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## Our Superb Aerospace Industry Thanksgiving

By Frosty Troy

What better time than Thanksgiving for Oklahomans to be thankful for the aerospace industry and what it means to the state.

Most don't know that the aerospace industry is responsible for more than 72,000 jobs, nearly 4.5% of the state's total employment.

Indirect and induced employment figures add another 43,237 jobs to the state total.

Oklahoma aerospace industry workers average \$55,000 a year – far more than the average Oklahoman who takes in \$30,000.

The direct and indirect gross output from Oklahoma's commercial aviation industry is estimated at \$12.4 billion – over 10% of the state's industrial output, with an annual payroll of \$5 billion.

Oklahoma is one of the top six global hubs for maintenance, repair and overhaul services.

Next time you whiz by Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City or zip past American Airlines in Tulsa, make the Sign of The Cross, blow a kiss or give a thumbs up – whatever you do in thanksgiving.

Tinker, with 22,000 civilian employees, is the second largest employer in Oklahoma, trailing only Wal-Mart. The difference is that Tinker pays living wages and earned benefits and Wal-Mart doesn't.

"Among Oklahoma's nearly 400 aerospace companies, we have one of the highest concentrations of companies and skilled workers engaged in the maintenance, modification, repair and overhaul of aircraft in the world," according to Victor Bird.

Bird is director of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission. He is quick to point out that America's aerospace industry enjoys a \$52 billion trade surplus on the international market.

Unfortunately, the dipsticks now running the Oklahoma Legislature turned their backs on two bills the industry says are of real concern.

House Bill 2085 would provide tax credits for Oklahoma aerospace companies that hire Oklahoma engineering graduates. The shortage is acute.

House Bill 2082 would provide \$30 million for the renovation or construc-

tion of airport terminals and hangars for general aviation, including pavement work for many of Oklahoma's regional business airports.

Both bills failed to make it out of committee but efforts will be renewed in the 2008 session because both are critical to the industry's future here.

Legislators also need to adequately fund the Center for Aerospace Supplier Quality, the effort to win some of the \$5 billion in federal contracts annually outsourced by Tinker.

The Republican-controlled Legislature has been so busy cutting taxes [\$700 million in three years] they can't smell the roses under their noses.

Oklahoma is only picking up about \$500 million of Tinker and other defense installation contracts in Oklahoma. That includes Boeing, Northrop, Grumman, ARINC and AAR.

Biggest problem facing this Oklahoma crown jewel is an engineering shortage here and nationwide. More than half of Oklahoma's engineers leave the state within five years after obtaining their degrees.

In April 2007, there were 4.4 million

on-line advertisements for job vacancies in the U.S., according to a report from The Conference Board, and of those ads 176,700 [or 4%] were for engineering positions.

Some employers are also required by law to use only U.S. citizens because of national security concerns. Meanwhile, many aerospace workers are leaving the industry, discouraged by past instability. Others are being lured to other labor markets, attracted by higher wages.

Evidence strongly indicates the aerospace industry is at the beginning of a shift that will significantly impact the definition of basic skills within the industry.

Oklahoma will experience shortages of approximately 200 aerospace engineers and 400 electrical engineers by 2014, with shortages of additional engineering specialties possible in that same time frame.

Currently not quantifiable, but potentially more significant than the shortage of engineers, are pending skills gaps within Oklahoma's aerospace workforce. The gaps stem from

advances in aerospace technology and an increased reliance within the industry on newly developed composite materials.

Qualitative data indicates that employers prefer that new graduates from training programs for welders and airframe and power plant mechanics receive their strongest education in the basic skills, which could include how to work with composite materials.

This at a time when legislative Republicans are slamming the door on adequate funding of Oklahoma's premier CareerTech department.

Due to lousy funding, they turned down 12,000 students this year, including 600 dropouts who wanted to come back and learn a skill.

Oklahoma's economic development community and its partners must continue to promote the importance of the industry and monitor Oklahoma's aerospace workforce for adequate number of workers by:

- Helping the aerospace industry work collectively to give the Oklahoma Aerospace Alliance, Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, Space Industry Development Authority, or some other similar entity the authority to function as the single voice of the industry, allowing for better coordination of data gathering, marketing, and policy development.

