Carter

Oklahoma lawmakers paid more than \$150,000 for a study on education costs and then declined to release the results when they pointed toward more spending, the study's author contends.

State leaders need a much better understanding of the costs associated with meeting new education standards, said the author, John Augenblick, the president of Denver-based Augenblick, Palaich and Associates.

He also defended his firm's 2005 study of the way Oklahoma's education system is funded, saying the question of how much it cost a state to provide education services which meet governmental standards is "a pretty new question."

Augenblick's two-part study, "Calculating the Cost of an Adequate Education in Oklahoma," analyzed the "adequacy of revenues available to elementary and secondary school districts in Oklahoma" for the 2003-04 fiscal year.

## IT WOULD TAKE \$7,000 PER PUPIL

The second portion of the report – finished in April 2005 but never released by the House of Representatives – said state per-student spending would have to be increased to almost \$7,000 to "ensure school districts have a reasonable chance" to meet state and federal student performance expectations.

The state paid more than \$150,230 in April 2005 for the study. With more than 600,000 students enrolled in Oklahoma public schools, records show the state would need to spend an additional \$844 million in new education funding to meet standards set by state lawmakers and the federal No Child Left Behind law.

"One question – and it's a relatively new question that leaders are asking – is 'what does it cost for school districts to reach [those] standards,'" Augenblick said. "No businessman would last 10 minutes if they didn't ask a similar question."

## IT CAN BE DANGEROUS FOR A STATE

"I'm not going to tell you that this stuff isn't controversial," he said. "Sometimes it becomes dangerous for a state to sponsor this type of study; by sponsoring it, it becomes official and has more power."

And then, Augenblick said, the information becomes the legal basis for a lawsuit.

"Quite frankly, there are people who go around telling Republican leaders that 'you are silly to do this type of analysis' ..."

While then-Republican House Speaker Todd Hiett has not said why Augenblick's 2005 study wasn't released during his tenure as House leader, Damon Gardenhire, a spokesman for current House Speaker Lance Cargill, claimed the study was made available, but that its conclusions "were questionable at best, since the firm was clearly a tool of the NEA."

## GARDENHIRE CITES NO SOURCES

"Other studies reach different conclusions," Gardenhire said in an e-mail. "And other states are experiencing fiscal problems because of similarly flawed studies by Augenblick."

Responded Augenblick: "We have no relationship with the NEA. We don't have a contract with them. He [Gardenhire] would have to tell me what he means by that. We don't take orders from anybody. We do what we're asked in the best way that we can."

# Hunger Task Force Swings Into Action

Hunger is a matter of fact in oil-rich Oklahoma – placing the state among the five states with the most hungry people.

A bipartisan task force headed by Sen. Andrew Rice and Rep. Kris Steele are hearing expert testimony on an issue that daily affects thousands of Oklahomans.

"Oklahoma ranks in the bottom five nationally for the number of hungry citizens it has," according to Rice, an Oklahoma City Democrat.

"Half a million Oklahomans are at risk of going to bed hungry, including one out of every five children, and the numbers are increasing at a disturbing rate. These are statistics you expect to see in third world countries, not in Oklahoma."

"We have the resources to address this problem, we just need to bring all the players – public, private, nonprofit and religious communities – to the table to coordinate their efforts."

According to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, most of the thousands of adults that are going hungry are employed, but do not make enough to pay all of their bills and are forced to choose between paying the utilities or buying groceries.

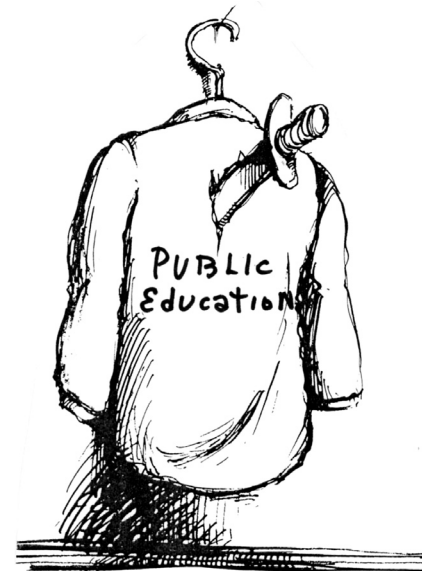
## FOR THE POOR IT'S A SERIES OF BAD CHOICES

Their statistics show that 42% must choose between utilities or food; 33% must choose to pay rent or mortgage or buy food; and 33% must choose to buy medicine or food. In addition, 41% report that one or more household members are in poor health; and 55% of clients have unpaid medical or hospital bills.

Steele, who will co-chair the task force with Rice, added that a lack of good coordination between all the groups working at reducing hunger in Oklahoma is a serious problem facing the state.

"This is especially imperative for school age children," said Steele, a Shawnee Republican. "If left un-addressed, hunger sets in motion an array of outcomes that perpetuate malnutrition, reduce the ability of adults to work, and erode children's ability to learn and lead productive, healthy, and happy lives."

SB 499 was a request bill from the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City and the Eastern Oklahoma Food Bank in Tulsa.



Augenblick also said Gardenhire's statement that his firm seems to reach strikingly similar conclusion in state after state was wrong.

Augenblick cited studies his firm did for Maryland and Kansas, where, he said, the states used "our numbers in [their] education funding system."

"Maryland was very proud of their accountability system," he said. "But they wanted an answer to what it cost and we set about doing the work. Later, the Legislature created a new school finance system and used our numbers in this new system."

## MARYLAND ADOPTED SIX-YEAR PHASE-IN

Maryland officials, he said, "knew there was no way to fund" their formula so they used a six-year phase-in process.

"They now have reached a point where they are funding schools at a level sufficient so districts have no excuse. And, as far as I know, they weren't bankrupt."

Gardenhire countered, saying the firm "seems to find that the only way to solve a state's education problems is to throw hundreds of millions of dollars more at the system."

This almost always seems to hinge on "adequacy" with lawsuits by state-level teachers' unions and public policy fights hanging on Augenblick's intriguing findings, he said.

"Last year, the OEA filed one such lawsuit against the Oklahoma Legislature, and it was dismissed. This seems to follow a pattern of lawsuits seen in other states," he said.

## WHAT 'OTHER' EXPERTS IS HE REFERRING TO?

"Other education experts have questioned Augenblick's methodology," Gardenhire, however, did not say which experts have questioned the firm's work.

Still, Augenblick said he was surprised the study was paid for and not released.

"It would be unusual for a state to do a study and for it not to be made public somehow," he said. "It's unusual in our experience. That doesn't mean people like them and people agree with them; because it's public money, they are normally released."

– The author writes for the Moore American and Norman Transcript, where this story first broke. It also appears on his Internet blog, [www.reddirtpolitical-report.blogspot.com](http://www.reddirtpolitical-report.blogspot.com).

Editor's Note: Oklahoma is 47th in what is spent per child, 47th also in teacher salaries – two figures Gardenhire failed to mention in his partisan attack on Oklahoma teachers.

homa City and the Eastern Oklahoma Food Bank in Tulsa.

The 15-member task force includes representatives from various state agencies as well as religious communities and public and private organizations like the Regional Food Bank. It has until Dec. 31 to submit its findings and recommendations to the governor.

For more information, contact Sen. Rice's office at 405.521.5610 or Rep. Steele's office at 405.557.7345.

# REPORT CARD

From Page 7

With the exception of Hispanics, all subgroups in Oklahoma at Grade 4 and Grade 8 either made gains or performed statistically the same in reading from 2003 to 2007.

At Grade 4, white students increased their score from 220 to 223; blacks climbed to 204 from 195; American Indian students rose to 213 from 206, but Hispanics fell to 198 from 200.

## ONLY HISPANICS FELL BEHIND

At Grade 8, there was no statistical difference in white, black and American Indian student performance, but Hispanic students decreased their score to 241 from 250 in 2003.

The percentage of Oklahoma students at or above Basic has risen from 60% in 2003 to 65% in 2007; however, there has been no statistical change in Oklahoma and across the nation in the percentage of students at Grade 8 scoring at or above Basic.

Oklahoma students' scale score of 217 at Grade 4 came close to being the same statistically as that of the nation's [220] in 2007.

Considering the level of poverty in Oklahoma and the lack of adequate education funding, the state fared quite well. Imagine what it could do with real state leadership.

## North Texas Still Thirsty

# Water Wars Heat Up As Drought Ends

By Robert Jackman

Our 2002-06 drought is history, and lakes and streams are full from summer floods.

Why worry? Because when the Comprehensive Water Plan is presented to legislators in 2011, it may be too late.

By then, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board [OWRB] will have already allocated a majority of the state's quality water in southern streams and lakes to Texans and special interests.

Texas allocations are not in the best interests of greater Oklahoma. Oklahoma's Comprehensive Water Plan may be like locking the barn door after all the horses were stolen.

Oklahoma is the only state allowing out-of-state entities' large water allocations.

### TEXANS ALREADY EYEING NEW OKLAHOMA DAMS

The North Texas Municipal Water Authority [NTMWA] is so confident Texas will beat us in federal court and get access to Oklahoma waters that they are in the process of preliminary planning of four more federal dams in southeastern Oklahoma for Texans' use.

NTMWA and other Texas water authorities serving Dallas-Fort Worth are having discussions with T. Boone Pickens to build a major water pipeline from Pickens' west Texas water rights to below Hugo near Red River to suck up Kiamichi River Basin water to pipe to the Dallas area.

Remember the Alamo? No, remember what Los Angeles did to Owens Valley.

OWRB under current management could transform rural southern and southeastern Oklahoma to indentured "Water Plantations" for Texans' exclusive use.

### A MONEY GRAB IN THE BILLIONS

Paranoid thinking? Then ask yourself why the Oklahoma Water Resources Board hides from the public and legislators the true price per barrel of Oklahoma water? We all know the posted price per barrel of Oklahoma oil, so what is our water worth?

Water market prices are available – follow the water money grab – it is in the billions.

Folks are concerned that Attorney General Drew Edmondson is not investigating credible complaints of the OWRB's use of unauthorized and bogus data to support questionable massive water over-allocations to Texans and special interests.

## Young Dems Raise Funds For Armor

Oklahoma City Community College Young Democrats recently staged their third "Bake Sale for Body Armor" – the latest in a nationwide series of non-profit fundraisers supporting American troops in Iraq.

After the success of the first two bake sales, Jed Green, president of the OCCC Young Democrats, decided it was time to hold another event.

The program was launched by a Helena, MT, resident, Tammara Rosenleaf, whose husband serves in Iraq with the U.S. Army.

Rosenleaf started the program with the aid of Iraq War veteran Charlie Anderson of Virginia Beach, VA, when she learned that her husband did not have adequate body armor.

"When I learned that my husband was over there unprotected," she said, "I was frantic. I realized that no matter what happened with my husband, we had to continue with this program."

Both national co-founders said that all the money raised from the "Bake Sale

## CONSOLIDATE

From Page 7

thor, tell people that public education does little but teach our kids lies and that teachers are the clergy of the godless.

I am disappointed in this assault on education. Public education in the United States is provided to all. We are free to choose private schools, public schools and home schools.

There are those who attack each form of education as inadequate, ineffective, or biased. However, the freedom to choose what form of education our children receive is at heart what makes America great.

### LET LOCALS DECIDE ON CONSOLIDATION

We may not agree on education or consolidation but our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is the foundation of our nation. I celebrate dissent. It forces us to answer tough questions.