- Working through that entity to develop in-state and out-of-state marketing strategies that create a positive image of aviation and aerospace within the state while promoting a broader awareness of Oklahoma's position as a global leader in the aerospace industry.

- Providing coordinated aid under the leadership of that entity to Oklahoma companies wanting to obtain aerospace contract work through the Air Logistics Center at Tinker Air Force Base, the FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, and other federal installations throughout the state.

The slash and burn agenda of GOP House Speaker Lance Cargill and Senate Co-Leaders Glenn Coffee and Mike Morgan can do permanent damage to the aerospace goose that lays the golden egg. Voters in both parties better wake up.



# Observations

## Bravo!

Three cheers for State Rep. Jabar Shumate, D-Tulsa, who will file legislation to crack down on fraudulent practices plaguing Oklahoma's initiative petition process.

All too often paid signature collectors lie their heads off. Today there is no legal method to have a name removed from an initiative petition.

His legislation would allow voters to contact the Secretary of State's office to have their names removed. It also would establish guidelines for individuals collecting signatures to ensure they face penalties if they mislead citizens about the content of a proposal.

In recent years, the initiative petition process has been plagued by alleged abuses. When an initiative petition effort was launched to place a fuel tax increase on the ballot in 2005, there were numerous reports of voters being misled to believe the proposal would slash fuel prices.

That may be one reason the initiative obtained enough signatures to go to the ballot while being rejected by 87% of the voters, largest margin of defeat in Oklahoma history.

Shumate's bill would be an important advance in preserving the integrity of the initiative petition process.

## Kids Today

Are America's teenagers and 20-somethings "self-absorbed narcissists" who have to be praised every 10 minutes, lest they burst into tears?

If that charge sounds familiar, it should. In the 1960s and '70s, grown-ups were making similar accusations against the very baby boomers now complaining about generations X and Y.

They were called spoiled, soft, the "Me Generation" – and for good reason. They indulged in sex and drugs, and protested any demand elders made of them.

Now that we're gray and balding, we're complaining that kids raised

in today's self-esteem culture think they're special.

Every generation is found wanting by their predecessors – and compared to boomers, high school seniors today smoke and drink less, are less likely to use illicit drugs, and are less likely to become pregnant.

Meanwhile, the nation's top universities have never seen so many applicants with straight A's, high SATs, and impressive extracurricular activities.

This might be hard for baby boomers to swallow, but perhaps young people hold themselves in high regard "because they've earned it."

## Change The Law

Let's say you build a thriving business or a beautiful estate by the sea. After you die, the government tells your children and grandchildren: Your family has owned this long enough. We're now handing it over to the public.

Under current copyright law, says author Mark Helprin, that's exactly what happens to writers, songwriters, inventors, and other owners of intellectual property.

Seventy years after death, novels, songs, and inventions go into the public domain. But it's not the public, generally, that benefits.

When a publisher issues great works of literature that have lost copyright protection, for example, it still charges you to buy the books.

The author's heirs just don't get a cut of the profits.

This is clearly unfair. In the 18th Century, when the framers of the Constitution decided to provide copyright protection "for limited times," 95% of the population earned its living from the land, so ideas and intellectual property were not seen as anyone's livelihood.

Today, more people make their living from ideas than from tilling the soil. It's time Congress extended the copyright protection beyond 70 years.



No good case can exist for treating with special disfavor the work of the spirit and the mind.

## What Peaceniks?

Oklahoma and America's manufacturing industries may be dying but there's one industry that still has plenty of customers throughout the globe – U.S. weapons manufacturers.

They are enjoying an unprecedented boom, with the Pentagon approving a record \$21 billion in arms sales in 2006.

In a recent four-year period, the U.S. sold more than 2,000 surface-to-air missiles to nations in the developing world, as well as 10 major warships, ranging from destroyers to aircraft carriers.

It recently agreed to sell \$1.8 billion in F-16 fighter planes to Turkey and another 100 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters over the next 15 years.

That's \$10.7 billion in fighter planes for a country that ranks 94th on the United Nations' human development index, below Lebanon, Colombia, and Grenada.

What accounts for these impressive sales figures? Like drug dealers, American arms dealers create their own demand.

First, they sell a load of weapons to one nation, and then tell its neighbor, "Hey, did you notice that the guys next door just bought some new jets, tanks, and submarines?"