But at the end of the day our freedom and the people's right to decide is something we should never give up nor take for granted.

While consolidation is always an option, local people should make that choice – not politicians or bureaucrats.

I thank God we have that choice in Oklahoma and will always fight to make sure that right is not taken away.

– The author, an Elk City Democrat, represents District 26 in the state Senate



Corps of Engineers documents offer proof to support these allegations. Both sides of the Red River speak of possible collusion between Texans, OWRB and certain Oklahoma elected officials.

The drought may be over, but the Oklahoma Water Wars are not.

### GOV. HENRY DUCKS AND DODGES

People are upset because Gov. Brad Henry refused to accept a southeastern Oklahoma water-related petition signed by 625 residents – or to meet with representatives protesting the OWRB.

Henry is adding to his reputation: Avoids conflicts, but loves ribbon cuttings. Oklahoma holds an annual Governor's Water Conference [the next is Oct. 23-25 in Oklahoma City] and Gov. Henry never shows up. He's indifferent to water issues!

Who took Texas campaign donations?

Exactly who is fighting for Oklahoma water for Oklahoma?

Texans are aggressive, powerful, smart, rich – and using Oklahoma City attorneys to make their case.

Is it an exercise in futility? Is it useless to fight big powers, local indifference and Dallas? Is it futile to battle for more valued uses of our natural water resources for a greater Oklahoma, and for your grandchildren's children's future?

– The author lives in Tulsa

for Body Armor" will be used to purchase and send to Iraq the precise kind of body armor approved by the U.S. military.

"We have verified that we will be buying the correct kind of protection, so that our donations don't inadvertently lead to anyone losing his or her military death benefits," Rosenleaf said, alluding to a new government policy that denies benefits to anyone who is killed while wearing self-supplied armor that doesn't meet government specifications.

The organization is currently focusing on leg armor, which helps protect troops from IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], the most common type of attack in Iraq.

Bake Sales for Body Armor also sent medical supplies and equipment such as radios for communication.

At the events, all donations given to buy cookies, pies and cakes are fully tax-deductible.

## MERIT PAY


From Page 7

other.

We can, and we must, do better by our children and those to whom we entrust them – our teachers. We hear a lot about "No Child Left Behind." Merit pay increases the chance that children who test poorly will be left behind as the focus shifts to those students with test scores high enough to boost teachers' pay.

So-called "merit pay" plans will not make schools better. Those who advance merit pay hold hostage our teachers' financial futures and our children's education just to advance an agenda that is more about looking good than doing good.

– The author, a Durant Democrat, represents District 6 in the state Senate



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## BOOKS

# Conservatism Belies 'Morning In America'

By Michael Washburn

### THE POLITICS OF HEAVEN

*America In Fearful Times*

By Earl Shorris

W.W. Norton

371 pages, \$25.95

Some of the meanest people in the world are nice.

That's the conservative evangelical paradox: the smiling churchgoer who will kindly volunteer his last crust of bread with one hand while voting to gut what remains of welfare with the other. The impersonal is the political, and the rest is Christian charity.

This attitude bedevils liberal observers of American political culture. How can such inconsistency not corrupt the logic of Christian values? And how can these same people sabotage their own economic interest by supporting tax-slashing politicians?

The past decade has seen a succession of books that offer answers to these questions, including such notable titles as Drew Westen's *The Political Brain*, Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?* and George Lakoff's *Moral Politics*.

The most recent addition to the field is Earl Shorris' sprawling, erudite book, and though sympathetic to his fellow liberals, Shorris feels that they often furnish solutions without fully appreciating the magnitude of the problem.

According to Shorris, the "absurdity" of most discussions about conservative political allegiances "is that the journalist or scholar [claims to know] the interests of the voters better than the voters themselves." Middle Americans, he argues, may be voting against their economic interests, but they're not voting against their best interests, at least as far as they're concerned.

Until liberal analysts stop viewing conservatives as confused, irrational yokels, the unifying power of conservatism will remain mysterious.

### RADICAL FEAR OF MASS DESTRUCTION

So far, so what, you might ask: Several writers have reached similar conclusions. But Shorris goes beyond polemics that look at history at the level of election cycles. "As much as any other single attribute," he writes, "the possibility of mass destruction describes contemporary life."

Since the bombing of Hiroshima, he argues, America has been in thrall to a radical fear that has forged a conservative national political movement "even more potent and more encompassing than the New Deal." The conservative movement has been the guiding force in American life for over half a century and it has proven corrosive to our democracy.

Shorris believes that the rise of the conservative movement is the result of "confluence" shifting the mood of nation. "Confluence," in his theory of history, is "Junction, union, flow, assemblage; rivers or people or currents coming together." That's as close as he gets to defining the term, though he speaks directly about what history-as-confluence isn't.

It's not, as some people claim, "one damned thing after another." Nor does confluence function like Marx's thesis-antithesis-synthesis progression. Shorris' idea is more rhetorical than analytical – he likens it to pulling apart the threads of a densely woven fabric – and it allows him to include Aristotle and Martin Lu-

# America's 'Frivolous Lawsuit' Frenzy

By Linda Andros

### BLOCKING THE COURTHOUSE DOOR

*How the Republican Party and Its Corporate Allies Are Taking Away Your Right to Sue*

By Stephanie Mencimer

Simon & Schuster Trade

304 pages, \$26

In her new book, investigative journalist Stephanie Mencimer uncovers the truth about the industry-funded attack on consumer access to the courts.

Corporate America and the GOP have used this assault on civil justice to shield corporations from legal accountability in our courts, and at the same time to defund Democratic sources of campaign money by picking the pockets of plaintiffs' attorneys, according to Mencimer's thorough research.

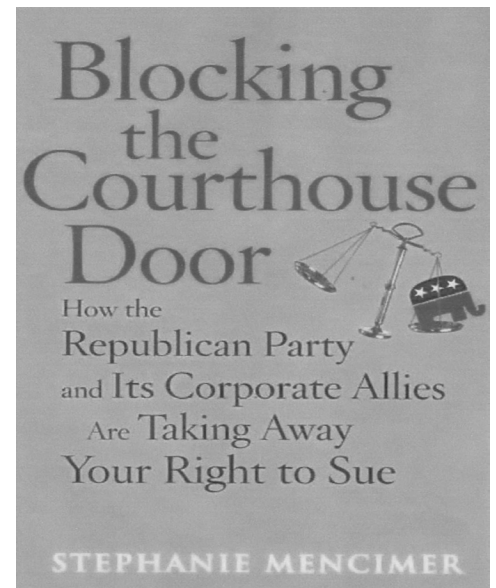
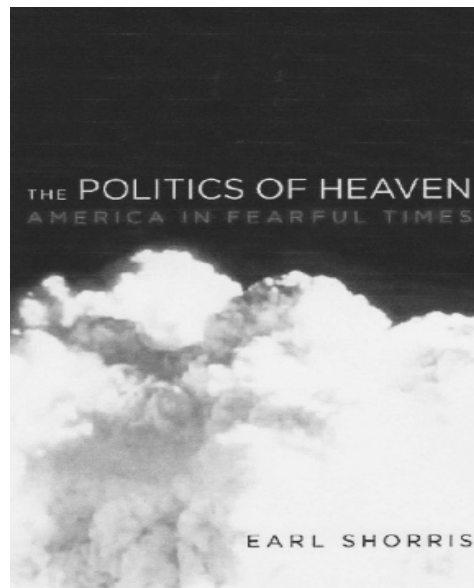
Mencimer describes how the likes of Karl Rove and Newt Gingrich seized on a strategy to demonize trial lawyers [an anti-lawyer plank was in the 1994 Contract With America] as a key tactic to create a GOP majority in Congress.

To achieve GOP dominance and keep it, conservative Republicans tried to make trial lawyers and their money "radioactive" for potential Democratic candidates and pushed for legislative proposals that would arbitrarily deprive injured plaintiffs and their lawyers of just compensation by, for example, capping damages for pain and suffering.

The GOP and corporate interests had little concern for trial lawyers' clients – people who suffered serious harm at the hands of negligent corporations.

Mencimer's book exposes the over-hyped claim that America's courts are awash in "frivolous" lawsuits as a ploy to distract the public from the true aim of corporate interests and the GOP: to limit citizen remedies by destroying the jury

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, OCTOBER 10, 2007, PAGE 10



ther alongside Lincoln and F.D.R. as major contributors to American history.

This strategy is perfectly acceptable when the idea is to stimulate curiosity about the connection between the Katrina disaster and Goldwater conservatism, or whatever, but when the book uses "confluence" to support direct cause and effect, as it occasionally yet reluctantly does, the concept veers dangerously close to deus ex machina.

Putting these concerns aside and taking Shorris on his own terms, the 62 years since the Enola Gay's infamous flight have seen such disparate events as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, the ascendancy of the economic shock doctrine, the rise of both the Christian Coalition and neoconservative thought, 9/11 and a multitude of other events and ideas, all of which have contributed to the confluence and our current political movement.

### THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PESSIMISM TAKE ROOT

The end result of this history, argues Shorris, has been the replacement of American optimism with various forms of pessimism, most importantly theological and political pessimism. People began to anticipate catastrophe. "And if enough people expect a catastrophe," he writes, "no real catastrophe need occur; the expectation is a catastrophe."

This is bad news because safety – financial, social and theological – then becomes the paramount societal concern, weakening citizens' commitment to civil liberties, civic dialogue and the state itself.

The most "salient" representative of this political movement, argues Shorris, is the conservative Christian evangelical, a kind of anti-mascot that unites political cynicism with Christian eschatology.

*The Politics of Heaven* is a frustrating book. At times it's oblique, vague and circular. But it's also learned, thoughtful and humane.

Shorris pulps a lot of history to make his argument. Depending on your personal politics, you might call it dynamic synthesis – or interpretive extravagance. But this is how history is written: drawing narrative connections through the innumerable entanglements and complications that time has presented.

Shorris is right more than he's wrong when he discusses how conservative intellectual developments have informed each other, but his book fails to prove that fear ushered in a national political movement.

If anything, fear shaped our entire national culture, and if that's what Shorris meant, I wish he'd said so.

But the value of *The Politics of Heaven* lies outside any specific argument. Earl Shorris understands that each political moment is the result of tremendous philosophical, theological and moral complexity, a fact that most books about current affairs blithely disregard.

– The author is assistant director of the Center for the Humanities at the Graduate Center, City University of New York

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system. Their effort also ignores the hypocrisy of corporations, which are the biggest users of our civil courts and which often file lawsuits intended mainly to bully smaller competitors.

By uncovering the falsehoods of this upside-down Alice-in-Wonderland world – a world where corporations are victims and juries are wrong – Mencimer connects the dots to reveal the frauds created by this very cynical and partisan agenda to block the courthouse doors.

– The author is legislative counsel for the Congress Watch division of Public Citizen

## INSIGHT. ANALYSIS.

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*With three decades on the front lines of national and state political reporting, Oklahoma Observer Editor Arnold Hamilton is the perfect choice to address your civic club, political gathering or classroom.*

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# Destroy The Health Insurance Industry

By Barbara Ehrenreich

Bow your heads and raise the white flags. After facing down the Third Reich, the Japanese Empire, the U.S.S.R., Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein, the United States has met an enemy it dares not confront – the American private health insurance industry.

With the courageous exception of Dennis Kucinich, the Democratic presidential candidates have all rolled out health “reform” plans that represent total, Chamberlain-like, appeasement.

Edwards and Obama propose universal health insurance plans that would in no way ease the death grip of Aetna, Unicare, MetLife, and the rest of the evildoers. Clinton – why are we not surprised? – has gone even further, borrowing the Republican idea of actually feeding the private insurers by making it mandatory to buy their product.

## WILL I BE ARRESTED?

Will I be arrested if I resist paying \$10,000 a year for a private policy laden with killer co-pays and deductibles?

It's not only the Democratic candidates who are capitulating. The surrender-buzz is everywhere. I heard it from a notable liberal political scientist on a panel in August.

We can't just leap to a single payer system, he said in so many words, because that would be too disruptive, given the size of the private health insurance industry.

Then I heard it from a Chicago woman who leads a nonprofit agency serving the poor: How can we go to a Canadian-style system when the private industry has gotten so “big?”

## CHECK WHAT THEY ARE COSTING

Yes, it is big. Leighton Ku, at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, gave me the figure of \$776 billion in expenditures on private health insurance for this year.

It's also a big-time employer, paying what Economist Paul Krugman has estimated two to three million people just turn down claims. This in turn generates ever more employment in doctors' offices to battle the insurance companies.

Dr. Atul Gawande, a practicing physician, wrote in *The New Yorker* that “a well-run office can get the insurer's rejection rate down from 30% to, say, 15%. That's how a doctor makes money. It's a war with insurance, every step of the way.”

# Hillary's Health Care 'Heritage'

By Joe Conason

Hillary Clinton's skillful introduction of her new health care plan demonstrated why she is the most formidable Democrat running for president. It also suggested that if victorious, she won't be defeated so easily by the insurance and pharmaceutical industries as she and her husband were the last time they tried to reform the dysfunctional American medical system.

While her major rivals in both the Democratic and Republican presidential fields felt compelled to attack even before she finished speaking, their glancing blows proved only that she is now dominating the campaign.

In broad outline, what Mrs. Clinton is proposing closely resembles the ideas previously presented by John Edwards and Barack Obama. While Edwards wants a stronger role for government-backed care and Obama rejects the federal mandate for individual insurance, the differences aren't enough to mobilize primary voters for any candidate.

All of the plans would impose stringent regulation on the insurance companies; all would subsidize insurance for working-class and middle-income people; and all would finance the costs of universal coverage by repealing tax cuts for the highest brackets.

## HILLARY DISPLAYS BILL-LIKE DEFTNESS

Rather than emphasize details that fascinate specialists but bore voters, Edwards and Obama each claimed he is more likely to achieve success than Mrs. Clinton, who has admittedly failed once. She anticipated that rather obvious line of criticism by acknowledging how much she has learned in the past decade or so, displaying the suppleness that was always among Bill Clinton's greatest assets.

This refreshing approach contrasted sharply with the old stereotypes of secrecy and arrogance that haunted her previous effort, and, perhaps more importantly, girded her against the inevitable assaults from the right.

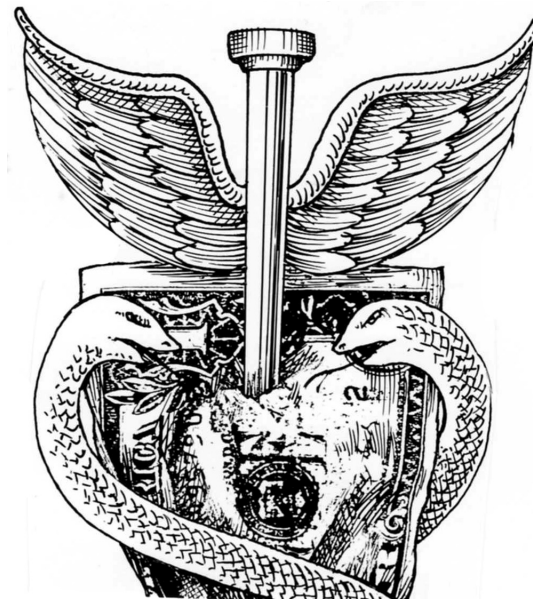
After all, she has adopted an important proposal from the Heritage Foundation as a central part of her own plan.

That's right: One of the pillars of the new Clinton plan was originally fashioned by a prominent policy analyst at Washington's largest conservative think tank.

## EXPAND FED COVERAGE TO ALL

Back during the Clinton Administration, Heritage Vice President Stuart Butler suggested that Americans be permitted to purchase insurance through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program – the cafeteria plan that covers millions of government employees, from janitors to senators.

Essentially, this was an early version of “compassionate conservatism,” with the hard-line Heritage Foundation seeking cooperation between right and left to achieve the “shared goal” of universal coverage. [Later events showed that Butler



That's another thing your insurance premium has to pay for: the ongoing “war” between doctors and insurers.

Note: The private health insurance industry is not big because it relentlessly seeks out new customers. Unlike any other industry, this one grows by rejecting customers.

No matter how shabby you look, Cartier, Lexus, or Nordstrom's will happily take your money. Not Aetna. If you have a prior conviction – excuse me, a pre-existing condition – it doesn't want your business.

Private health insurance is only for people who aren't likely to ever get sick. In fact, why call it “insurance,” which normally embodies the notion of risk-sharing? This is extortion.

## THREE TIMES THE 9/11 LOSS

Think of the damage. An estimated 18,000 Americans die every year because they can't afford or can't qualify for health insurance. That's the 9/11 carnage multiplied by three – every year. Not to mention all the people who are stuck in jobs they hate because they don't dare lose their current insurance.

Saddam Hussein never killed 18,000 Americans or anything close; nor did the U.S.S.R. Yet we faced down those “enemies” with huge patriotic bluster, vast military expenditures, and, in the case of Saddam, armed intervention.

So why does the U.S. soil its pants and cower in fear when confronted with the insurance industry?

Here's a plan: First, locate the major companies. No major intelligence effort will be required, since Google should suffice.

Second, estimate their armed strength. No doubt there are legions of security guards involved in protecting the company headquarters from irate consumers,

See *INSURANCE* Page 15

was one of very few conservatives who truly shared that goal.]

Aside from the Heritage scheme's beguiling simplicity, it can be formulated as a question that has only one plausible answer: Shouldn't every American enjoy the same quality and choice in health insurance that our taxes now provide for our elected representatives and all the other people who work for government?

Now, as the Heritage Foundation will surely point out, the architecture of Mrs. Clinton's plan is much more elaborate than the Butler proposal – which would not require insurance companies to accept everyone who applies for coverage at roughly the same price, and would not have expanded Medicare as an option for individual coverage.

## NEUTRALIZING PARTISAN AND CORPORATE FOES

Yet by folding the Heritage plan into her own new plan – and by simultaneously adopting aspects of the Massachusetts and California universal-coverage plans – Mrs. Clinton is shielding herself against the inevitable barrage from both partisan and corporate adversaries.

How radical is a plan that echoes the Heritage Foundation, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mitt Romney?

Of course, Romney is running away from the health care innovations he helped bring to the Bay State, just as he no longer remembers when he was an advocate of gay rights and reproductive freedom. Like Rudolph Giuliani, he seized upon Mrs. Clinton's health initiative to warn once more against big government, socialized medicine and all the other scary things supposedly symbolized by “Hillarycare.”

## WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE, THANKS TO 1994

Such buzz phrases have repeatedly terrified American voters into submission to the insurance industry, but they may have lost much of their power.

Corporate advertising and Republican rhetoric rolled over Mrs. Clinton in 1994, but she has come back to fight again for this Democratic promise with greater wisdom and experience.

Voters are likely to respect and appreciate her perseverance, and they are also likely to regard her plan with open minds, regardless of the negative propaganda that will no doubt engulf us all.

Ever since Harry Truman first proposed universal health care in 1948, the insurance industry has refused to create a system that would cover everyone, erecting instead a nightmarish edifice of corporate bureaucracy, unaffordable waste and cruel exclusion.

Rather than rant against the constructive alternatives, let them – and their political mouthpieces – explain why we should continue to tolerate their failure.

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# Thomas Still Trying To Smear Messenger

By Anita Hill

On Oct. 11, 1991, I testified about my experience as an employee of Clarence Thomas's at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

I stand by my testimony.

Justice Thomas has every right to present himself as he wishes in his new memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*. He may even be entitled to feel abused by the confirmation process that led to his appointment to the Supreme Court.

But I will not stand by silently and allow him, in his anger, to reinvent me.

In the portion of his book that addresses my role in the Senate hearings into his nomination, Justice Thomas offers a litany of unsubstantiated representations and outright smears that Republican senators made about me when I testified before the Judiciary Committee – that I was a “combative left-winger” who was “touchy” and prone to overreacting to “slights.” A number of independent authors have shown those attacks to be baseless. What's more, their reports draw on the experiences of others who were familiar with Mr. Thomas's behavior, and who came forward after the hearings. It's no longer my word against his.

## THOMAS' TALE FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS

Justice Thomas's characterization of me is also hobbled by blatant inconsistencies. He claims, for instance, that I was a mediocre employee who had a job in the federal government only because he had “given it” to me. He ignores the reality: I was fully qualified to work in the government, having graduated from Yale Law School [his alma mater, which he calls one of the finest in the country], and passed the District of Columbia Bar exam, one of the toughest in the nation.

In 1981, when Mr. Thomas approached me about working for him, I was an associate in good standing at a Washington law firm. In 1991, the partner in charge of associate development informed Mr. Thomas's mentor, Sen. John Danforth of Missouri, that any assertions to the contrary were untrue. Yet, Mr. Thomas insists that I was “asked to leave” the firm.

It's worth noting, too, that Mr. Thomas hired me not once, but twice while he was in the Reagan administration – first at the Department of Education and then at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. After two years of working directly for him, I left Washington and returned home to Oklahoma to begin my teaching career.

## HE STOOPS SO LOW AS TO ATTACK HILL'S RELIGIOSITY

In a particularly nasty blow, Justice Thomas attacked my religious conviction, telling “60 Minutes,” “She was not the demure, religious, conservative person that they portrayed.” Perhaps he conveniently forgot that he wrote a letter of recommendation for me to work at the law school at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. I remained at that evangelical Christian university for three years, until the law school was sold to CBN University [later Regent University] in Virginia Beach, VA, another Christian college. Along with other faculty members, I was asked to consider a position there, but I decided to remain near my family in Oklahoma.

Regrettably, since 1991, I have repeatedly seen this kind of character attack on women and men who complain of harassment and discrimination in the work-

# Pity Replaces Dislike Of Clarence Thomas

By Colin T. Bent

In recent days, my feeling towards Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has progressed from total dislike and near hatred to one of pity and deep sympathy.

My awareness of Justice Thomas did not begin with his nomination by President G.H.W. Bush and so when his appointment was confirmed by the timid majority Democratic Senate, I was particularly incensed because I was aware of his professional record up to that time.

As the man who headed up the EEOC under Ronald Regan, there was constant clamor that this government department was not doing the job of seeing to it that the laws of equal employment were being observed by America's large corporations. So when he transitioned from that office, there was a major backup of workers' complaints which were never properly examined.

I could not understand how a man who got to every position that he ever held due to affirmative action ultimately turned against it and tried to nullify the opportunities it afforded to others like him who followed.

Although Anita Hill's testimony was riveting, the story of his contempt for the law and our Constitution was already well known.

So I gritted my teeth and settled down to watch 60 Minutes' interview of Justice Thomas.