Next thing you know, a country like Turkey or Saudi Arabia is eagerly writing a check to Lockheed Martin with nine zeros on it.

We Americans claim to be peace-loving but no other country does more to facilitate war and armed uprisings.

## Rich Gesture

With President Bush calling for fuel conservation perhaps the captains of industry would consider mothballing their jets.

Corporate turbojets consume 313 gallons of kerosene an hour – a burn rate 100 times that of the average Buick.

Eliminating the 590 million gallons of fuel the nation's 5,000 or so corporate jets burn annually would be the proverbial drop in the oceans of hydrocarbons we consume, but it would

certainly be very good public relations. Especially for televangelists.

Ditching the corporate jet would also give CEOs a chance to pay more than lip service to the notion of conserving energy while burnishing the green credentials that are all the rage in the corporate world.

The fuel savings would be small, but the symbolism would be huge. For the relatively small price of standing with the masses at check-in and security lines, they might even generate enough goodwill to take the heat off their options and severance packages.

One incompetent CEO was recently given the boot from a major corporation but landed safely with a golden parachute of \$161 million.

Poor thing.

## Hyper Living

If you had a choice between a higher salary and more vacation time, which would you choose?

Most Americans would prefer more time off, studies have found – yet the amount of time we spend away from our jobs is in precipitous decline.

Though we are the richest nation on earth, we guarantee no vacation time to workers, and the average number of days taken is only 12.

Contrast that to Britain, which guarantees all workers 20 days of paid leave; Germany, which gives 24; and France, which insists on 30.

American workers put in longer workdays, too, and the average male now works 100 hours more a year than the average male did in the 1970s, while the average woman works 200 more hours.

Those hours are coming from somewhere: from time with our kids, our friends, our spouses, even our bed.

Why is our work ethic in overdrive? Cornell economist Robert Frank says Americans are caught in a cycle of wanting more goodies than the guy next door.

No matter how much we have, we still feel a need for more income if our neighbor's house or car or flat-panel TV is bigger than ours.

In other words, Americans are determined to keep up with the Joneses. And that won't stop until the Joneses take a nice, long vacation. You can stop and smell the roses without buying them.

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LETTERS TO EDITOR: E-mail to letters@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. SPEAKERS BUREAU: To book Founding Editor Frosty Troy for your Chamber banquet, convention or other gathering, contact Helen Troy for rates and availability. Telephone: 405.525.5582. E-Mail: ftroy@fullnet.net. U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 53371, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3371.

To invite Editor Arnold Hamilton to address your civic club, students or political gathering, contact him directly at 405.478.8700 or ahamilton@okobserver.net.

PUBLISHER  
Beverly Hamilton  
405.478.8700

EDITOR  
Arnold Hamilton  
ahamilton@okobserver.net  
405.478.8700

FOUNDING EDITOR  
Frosty Troy  
ftroy@fullnet.net  
405.525.5582

ART DIRECTOR/WEBMASTER  
Kyle Williams  
405.478.8700

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

Rep. Shane Jett, R-Shawnee, is proposing a guest worker program to solve the immigration crisis. It worked like a dream for Ronald Reagan for the eight years he was California's governor.

Dart: To President Bush for his veto of the health, education and welfare bill while asking for another \$50 billion for his misguided war in Iraq.

Somebody is circulating fliers in the district of House Speaker Lance Cargill, R-Harrah, extolling a detailed account of his ethics problems. Some House Republicans say if he loses his case – which is likely – he could drag down Republicans, too.

Laurel: To Oklahoma's 540 public school districts, home for 634,739 students. Of the total, 15.2% are special education students, 7.5% don't speak English, a whopping 54.5% are on free or reduced lunches.

If Oklahoma can find a way to do it, Sen. Kenneth Corn's proposal to make community colleges free for qualifying students would be superb. Massachusetts just did it. So has North Carolina.

Dart: To GOP House Speaker Lance Cargill, wasting taxpayer money by sending out a flock of his clones to convince teachers that merit pay is a good thing. Not until teachers are paid a regional wage. They rank 47th today.

"He's dumb as hell ... but he's friendly." – President Richard Nixon describing Fred Thompson, then a Nixon leak on the congressional Watergate committee probe. [The Economist]

Laurel: To the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, representing 16 Christian faiths, criticizing Oklahoma's new immigration law as unduly cruel. It is.