My eyes were opened and I came to understand the story of a man who hates his upbringing and now makes every attempt to live a life that tries to deny everything there is about him and others like him. Yes, he dislikes his grandfather and he hates the mantle he wears of being a man who benefited from special programs given to him because of his blackness.

Clarence Thomas despises the law degree he received from Yale Law School because his comeuppance was mostly attributed to affirmative action rather than his hard work.

Undoubtedly, it was affirmative action that got him to Yale but it was his hard work that got him through Yale and it was unfair to disregard that aspect of his development.

But when it came time for him to be appointed Supreme Court Justice, ironi-



“... Whenever my Bush Derangement Syndrome flares up to the point where I'm actually feeling nostalgic for the days when George Bush the Elder was in the White House, I need only recall that it was Poppy who put Thomas on the court. That snaps me back to my senses. Thomas is only 59; we'll be saddled with him and that gigantic chip on his shoulder for decades to come.”

– Eugene Robinson,  
Washington Post columnist

place. In efforts to assail their accusers' credibility, detractors routinely diminish people's professional contributions. Often the accused is a supervisor, in a position to describe the complaining employee's work as “mediocre” or the employee as incompetent.

Those accused of inappropriate behavior also often portray the individuals who complain as bizarre caricatures of themselves – oversensitive, even fanatical, and often immoral – even though they enjoy good and productive working relationships with their colleagues.

## EMPLOYING THE LAMEST EXCUSES

Finally, when attacks on the accusers' credibility fail, those accused of workplace improprieties downgrade the level of harm that may have occurred. When sensing that others will believe their accusers' versions of events, individuals confronted with their own bad behavior try to reduce legitimate concerns to the level of mere words or “slights” that should be dismissed without discussion.

Fortunately, we have made progress since 1991. Today, when employees complain of abuse in the workplace, investigators and judges are more likely to examine all the evidence and less likely to simply accept as true the word of those in power.

But that could change. Our legal system will suffer if a sitting justice's vitriolic pursuit of personal vindication discourages others from standing up for their rights.

The question of whether Clarence Thomas belongs on the Supreme Court is no longer on the table – it was settled by the Senate back in 1991. But questions remain about how we will resolve the kinds of issues my testimony exposed.

My belief is that in the past 16 years we have come closer to making the resolution of these issues an honest search for the truth, which, after all, is at the core of all legal inquiry. My hope is that Justice Thomas's latest fusillade will not divert us from that path.

– The author, former law professor at the University of Oklahoma, is visiting scholar at the Newhouse Center for the Humanities at Wellesley College. She also is professor of social policy, law and women's studies at Brandeis University.

© The New York Times

cally, it was the improper use of affirmative action that got him through the door along with some rather spineless Democratic senators.

It took me some time to understand why it is that Mr. Thomas could make such anti-black, racist decisions from the bench because he is no racist. Immersed as he is in self-hatred and loathing of his very upbringing, Mr. Thomas has gone the other way and has fully bought into the doctrine of white supremacy.

As such he has attempted in every aspect of his life to rid himself of his blackness in an attempt to prove to himself and everyone else that he has eschewed, as it were, everything that is really him.

This is an unfortunate individual and one that should be afforded all help. Unfortunately he does not see himself in that light so presently, he is beyond help.

History is replete with examples of people who have despised their past, trying to conceal it from others.

In Mr. Thomas' case, he cannot obfuscate what he is, but he can show his scorn by acting like what he is not. How sad!

– The author lives in Tulsa

## Different Medical Clinics

Two patients limp into two different medical clinics with the same complaint. Both have trouble walking and appear to require a hip replacement.

The first patient is examined within the hour, is x-rayed the same day and has a time booked for surgery the following week.

The second sees his family doctor after waiting three weeks for an appointment, then waits eight weeks to see a specialist, then gets an x-ray, which isn't reviewed for another week and finally has his surgery scheduled for a month from then.

Why the different treatment for the two patients?

The first is a Golden Retriever. The second is a Senior Citizen.

Next time take me to a vet.

# America Arms The World – Regardless

By Frida Berrigan

They don't call us the sole superpower for nothing. Paul Wolfowitz's term he used to describe the pervasiveness of U.S. might back when he was a deputy secretary of defense – hyperpower – still fits the bill.

Face it, the United States is a proud nation of firsts. Among them:

## FIRST IN OIL CONSUMPTION

The United States burns up 20.7 million barrels per day, the equivalent of the oil consumption of China, Japan, Germany, Russia, and India combined.

## FIRST IN CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS

Each year, world polluters pump 24,126,416,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>] into the environment. The United States and its territories are responsible for 5.8 billion metric tons of this, as much as China [3.3 billion], Russia [1.4 billion] and India [1.2 billion] combined.

## FIRST IN EXTERNAL DEBT

The United States owes \$10.040 trillion, nearly a quarter of the global debt total of \$44 trillion.

## FIRST IN MILITARY EXPENDITURES

The White House requested \$481 billion for the Department of Defense for 2008, but this huge figure does not come close to representing total U.S. military expenditures projected for the coming year.

To get a sense of the resources allocated to the military, the costs of the global war on terrorism, of the building, refurbishing, or maintaining of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and other expenses also need to be factored in.

Military analyst Winslow Wheeler did recently: "Add \$142 billion to cover the anticipated costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; add \$17 billion requested for nuclear weapons costs in the Department of Energy; add another \$5 billion for miscellaneous defense costs in other agencies ... and you get a grand total of \$647 billion for 2008."

## THE REAL PRICE TAG OF IRAQ

Taking another approach to the use of U.S. resources, Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard Business School lecturer Linda Bilmes added to known costs of the war in Iraq invisible costs such as its impact on global oil prices as well as the long-term cost of health care for wounded veterans. They came up with a price tag of between \$1 trillion and \$2.2 trillion.

If we turned what the United States will spend on the military in 2008 into small bills, we could give each one of the world's more than one billion teenagers and young adults an Xbox 360 with wireless controller and two video games to play.

## FIRST IN WEAPONS SALES

Since 2001, U.S. global military sales have normally totaled between \$10 billion and \$13 billion. That's a lot of weapons, but in fiscal year 2006, the Pentagon broke its own recent record, inking arms sales agreements worth \$21 billion.

It almost goes without saying that this is significantly more than any other nation in the world.

In this gold-medal tally of firsts, there can be no question that things that go bang in the night are our proudest products. No one makes more of them or sells them more effectively than we do.

When it comes to the sorts of firsts that once went with a classic civilian manufacturing base, however, gold medals are in short supply. To take an example:

## NOT FIRST IN AUTOMOBILES

Once, Chrysler, General Motors, and Ford ruled the domestic and global roost,



setting the standard for the automotive industry. Not any more.

In 2006, the U.S. imported almost \$150 billion more in vehicles and auto parts than it sent abroad. Automotive analyst Joe Barker told the Boston Globe "it's a very tough environment" for the so-called Detroit Three.

"In times of softening demand, consumers typically will look to brands that they trust and rely on. Consumers trust and rely on Japanese brands."

## NOT EVEN FIRST IN BULK GOODS

The Department of Commerce announced total March exports of \$126.2 billion and total imports of \$190.1 billion, resulting in a goods and services deficit of \$63.9 billion. This is a \$6 billion increase over February.

But why be gloomy? Stick with arms sales and it's dawn in America every day of the year. Sometimes, the weapons industry pretends that it's like any other trade – especially when it's pushing our congressional representatives [as it always does] for fewer restrictions and regulations.

Don't be fooled. Arms aren't automobiles or refrigerators. They're sui generis; they are the way the USA can always be number one – and everyone wants them.

The odds that, in your lifetime, there will ever be a \$128 billion trade deficit in weapons are essentially nil. Arms are our real gold-medal event.

## FIRST IN SALES OF SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES

Between 2001 and 2005, the United States delivered 2,099 surface-to-air missiles like the "Sparrow" and the "AMRMM" to nations in the developing world, 20 more than Russia, the next largest supplier.

## FIRST IN SALES OF MILITARY SHIPS

During that same period, the U.S. sent 10 "major surface combatants" like aircraft carriers and destroyers to developing nations.

Collectively, the four major European weapons producers shipped 13. And we were first in the anti-ship missiles that go along with such ships, with nearly double [338] the exports of the next largest supplier Russia [180].

## FIRST IN MILITARY TRAINING

A thoughtful empire knows that it is not enough to send weapons; you have to teach people how to use them. The Pentagon plans on training the military of 138 nations in 2008 at a cost of nearly \$90 million. No other nation comes close.

## FIRST IN PRIVATE MILITARY PERSONNEL

According to best-selling author Jeremy Scahill, there are at least 126,000 private military personnel deployed alongside uniformed military personnel in Iraq alone. Of the more than 60 major companies that supply such personnel worldwide, more than 40 are U.S. based.

See U.S. LEADERSHIP Page 14

## Flight Attendants Keep 'Em Giggling

Here are more true remarks that kept airline passengers giggling:

- "Welcome aboard Southwest Flight 245 to Tampa. To operate your seat belt, insert the metal tab into the buckle, and pull tight. It works just like every other seat belt; and, if you don't know how to operate one, you probably shouldn't be out in public unsupervised."

- "In the event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, masks will descend from the ceiling. Stop screaming, grab the mask, and pull it over your face. If you have a small child traveling with you, secure your mask before assisting with theirs. If you are traveling with more than one small child, pick your favorite."

- "Weather at our destination is 50 degrees with some broken clouds, but we'll try to have them fixed before we arrive. Thank you, and remember, nobody loves you, or your money, more than Southwest Airlines."

- "Your seat cushions can be used for flotation; and, in the event of an emergency water landing, please paddle to shore and take them with our compliments."

- "As you exit the plane, make sure to gather all of your belongings. Anything left behind will be distributed evenly among the flight attendants. Please do not leave children or spouses."

- And from the pilot during his welcome message: "Delta Airlines is pleased to have some of the best flight attendants in the industry. Unfortunately, none of them are on this flight."

- Heard on Southwest Airlines just after a very hard landing in Salt Lake City. The flight attendant came on the intercom and said, "That was quite a bump, and I know what y'all are thinking. I'm here to tell you it wasn't the airline's fault, it wasn't the pilot's fault, it wasn't the flight attendant's fault, it was the asphalt."

- Overheard on an American Airlines flight into Amarillo, TX, on a particularly windy and bumpy day: During the final approach, the captain was really having to fight it. After an extremely hard landing, the flight attendant said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to Amarillo. Please remain in your seats with your seat belts fastened while the captain taxis what's left of our airplane to the gate."

- Another flight attendant's comment on a less than perfect landing: "We ask you to please remain seated as Captain Kangaroo bounces us to the terminal."

- After a real crusher of a landing in Phoenix, the attendant came on with, "Ladies and Gentlemen, please remain in your seats until Capt. Crash and the crew have brought the aircraft to a screeching halt against the gate. And, once the tire smoke has cleared and the warning bells are silenced, we'll open the door and you can pick your way through the wreckage to the terminal."

- Heard on a Southwest flight. "Ladies and gentlemen, if you wish to smoke, the smoking section on this airplane is on the wing and if you can light 'em, you can smoke 'em."

- On a Continental flight with a very "senior" flight attendant crew, the pilot said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we've reached cruising altitude and will be turning down the cabin lights. This is for your comfort and to enhance the appearance of your flight attendants."

- "There may be 50 ways to leave your lover, but there are only four ways out of this airplane."

- "Thank you for flying Delta Business Express. We hope you enjoyed giving us the business as much as we enjoyed taking you for a ride."

- As the plane landed and was coming to a stop at Reagan Washington National Airport, a lone voice came over the loudspeaker: "Whoa, big fella. WHOA!"

# Don't Give Up On The Word 'Liberal'

By Greg Colvin

It is time for a fresh look at how we label political viewpoints in America. These days, the terms left and right, liberal and conservative, are most often applied to ideas, groups, and individuals by those aiming to discredit them.

If you are inclined to be a liberal, you can't avoid hearing the radio voices of the Limbaughs, Coulters, Hannitys, and Savages growling and hissing in the back of your head.

Liberalism has been so demonized that many people have either stopped defining themselves politically, straddled the question ["I'm a fiscal conservative but liberal on social issues"], claimed to be independent or pragmatic, looked for a "third way," moved to the center, or adopted the term "progressive."

The word "progressive" seems honorable enough, harkening back to the Progressive Era, 25 years of popular upheaval before World War I when anti-trust laws were passed, child labor was abolished, Teddy Roosevelt dedicated national parks, and government reforms were directed against the wealthy and the corrupt.

## DEFINE OURSELVES AS PROGRESSIVES?

So, should we bury the word "liberal" and try to define ourselves along a continuum that we call progressive on the left side and conservative on the right? No, for several good reasons.

Such a shift would not be broadly accepted. The liberal-conservative dichotomy has been rooted in Western culture for more than a century, on both sides of the Atlantic. Reporting on political candidates, groups, and events, the media will continue to apply those labels regardless of what the people involved may say.

The press calls MoveOn.org "liberal," a word the group has never used to describe itself.

Liberalism has a proud history and deserves respect equal to that accorded to conservatism. The word has many positive associations: our cherished liberties as a free people, liberal arts and education, liberal democracy, the liberation of the enslaved and oppressed, and national liberators from Simon Bolivar to Daniel O'Connell to Lech Walesa.

## DUCKING WOULD DRAW MORE RIDICULE

Ducking for cover under a new name will only invite more ridicule. From the Goldwater defeat of 1964 to the Reagan victory of 1980, a sturdy band of Republicans worked to convert the conservative label into a badge of pride, and they succeeded.

There is a growing intellectual movement to rehabilitate the liberal tradition in America, tracing its course from the founding fathers to the 20th Century leaders who pulled the country out of depression, prevailed over fascism, fought racial discrimination, instituted a mixed economy, and crafted the detente that kept us out of nuclear war.

## MOVEMENT RESTORED THE PUBLIC'S FAITH

The progressive reform movement restored faith in popular government and gave the country a new platform upon which the left-right debates of the future could proceed to other issues.

The Merriam Webster dictionary definition of liberalism is "a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties."

Conservatism is defined as a political philosophy based on "tradition and social stability, stressing established institutions, and preferring gradual development to abrupt change."

On economic grounds, since the advent of Marxism the left-right divide often has been portrayed as socialism and central planning versus capitalism and the free market. Again, history has taken us way past that dichotomy.

## PURE SOCIALISM EQUALS COMMUNISM

Capitalism in its purest totalitarian state form, Soviet communism, failed. Capitalism is the dominant system almost everywhere. Conservatism has become identified as a pro-business ideology, which is ironic because the free enterprise system is founded upon the liberal idea that anyone can own and exploit private property.

# AMERICA'S LEADERSHIP

From Page 13

Rest assured, governments around the world, often at each others' throats, will want U.S. weapons long after their people have turned up their noses at a range of once dominant American consumer goods.

For instance, the "trade" publication Defense News recently reported that Turkey and the United States signed a \$1.78 billion deal for Lockheed Martin's F-16 fighter planes.

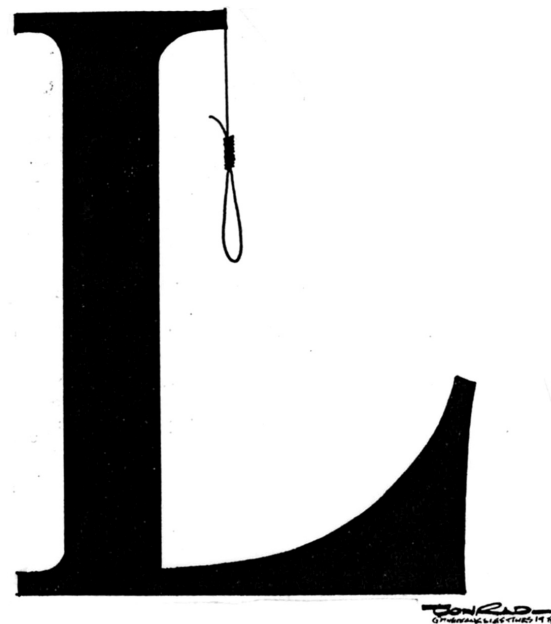
As it happens, these planes are already ubiquitous – Israel flies them, so does the United Arab Emirates, Poland, South Korea, Venezuela, Oman and Portugal, not to speak of most other modern air forces.

## THE F-16 IS ALSO A SYMBOL

In many ways, the F-16 is not just a high-tech fighter jet, it's also a symbol of U.S. backing and friendship. Buying our weaponry is one of the few ways you can actually join the American imperial project!

In order to remain number one in the competitive jet field, Lockheed Martin, for example, does far more than just sell airplanes. TAI – Turkey's aerospace corporation – will receive a boost with this sale, because Lockheed Martin is hand-

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To add to the confusion, there is the dimension of nationalism, sovereignty, and globalization. During most of the 20th Century, conservatives in America opposed foreign intervention and "nation building," while liberals such as FDR and LBJ plunged us into World War II and the Vietnam War.

Now, so-called neo-conservatives justify the Iraq war as a demonstration project for liberty in the Middle East.

We have seen election campaign efforts by partisan forces to define conservatism and liberalism using short-hand statements of "values."

## ALL WE GET ARE SOUND BITES

Philosophical observers from Saul Alinsky to Thomas Jefferson have noticed a theme that seems to resonate at the core of our attitudes toward the political life we see around us. In 1824, after more than 50 years in politics, Jefferson wrote:

"Men by their constitution are naturally divided into two parties: 1. Those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes. 2. Those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not the most wise depository of the public interests."

In the conservative worldview, at the ultimate extreme, you can trust only yourself and those you personally know to be trustworthy.

Outside of that circle, it is every man for himself. Having a weapon to defend yourself and your family is imperative.

## LIBERALS BELIEVE IN THE GOODNESS OF PEOPLE

Liberals tend to believe that most people, most of the time, liberated from the compulsory authority of others over their lives, will behave themselves.

Misbehavior can be understood, corrected, even forgiven. Conservatives are tougher on crime, trust less in rehabilitation.

The liberal impulse is to believe not only in basic individual goodness and individual liberty, but also that people are capable of joining together in collective efforts for the common good.

Liberals use slogans like "We are all in this together." They favor government action to address public needs and believe that the unselfish payment of taxes is worthwhile if the programs are administered well.

Conservatives like the rugged individual who earns his keep, pays his own way, pulls himself up by his own bootstraps, and doesn't need government help.

## HAND UP OR NO HAND AT ALL?

Liberals see suffering and oppression and believe that government should take the side of the weak against the strong. To conservatives, liberals are naive. To liberals, conservatives lack compassion.

Few of us are purely liberal or conservative. We want to trust, but we have strong doubts about many of our fellow human beings. As Ronald Reagan famously said, "Trust, but verify."

Our inclinations to be liberal or conservative are always relative. How we lean is not genetically determined, but is a product of personality, upbringing, peer influences, and critical life experiences.

We define ourselves as to the right or left of George W. Bush or Nancy Pelosi or Attila the Hun – as well as we may comprehend where they stand.

We may find ourselves to be liberal in relation to the prevailing views in one community, state, country or decade, and conservative in another.

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# Fred Thompson Is Warmed Over Bush

By Maureen Dowd

Dying for a daddy, the Republicans turn their hungry eyes to Fred. Fred Thompson acts tough on screen. Like Ronald Reagan, he has a distinctively masculine timbre and an extremely involved wife.

In his announcement video, Thompson stood in front of a desk in what looked like, duh, a law office, rumbling reassuringly that in this "dangerous time" he would deal with "the safety and security of the American people."

As Michelle Cottle wrote in *The New Republic*, far more than puffy-coiffed Mitt and even more than tough guys Rudy and McCain, the burly, 6-foot-5, 65-year-old Thompson exudes "old school masculinity."

"In Thompson's presence [live or on screen]," she wrote, "one is viscerally, intimately reassured that he can handle any crisis that arises, be it a renegade Russian sub or a botched rape case."

## MAN ENOUGH FOR THE FIGHT?

But she wondered, was he really "enough of a man for this fight," or just someone who meandered through life, creating the illusion of a masculine mystique?

Newsweek reported that some close to the Tennessean "question whether moving into the White House is truly Thompson's life ambition – or more the dream of his second wife, Jeri, a former GOP operative who is his unofficial campaign manager and top adviser."

It took only a few days of campaigning to answer the masculine mystique question. Fred gave an interview to CNN's John King as his bus rolled through Iowa.

"To what degree should the American people hold the president of the United States responsible for the fact that bin Laden is still at large six years later?" King asked.

"I think bin Laden is more of a symbolism than he is anything else," Thompson drawled. "Bin Laden being in the mountains of Afghanistan – or Pakistan is not as important as the fact that there's probably Al Qaeda operatives inside the United States of America."

## EXQUISITELY INANE LOGIC

Usually, you can only get that kind of exquisitely inane logic from the president. Who does Fred think is sending operatives or inspiring them to come?

Fred is not Ronnie; he's warmed-over W. President Reagan always knew who the foe was.

Fred followed W's nutty lead of marginalizing Osama on a day when TV showed another creepy, fruitcake manifesto by the terrorist, who was wearing what seemed to be a fake beard left over from Woody Allen's "Bananas."

He was bloviating on everything from the subprime mortgage crisis to the "woes" of global warming to a Kennedy assassination conspiracy.

It even included theory of the wisdom of Noam Chomsky to the unwisdom of Richard Perle to the heartwarming news that Muslims have lived with Jews and not "incinerated them" to the need to "continue to escalate the killing and fight-

# Young Won't Vote For Republicans

By Carla Marinucci

A Democracy Corps poll from the Washington firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner suggests voters ages 18 to 29 have undergone a striking political evolution in recent years.

Young Americans have become so profoundly alienated from Republican ideals on issues including the war in Iraq, global warming, same-sex marriage and illegal immigration that their defections suggest a political setback that could haunt Republicans "for many generations to come," the poll said.

The startling collapse of GOP support among young voters is reflected in the poll's findings that show two-thirds of young voters surveyed believe Democrats do a better job than Republicans of representing their views – even on issues Republicans once owned, such as terrorism and taxes.

The anti-GOP shift for this generation, which is expected to reach 50 million voters, or 17% of the electorate, in 2008, represents a marked contrast from their predecessors.

Greenberg said the poll showed the war in Iraq and President Bush are unpopular with younger voters, which contributed to the decline in support for the GOP.

Younger voters who grew up in the Clinton years are also increasingly at odds with the GOP and its leaders on social issues.

"This is a more diverse generation, racially and ethnically, and it's more progressive on social issues like gay marriage," Greenberg said. "They see the Republican Party as profoundly different on tolerance and identity."