If you haven't visited the Clinton Library in Little Rock you're missing one of the top presidential libraries in America. He was a great President – from the waist up.

Dart: To anyone riding a motorcycle without a helmet. You need only check their shoe size to know their IQ. Motorcycles now account for 11.3% of all American traffic deaths. [U.S. Department of Transportation]

"A man who owned Hitler's globe is putting it up for auction. He found the globe of the world in Hitler's bunker. So if you're thinking of a gift for Ann Coulter ..." – Jay Leno

Laurel: To Tulsa World Associate Editor Julie DeCour, the ACLU's Fran Morris Media Award winner for a superb editorial concerning Oklahoma's No. 1 place in the incarceration of females.

It took eight long years of work by the Oklahoma School Psychological Association to finally win recognition for members as national certified educators entitled to the \$5,000 a year. Nobody worked harder than Dr. Marshall Glenn.

Dart: To those opposing water sales to Texas. More than 8.5 million acre-feet of water washes out of Oklahoma daily. Oklahoma uses only two million acre-feet of water annually.

A survey of 303 different jobs among the state government's 36,964 employees showed that their salaries average 10.5% below the market average for comparable jobs. The huge turnover is costing taxpayers more than \$80 million a year.

Laurel: To the Legislature for a law cracking down on copper thieves. Oklahoma now ranks fifth among the 50 states in such thefts.

Quit beefing until you know where you are. At 38.4 cents tax per gallon on diesel and 35.4 cents on a gallon of gasoline, Oklahoma is in the bottom five taxes on fuel. You could be in California.

Dart: To the craven tobacco industry, feasting off death and disability. Thankfully, the higher cigarette tax in Oklahoma has resulted in 50 million fewer packs smoked last year.



Those prayers you see wafting over Oklahoma City are from the Daily Disappointment folk who beseech the Almighty to let sick old Gene Stipe live to 120 so they will have something to write about.

Laurel: To English teachers Shelly Unsicker of Moore Central Junior High and Dionne Liebl of Putnam City West High, winners of the \$25,000 cash prizes from the Milken Family Foundation for excellence in teaching.

"You grow up the day you have your real first laugh at yourself." – Ethel Barrymore

Oklahoma, with 645 breeders, is second only to Missouri in dog breeding. Rep. Lee Denney, R-Cushing, wants to regulate the breeders. And by the way, the dogs produced don't include the dogs in the Legislature.

Dart: To the folks running the Pentagon, squandering more than \$600 million tax dollars on a new Baghdad embassy featuring an astonishing 619 blast-proof apartments!

Utah, reddest state in the Union and a big homeschool state, defeated the nation's first statewide voucher system with 62% of the vote. Let that be a lesson to the wannabe freeloaders and nitwit anti-public school forces at the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

Laurel: To 84.3% of Oklahomans 25 and older who have a high school diploma – ahead of the national average of 84.1%. Critics only tell you a half truth about the dropout rate. [U.S. Census Bureau]

Billionaire Warren Buffett is advising Congress not to abandon the inheritance tax, already with a \$2 million exemption, going to \$3.5 million in 2009. Tell us again how hard Paris Hilton worked for that \$50 million. Duh!

Dart: To President Bush, pushing for renewal of the No Child Left Behind Act just as it is. A Gallup poll shows 76% of Americans disagree with him, saying students need more than just reading and math.

OKC's WKY Radio, once the premier station in Oklahoma, now ranks dead last in listeners – 0.5% of the audience. Tops is KOMA with classic hits.

Laurel: To Tim O'Connor, executive director of OKC's Catholic Charities, awarded the Friend of Nursing Award by the Oklahoma Nursing Association for his dedication and support of Faith Community Nursing in Oklahoma.

Our readers ought to know that new Oklahoma County DA David Prater is doing a first-rate job. His initiative against parents with truant children is long overdue.

Dart: To the feds for a \$1,485 filing fee to apply for a green card. Add attorney fees and you're talking \$5,000 more. Yet critics claim they want undocumented to be legal.

Know how immigration law affects education? Consider the impact on Guymon Public Schools. They had 325 Hispanic students in 1994, today it's 1,506, with only 913 white students.