The poll also suggests the GOP is not addressing young voters' deep concerns about their future economic security. "Young people's economic struggles, more than any other issue, defines their political agenda," she said.

The scientific study was of voters ages 18-29 and was conducted May 29-June 19.

The GOP's problems for the future that show up in the poll are evident among young conservatives such as Wes Hanson, 17, a high school senior who describes himself as church-going, strongly anti-abortion and deeply concerned with the impacts of illegal immigration.

Hanson, who will cast his first presidential ballot in the 2008 election, is not sure he will register Republican and is just as likely to be a "decline-to-state" or



ing" against American kids in Iraq.

Can we please get someone in charge who will stop whining that Osama is hiding in "harsh terrain," hunt him down and blast him forward to the Stone Age?

Fred must have missed the news of the administration's intelligence estimate in July deeming Al Qaeda rejuvenated and "a persistent and evolving terrorist threat" to Americans.

Pressed by King on the fact that the Bush hawks went after Saddam instead of Osama, Fred continued to sputter: "You – you're – you're not served up these issues one at a time. They – they come when they come, and you have to – you have to deal with them."

Democrats pounced. John Edwards issued a statement saying, "Bin Laden is still at large and is Bush's starkest failure." John McCain and Rudy Giuliani also stressed the need to take out Osama.

Fred quickly caved on the matter of men in caves. At a rally he manned up.

## OSAMA OUGHT TO BE CAUGHT AND KILLED

"Apparently Osama bin Laden has crawled out of his cave long enough to send another video and he is getting a lot of attention," he said, "and ought to be caught and killed."

He continued to insist that killing bin Laden would not end the terrorist threat without realizing that this is true now because, by not catching bin Laden, W allowed him to explode into an inspirational force for jihadists.

Republicans are especially eager for a papa after their disappointing experiences with Junior. After going through so many shattering disasters, W seems more the inexperienced kid than ever.

In Australia, the president called Australian soldiers in Iraq "Austrian troops," and got into a weird to-and-fro on TV with the South Korean president.

W cooperated with Robert Draper, author of a new biography of him, yet the portrait was not flattering. Like a frat president sitting around with the brothers trying to figure out whether to party with Tri-Delts or Thetas, W asked his advisers for a show of hands last year to see if Rummy should stay on.

W is obsessed with getting the Secret Service to arrange his hiking trails. "What kind of male," one of his advisers wondered aloud, "obsesses over his bike riding time, other than Lance Armstrong or a 12-year-old boy?"

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independent voter.

"I feel that Republicans tend to look out more for the best interests of the majority," especially on fiscal issues and moral responsibility, Hanson says.

But, like many in his age group, he has a libertarian streak and believes party lawmakers are wrong to try to legislate issues such as same-sex marriage.

"I don't think it's any of the government's business," said Hanson, who says he is still not inspired by any of the GOP's 2008 presidential candidates.

Paul Lindsay, a spokesman for the Republican National Committee, acknowledged the challenges that the Iraq war and other issues have created for the party, but said they are not insurmountable.

© San Francisco Chronicle

# INSURANCE

From Page 11

but these should be manageable with a few brigades.

Next, consider an air strike, followed by an infantry assault.

And what about the two to three million insurance industry employees whose sole job it is to turn down claims?

Well, I have a plan for them: It's called unemployment. What country in its right mind would pay millions of people to deny other people health care?

I'm not mean, though. If we had the kind of universal, single-payer, health insurance Kucinich is advocating, private health insurance workers would continue to be covered even after they are laid off.

As for the health insurance company executives, there should be an adequate job-training program for them – perhaps as home health aides.

Fellow citizens, where is the old macho spirit that has sustained us through countless conflicts against enemies both real and imagined?

In the case of health care, we have identified the enemy, and the time has come to crush it.

- Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of 13 books, including the *New York Times* bestseller "Nickel and Dimed." She is a contributing writer to *Time* magazine.

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# War Power Ignored Congress Is Ignoring The U.S. Constitution

By Mario M. Cuomo

Most Americans want the war in Iraq ended, but it continues and Americans are killed, mutilated or wounded every day, as the Democratic majorities in Congress struggle to produce legislation that will take our forces out of harm's way.

Meanwhile, President Bush continues to insist that as commander in chief, he has the constitutional power to go to war and decide when to end it, unilaterally.

At the same time, another possible disaster emerges from the shadows: Bush appears to be considering a military assault on Iran, again apparently without Congress declaring war first.

## CAN WE DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT NOW?

How did we get to this point and what, if anything, can we do now?

The war happened because when Bush first indicated his intention to go to war against Iraq, Congress refused to insist on enforcement of Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution.

For more than 200 years, this article has spelled out that Congress – not the President – shall have “the power to declare war.”

Because the Constitution cannot be amended by persistent evasion, this constitutional mandate was not erased by the actions of timid Congresses since World War II that allowed eager presidents to start wars in Vietnam and elsewhere without a “declaration” by Congress.

Nor were the feeble, post-factotum congressional resolutions of support of the Iraq invasion – in 2001 and 2002 – adequate substitutes for the formal declaration of war demanded by the founding fathers.

## WHAT DEMOCRATS OUGHT TO DO

What can be done now?

First, Democrats should make clear that it is the President who is keeping the war in Iraq from ending.

Even if Congress were able to pass a veto-proof bill with respect to withdrawal, the president would resist enforcement of the bill, insisting that as commander in chief, he is immune from Congress' decision. That would raise a constitutional issue for the courts.

Judging by the courts' history concerning constitutional war powers, including decisions involving the Iraq war in the U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals in Massachusetts, the judiciary would, in all probability, choose not to intervene,

# Wind-Storm Threatens To Sink Kennedy

By Froma Harrop

Once upon a time, Ted Kennedy could count on his daily dose of veneration. The right wing hated the Massachusetts Democrat, but progressives honored him as a defender of old-school liberalism.

In a remarkable turnaround, liberals are now heaping scorn on the 73-year-old senator. Young audiences boo at his name, and the leftish “Daily Show” on Comedy Central makes fun of him.

The source of unhappiness is Kennedy's efforts to kill an offshore wind farm on Nantucket Sound. Cape Wind was to be the first such project in the United States and a source of pride to environmentally minded New Englanders. Polls show 84% of Massachusetts residents in favor. But now it appears that America's first offshore wind farm will be near Galveston, TX.

Proposed the month before Sept. 11, 2001, Cape Wind remains in limbo. It's been frustrated at every turn by a handful of yachtsmen, Kennedy included, who don't want to see windmills from their verandas. Many millions have been spent spreading disinformation and smearing the wind farm's supporters.

## THE PROBLEM: 'THAT'S WHERE I SAIL'

The towers would be at least five miles out and barely visible from shore on the clearest day, but the summer plutocrats resent any intrusion on their waterfront vistas – and, equally, any challenge to the notion that they control everything.

“But don't you realize – that's where I sail!” may stand as Kennedy's most self-incriminating quote.

The sordid affair is documented in a funny and depressing book titled *Cape Wind: Money, Celebrity, Class, Politics and the Battle for Our Energy Future on Nantucket Sound*. In it, authors Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb [full disclosure: Whitcomb is my editor at The Providence Journal] describe the bipartisan endeavor to betray America's environmental and energy interests – and ignore the welfare of the year-round locals.

Kennedy did much of the dirty work in Washington, but he had considerable help. In 2004, Sen. John Warner, the Virginia Republican, added a last-minute rider to an urgent Iraq War funding bill that forbade the Army Corps of Engineers to spend money permitting offshore wind projects.

“Warner was dragging American troops into the Cape Wind war,” Williams and Whitcomb noted. The outcry forced him to back down.

## WHY WARNER STUCK HIS NOSE INTO THE FIGHT

Why did Warner care so deeply about a wind-energy project in Massachusetts? Some of his fabulously wealthy relatives own choice waterfront property on Cape Cod. That's why.

Anchorage is 4,600 miles from Boston. And so what was this project to Rep. Don Young, the Alaska Republican? It was apparently an opportunity to exercise



claiming that the disagreement between the President and Congress is a political question.

However, the political-question thesis is nowhere referred to in the Constitution, and it denies the people the protection of the Constitution in dealing with perhaps the most serious question the nation has to face: “Should we go to war?”

## BUSH COURT A SAD RUBBER STAMP

That position should be challenged as an abdication of constitutional duty by the courts, but the sad truth is that the current conservative-dominated Supreme Court would probably support our current radical President.

As a practical matter, that means only the President can end this war or change our strategy in Iraq.

Even if it is too late for Congress to remedy its failure to comply with the Constitution with respect to Iraq, at the very least our candidates for President and our congressional leaders should assure us that they will not allow this lapse to result in further unilateral acts of war – against Iran, Pakistan or any other nation – by this President or any other.

Our leaders must make it clear that in the future, Congress will insist on compliance with Article 1, Section 8 for any military action that is not fairly deemed an unexpected emergency.

It is frightening that our government has permitted this fundamental and costly constitutional transgression to persist for more than four years.

We must do everything we can to end the war in Iraq and avoid a new tragedy abroad by recommitting to strict adherence to the rule of law and to the Constitution by the president, Congress and the courts – especially with respect to war powers

– The author served as governor of New York from 1983 to 1995 and now practices law in New York

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an old grudge against Theodore Roosevelt IV, the 26th president's great-grandson and a wind-farm supporter.

Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander also took an unusual interest in a venture far from his home state of Tennessee. Complaining that wind farms threaten “the wholesale destruction of the American landscape,” Alexander introduced legislation that would have banned virtually all offshore wind projects in America. It turns out that Alexander owns a fancy piece of real estate on Nantucket Island.

## ENVIRONMENTALISTS, UNONS LINE UP AGAINST KENNEDY

Kennedy, however, remains the central focus of ire. Greenpeace recently launched an anti-Kennedy, pro-Cape Wind television ad campaign.

John Bullard, the former mayor of New Bedford and a Democratic stalwart, is loudly condemning the senator. His working-class city is downwind from one of the nation's dirtiest power plants. Cape Wind could help replace it.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers built a wind turbine along an expressway going into Boston and, next to it, a billboard promoting Cape Wind. The project would mean jobs for the Boston local, which runs a training center for wind technology.

After 45 years in the Senate, Kennedy should be polishing his liberal legacy. But his manipulative attacks on this wind farm have so sickened supporters that his long career may be headed for a sorry end.

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## An Airplane Accident

A plane was taking off from Kennedy Airport. After it reached a comfortable cruising altitude, the captain made an announcement over the intercom.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. Welcome to Flight Number 293, nonstop from New York to Los Angeles. The weather ahead is good and, therefore, we should have a smooth and uneventful flight. Now sit back and relax ... OH, MY GOD!”

Silence followed. And after a few minutes, the captain came back on the intercom.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I am so sorry if I scared you earlier while I was talking to you. The flight attendant accidentally spilled a cup of hot coffee in my lap. You should see the front of my pants!”

A passenger in coach yelled, “That's nothing. You should see the back of mine.”

# When A Union Dies

## The Missing Class: Life After Maytag

By Louis Uchitelle

The last of the Maytag factories that lifted so many people into the middle class in Newton, IA, closes Oct. 26. Guy Winchell and his wife, Lisa, will lose their jobs that day.

Their combined income of \$43 an hour will disappear and, soon after, so will their health insurance. Most of the pensions they would have received will also be gone.

The Winchells are still in their 40s. They can retrain or start a business, choices promoted by city leaders in a campaign to "reinvent" Newton without its biggest employer.

As they ponder their futures, the Winchells are uncertain about how to deal with a lower standard of living.

"I'm not wanting to go waitress," said Mrs. Winchell, who, at 41, drives a forklift and earns \$19 an hour, "but I can do what I have to to make money."

Winchell, 46, having earned \$24 an hour as a skilled electrician, seems paralyzed by the disappearance of his employer. He imagines that there is work for electricians in central Iowa but he hasn't looked.

### MOM SAYS WORRYING WON'T HELP

"Lisa is always on me because I'm so angry," he said. "She says, 'What would your mom have said?' My mom would have said, 'Worrying is not going to help.'"

Newton's last day as a manufacturing mecca comes a century after Fred L. Maytag built his first mechanical washing machine there.

Over time he also located his headquarters, research center and most production in Newton, changing it from a rural county seat into a prosperous city of 16,000.

In Newton, Maytag's fortress-like headquarters building, its beige-colored bulk looming over the downtown, has been emptied of 1,200 white-collar workers.

Of nearly 900 unionized blue-collar workers still left last December in the sprawling factory, 400 were laid off and the rest got a reprieve, including the Winchells.

### WAGES FALL DRAMATICALLY

Absent Maytag's decent pay, overall hourly earnings last year for other workers in the county would have been \$3 an hour less, according to Iowa Workforce Development, a state agency.

The Whirlpool Corp. bought Maytag in the spring of 2006 and began shutting down its operations here, eliminating jobs and depressing wages.

Those caught in this process around the country are gradually swelling what Katherine S. Newman, a Princeton sociologist, describes as "The Missing Class," the title of a soon-to-be-published book [Beacon Press], of which she is co-author.

Newman calculates that 54 million adults and children occupy a "nether region" of family incomes well above the poverty line – but well short of the middle class.

Either they fall out of the middle class, as the Winchells are in danger of doing, or they have never earned enough at one job to get a family of four into the middle class.

### THE BEST AMERICAN JOBS DISAPPEARING

"We are caught in a never-ending cycle of de-industrialization in which the best jobs disappear," Newman said. "It is amazing to me how much we have come to accept that there is nothing to be done about this loss of income."

Theirs is a dead-end task: keeping retailers supplied until Whirlpool can start production of redesigned Maytag models built on the chassis of Whirlpool machines at the company's existing factories in Monterrey, Mexico, and Clyde, OH.

# CEO Pay 364 Times More Than Workers'

By Jeanne Sahadi

Pay comparisons almost always leave someone feeling dwarfed, and none more so than the CEO-to-worker pay gap. But even CEOs have reason to feel seriously dwarfed these days, thanks to the outsized paychecks of private equity and hedge fund managers.

The average CEO of a large U.S. company made roughly \$10.8 million last year, or 364 times that of U.S. full-time and part-time workers, who made an average of \$29,544, according to a joint analysis by the Institute for Policy Studies.

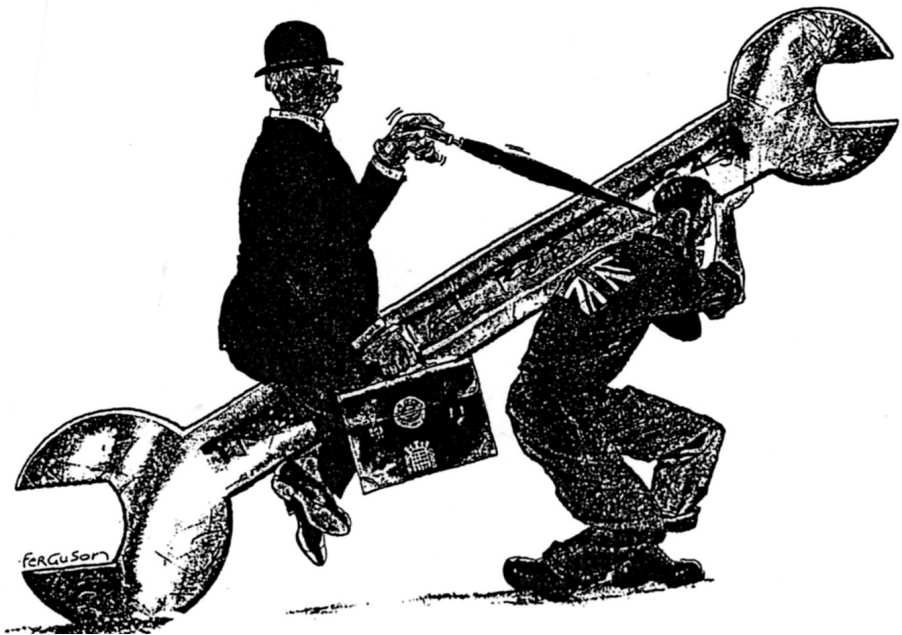
That gap is down from 411 times in 2005 and well-below the record high of 525 times recorded in 2000. But the comparison isn't exactly apples-to-apples, in part because methods have changed on how they measured CEO options pay this year.

If you just consider the average compensation [wages plus benefits] of full-time year-round workers in non-managerial jobs – roughly \$40,000 – CEO pay is more like 270 times bigger than the average Joe's.

### IT ISN'T THE BIGGEST PAY GAP

That's still a far cry from days gone by. In 1989, for instance, U.S. CEOs of large companies earned 71 times more than the average worker, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

The report also compared U.S. CEO pay to that of leaders in other fields and other countries. The top 20 CEOs of U.S. companies made an average of \$36.4



In Clyde, top pay for nearly all of the 3,700 non-union blue-collar workers is \$17 an hour, several dollars less than Maytag paid in Newton.

As Bill Townsend, the plant manager, put it, "whenever we advertise for employment, it is not difficult finding folks."

Nor is it difficult to recruit workers in Newton anymore. Absent Maytag, a good wage in central Iowa is \$12 or \$13 an hour.

The trick is to get that much as well as health insurance – and if not the wage, then at least the health insurance, even if that means commuting 40 to 50 miles, as more than a few ex-Maytag workers are now doing.

The downshift is reflected in the Labor Department's national data. Median family income has risen at an average annual rate of only six-tenths of a percent, adjusted for inflation, since the mid-1970s in sharp contrast to the 2.8% growth rate in the preceding 26 years.

### SEVERANCE PACKAGE NEGOTIATED

Hardship, however, is initially postponed in Newton. Local 997 of the United Automobile Workers, representing Maytag's blue collar staff, negotiated a severance package with Whirlpool last fall that extends each departing worker's health insurance for five or six months and pays at least \$850 for each year worked, up to 30 years.

For the Winchells, who have five children, all but one from previous marriages, the severance packages translate into more than 20 weeks of pay for the couple.

The delayed impact helps to explain, as Winchell put it, why he and his wife won't be forced until early next spring to face the inevitable distress of shrunken incomes and uncertain health care.

"I'll find work," he declared, "but I really don't know what I am going to do. I've thought about applying to hospitals because they have health insurance. One of us will have to take a job with health insurance."

Whatever the damage to living standards, from Whirlpool's point of view, its strategy in acquiring Maytag was impeccable. Make the same number of washing machines in two plants – Clyde and Monterrey – instead of three, achieving economies of scale.

### NON-UNION WORKERS EARNING LESS

Add 1,000 workers in Clyde to accommodate the increased output, but non-union workers earning less, with fewer benefits, than the unionized work force in Newton.

The state of Iowa offered numerous incentives to Whirlpool to stay in Newton. Gov. Tom Vilsack suggested publicly that he would build for Whirlpool "the most energy-efficient plant in the world."

As a lure, the city said it would give full college scholarships to children who went through the public schools.

"It was part of a retention strategy; here's the benefit we can provide if you stay."

The answer was no.

© The New York Times

## Flawed Dropout Data

# Early Intervention Answer To Truancy

By Harold Levy and Kimberly Henry

Here's a math problem only truant officers will get right: How is it possible for many school districts in America to report both that average daily attendance is better than 90% and that almost 30% of students miss a month of school annually?

(a) Averages hide underlying data. While a few schools have nearly perfect attendance, most have a serious truancy problem.

(b) Elementary schools are large and have high attendance, while middle and high schools have smaller enrollments and miserable attendance.

Large numbers of dropouts in the upper grades hide mass absences because enrollments there are lower.

(c) That 90% average daily attendance doesn't mean the same 10% of children are out all the time; it could mean 30% are chronically absent, only on different days.

Sadly, the answer is: (d) All of the above.

### CAMOUFLAGING THE REAL TRUANCY FIGURES

Let us explain. The high average daily attendance statistics reported by school districts camouflage a real truancy problem.

In 2005, for example, the average daily attendance rate reported at the five middle schools in the Hernando County School District in Florida was 91.9%. But 17.6% of the students met the definition of "chronic truancy" [21 or more days of unexcused absence during the school year].

Average daily attendance can even obscure a problem at an individual school. In the same school year, 28.7% of students at Madison Middle School in Dade County, FL, were designated chronic truants.

However, the average daily attendance rate reported was 88.4%. Attendance statistics can be used to paint vastly different pictures.

Students generally don't decide one day to drop out; it is a long process that often begins with the occasional unexcused, casual absence.

### AMERICA HAS A TRUANCY EPIDEMIC

America is awash in casual truancy. In New York City, the attendance tracking system routinely catches fully 30% of the city's 1.1 million students in its grip each year. That means that almost a third of all students are out a month or more.

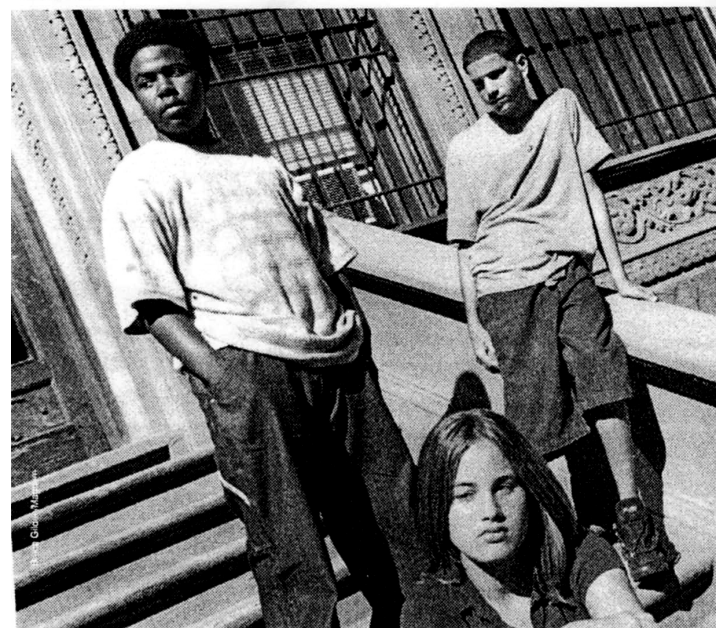
New York is not alone. Defining a "chronic truant" as a student who banks 21 or more days of unexcused absences in one year, Florida reports that 14.8% of high school students meet this criterion.

In Denver, where chronic truancy is defined at a much lower level [10 such days per year], 23% of eighth graders and 35% of 12th graders in 2005 were classified as chronic truants.

During the 2005-06 school year in the Milwaukee Public Schools, 32% of elementary school students, 46% of middle school students and 74% of high school students were classified as habitual truants [five or more unexcused absences in one semester].

### NOTHING NEW ABOUT SKIPPING SCHOOL

Skipping school has been going on since biblical times. Talmudic sages originally placed the obligation to educate children on the families, particularly on



fathers to educate their sons.

This system did not work well because many children were orphaned, neglected, born into poverty or simply avoided instruction.

The Talmud records that Joshua ben Gamla, a high priest in the Sanhedrin in 64 A.D., issued a decree requiring universal schooling for all boys starting at age six. The age of truancy had begun.

Truancy has no single cure. Students skip school because of illness, to work, to care for younger siblings or infirm grandparents, because they have become disaffected or for more nefarious reasons – drugs and other criminal conduct.

Solutions will need to take into account all these motivations. Denver has one of the more aggressive truancy programs, yet in 2004-05, only 4% of the most serious elementary school truants received any intervention beyond a phone call or letter.

### IT TAKES EARLY INTERVENTION

This is particularly alarming given that the most effective strategies are likely to involve prevention and early intervention rather than late targeting of only the most chronic truants. Unfortunately, almost nothing is done for early-stage, casual truants.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires consistent statewide reporting of truancy, is up for reauthorization.

In 2004 the Department of Education held the first National Truancy Prevention Conference. But the department has neither addressed states' inconsistent data-gathering nor established a nationwide data collection system.

Outside the context of drug abuse prevention, the department doesn't even have an office that monitors truancy.

Until we stop relying on the myth that average daily attendance is meaningful, we will remain in denial.

A clear national definition of a truant needs to be created, and all schools should report accurate statistics based on this definition to their state departments of education.

Schools and communities must be held accountable for achieving and maintaining low truancy rates. Congress should require a true census of the truants and then finance the cure.

– Harold O. Levy, a former New York City schools chancellor, is managing director at an investment firm. Kimberly Henry is an assistant professor of psychology at Colorado State University.

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# Staying Silent Is Killer For Women

By Anne Harding

Women who force themselves to stay quiet during marital arguments appear to have a higher risk of death, a new study shows.

Depression and irritable bowel syndrome are also more common in these women.

Such "self-silencing" during conflict may have provided an evolutionary survival advantage long ago, and unfortunately may be a necessity for women in abusive relationships, Dr. Elaine D. Eaker of Eaker Epidemiology Enterprises in Gaithersburg, MD, the study's lead author, told Reuters Health.

Eaker and her colleagues found that, over a 10-year period, the most striking finding was that women who self-silenced were four times more likely to die than women who expressed themselves freely during marital arguments.

### A FIRST LOOK AT ALL OUTCOMES

The current study is the first, Eaker says, to look at behavior, heart disease and mortality in the context of marital relationships.

While many studies have looked into marital status and quality and heart disease, she added, "We had some other questions that I think get more at the dynamics of how people really feel in a marriage, what actually happens in a marriage."

Eaker and her team looked at 3,682 men and women participating in the Framingham Offspring Study, most of whom were in their 40s and 50s at the beginning of the study.

Study participants were followed for 10 years for the development of heart disease and for death from any cause.

The study confirmed that marriage is good for men's health – compared with unmarried men, husbands were nearly half as likely to die during the follow-up

period.

The researchers also found that men whose wives came home from work upset about their jobs were 2.7 times as likely to develop heart disease as men with less work-stressed wives.

### HE CAN'T PROTECT HER AT HER JOB

It's possible, Eaker and her team suggest, that a wife's problems on the job could be upsetting to a husband because he is unable to "protect" her in this arena.

"Attention has been focused on the changing roles of women," they note in the July/August issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*. "The changing roles and expectations of husbands/men also need to be scrutinized and understood."

The findings underscore the importance of healthy communication within marriage, Eaker says, although she does urge that other researchers confirm the results "before we make a lot out of them."

Nevertheless, she concludes, "both spouses really need to allow another person a safe environment to express feelings when they're in conflict," both for their own health, and for the health of the relationship.

– Source: *Psychosomatic Medicine*, July/August 2007

## Mocking Fighters For Liberty

"As wiser men than I have said through the ages, when liberty is separated from justice, neither liberty nor justice is safe, and those who sacrificed for both are mocked."

– Bill Moyers

# Kids Of Same Sex Parents Doing Fine

By Linda Little

Children growing up in same-sex parental households do not necessarily have differences in self-esteem, gender identity, or emotional problems from children growing up in heterosexual parent homes.

"There are a lot of children with at least one gay or lesbian parent," says Ellen C. Perrin MD, professor of pediatrics at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston. She revealed the findings at the American Academy of Pediatrics Conference and Exhibition.

Up to six million children in the U.S. are being reared by committed lesbian or gay couples, she says. Children being raised by same-sex parents were either born to a heterosexual couple, adopted, or conceived through artificial insemination.

"The vast consensus of all the studies shows that children of same-sex parents do as well as children whose parents are heterosexual in every way," she said.

"In some ways children of same-sex parents actually may have advantages over other family structures."

## DATA EXAMINED FROM FIFTEEN STUDIES

Researchers looked at information gleaned from 15 studies on more than 500 children, evaluating possible stigma, teasing and social isolation, adjustment and self-esteem, opposite gender role models, sexual orientation, and strengths.

Studies from 1981 to 1994, including 260 children reared by either heterosexual mothers or same-sex mothers after divorce, found no differences in intelligence, type or prevalence of psychiatric disorders, self-esteem, well-being, peer relationships, couple relationships, or parental stress.

"Some studies showed that single heterosexual parents' children have more difficulties than children who have parents of the same sex," Perrin says.

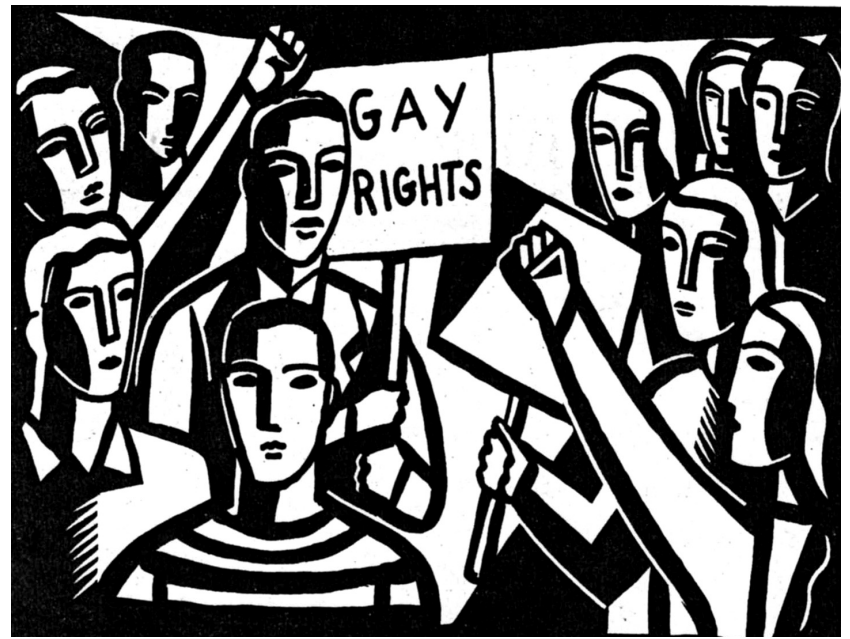
"They did better in discipline, self-esteem, and had less psychosocial difficulties at home and at school."

## NO DIFFERENCE IN BEHAVIOR DISCOVERED

Another study of 37 children of 27 divorced lesbian mothers and a similar number of children of heterosexual mothers found no differences in behavior, adjustment, gender identity, and peer relationships.

Two other large studies involving more than 100 couples found that same-sex parents also had contact with extended family, had social support, and had a more equitable division of labor in the home.

"Lesbian couples share household responsibilities and chores more equita-



bly," Perrin says. "And the children of lesbian couples are less aggressive, more nurturing to peers, more tolerant of diversity, and more inclined to play with both boy's and girl's toys."

Children seem to adjust better when there is a more equal division of labor in the home and the parental relationship with the children had a higher rating, she says.

## KIDS OF LESBIAN PARENTS MORE TOLERANT

The combined data presented by Perrin showed that children whose parents are lesbian have no more problems than the rest of the children and actually may be more tolerant of differences, she says.

There was suggestive evidence that there were more stresses due to the gender of same-sex parents, but the children also reported greater well-being, more nurturing, and a greater tolerance for differences.

"What is striking is that there are very consistent findings in these studies," Perrin says.

While further study should be done, this is important for pediatricians to know so they can learn more about variations in families, give appropriate advice in optimizing the child's development, Perrin says.

Carol Berkowitz, MD, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, says this analysis is important in that it combines evidence-based studies.

"This subject evokes a lot of emotions," she says. "Some of the studies on this subject in the past have been weighted and biased, based on nothing more than the researcher's views."

Evidence-based studies are important in helping pediatricians in their practices and creating policy for the future, she says.

— Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Ellen C. Perrin, MD, professor of pediatrics, Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston. Carol Berkowitz, MD, former president, American Academy of Pediatrics.

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## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION - Required by U.S. Postal Service.

1. Publication Title: The Oklahoma Observer
2. Publication No. 865-720
3. Filing Date: 10-1-07
4. Issue Frequency: Semi-monthly except monthly in July & December.
5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 22
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$30.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication [Not Printer] [Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4]: 13912 Plymouth Crossing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275, Oklahoma County. Contact Person: Beverly Hamilton. Telephone: 405-478-8700.
8. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher [Not printer]: 13912 Plymouth Crossing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor [Do not leave blank]:  
Publisher: Beverly Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.  
Editor: Arnold Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.  
Managing Editor: F.J. "Frosty" Troy, 3009 N. Glenvalley Dr., Midwest City, OK 73110.
10. Owner [Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.]  
AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.  
Arnold Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.  
Beverly Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None.
12. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: Not Applicable.
13. Publication Title: The Oklahoma Observer
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 9-25-07
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:  
a. Total No. Copies [Net Press Run]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 7,066.  
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation:  
[1] Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscription stated on Form 3541. Average No. Copies Each issue during preceding 12 months: 5,142 - No. Copies of Single Issue published nearest to filing date: 4,917.  
[2] Paid In-County Subscriptions: Average No. Cop-

- ies Each issue during preceding 12 months: 1,634 - No. Copies of Single issue published nearest to filing date: 1,590.
- [3] Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution: 0
- [4] Other Classes mailed through the USPS: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 0 - No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 0
- c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [Sum of 15b, [1], [2], [3], and [4]. Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 6,776. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 6,507.
- d. Free Distribution by Mail [Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free]:  
[1] Outside-County as stated on Form 3541: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 17. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 16.  
[2] In-County as stated on Form 3541: Average No. Copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 27. No. Copies of Single issue published nearest filing date: 27.  
[3] Other Classes Mailed through the USPS: Not applicable.
- e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail [Carriers or Other Means]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 100. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 100.
- f. Total Free Distribution [Sum of 15d and 15e]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 144. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue published Nearest to Filing Date: 143.
- g. Total Distribution [Sum of 15c and 15f]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 6,920. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 6,507.
- h. Copies Not Distributed: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 244. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 243.
- i. Total [Sum of 15g and 15h]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 7,164. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 6,893.
- j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation [15c divided by 15g x 100]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 97.91%. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 97.84%.
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership required. Will be printed in the 10-10-07 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Beverly Hamilton, Publisher. Date: 10-1-07. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions [including fines and imprisonment] and/or civil sanctions [including civil penalties].

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