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for a \$5,000 donation to the Oklahoma Democratic Party. He raised more than \$5 million in the last election cycle and still has more than \$500,000 on hand.

Talk about friends. Dr. Randall Raburn, executive director of the school administrators association, suffered an aneurysm on a trip out of state. Friends raised \$27,000 for an air ambulance to bring him home. He is recovering nicely.

Dart: To Tim Russert of NBC's Meet the Press, asking candidates what their favorite Bible verse is. He has turned Meet the Press into Meet Tim Russert, a real dud.

The National Committee for an Effective Congress has given lone Democrat Dan Boren a grade of 76%. Sen. Coburn got 5%, Inhofe 3%. In the House, Lucas scored 10%, Sullivan 2%, Cole 9%, Fallin 5%.

Dart: To the U.S. Chamber, posing as nonpolitical but by their fruits shall ye know them – \$231,000 to GOP candidates in the last election cycle, 80% of all they donated through their PAC.

There's a new visiting garbage collector in Oklahoma – Terry Stoops, shill from the far right John Locke Foundation, peddling the line that Oklahoma teachers are really highly paid. [Urban Tulsa Weekly]

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer




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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

I've been a liberal Democrat for 45 years, and I support the expansion of health insurance for otherwise uninsured children. It's a worthy cause, and I'm comfortable with seeing my taxes increase to pay my fair share of it.

But I'm also a smoker. Unless I'm missing the clear-cut link between smoking and children's health insurance, it seems to me that we smokers are being asked to pay not just our fair share, but to foot the entire bill.

Where is the logic and fairness in this?

Court Atchinson  
Enid

Editor, The Observer:

Just a wonderin' if we might could trade Randy Terrell and all these milquetoast, spineless worm Democrats in Oklahoma and Congress for the illegal aliens?

Max Edgar  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Where indeed is the outrage over the Legislature changing the funding of HB 1017?

The vote of the people mandated those funds be over and above the regular school appropriation. Now, they've just rolled them over into the appropriation.

And politicians will stand there with a straight face and tell you about how they follow the will of the people. The bunch in Oklahoma City should be ashamed of themselves for claiming to represent the people.

The day after I learned about this fraud, I ran into Dr. Clarence Oliver, former Broken Arrow Superintendent. "Why?" I asked. "People won't care," he replied with a tear in his eye.

Shame on the Legislature! The current batch of politicians is making the old ones look good.

Throw them all out!

Bill Sittler  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Why did it take so long for the Oklahoma Hall of Fame to honor Clara Luper, the Mother of Oklahoma Civil Rights?

The other seven inductees put together have not done even a fraction of what Clara Luper has done for Oklahoma or their fellow men.

All of the others, except Linda Twine and Jayne Jayroe, were honored for making money and a number of them were born with it. Not one of the others deserved to stand on the stage

with Clara. She led the first counter sit-ins in America.

All of these people made it before Clara Luper. I suspect Clara Luper didn't donate enough money somewhere. It just goes to show you what this group thinks is important or worth honoring. I would have thought she had been in it for years. I was shocked she wasn't already in it.

Anita Bryant, 1966  
Van Heflin, 1964  
Oral Roberts, 1972  
Dale Robertson, 1979  
Roy Clark, 1982  
Patti Page, 1983  
Johnny Bench, 1984  
James Garner, 1986  
Kay Starr, 1988  
Jim Hartz, 1990  
Warren Spahn, 1993  
Don Nickles, 1994  
Vince Gill, 1997  
Reba McIntyre, 1998  
Abe Lemons, 1999  
Barry Switzer, 1999  
Darrell Royal, 2000  
Boone Pickens, 2003  
Molly Shi Boren, 2004  
Frank Keating, 2005  
Bobby Murcer, 2005

Karen Webb  
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

I am one of the 73% of Americans who oppose George Bush's warrantless wiretapping of American citizens in violation of the Fourth Amendment and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 [FISA].

I am outraged that George Bush admits he broke the FISA law at least 30 times by authorizing activities that were illegal – and I am outraged Congress has not impeached Bush for doing so.

I am outraged that the Bush Administration has lied about its illegal activities for years, especially former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' perjury before Congress – and I am outraged Gonzales has not been prosecuted for doing so.

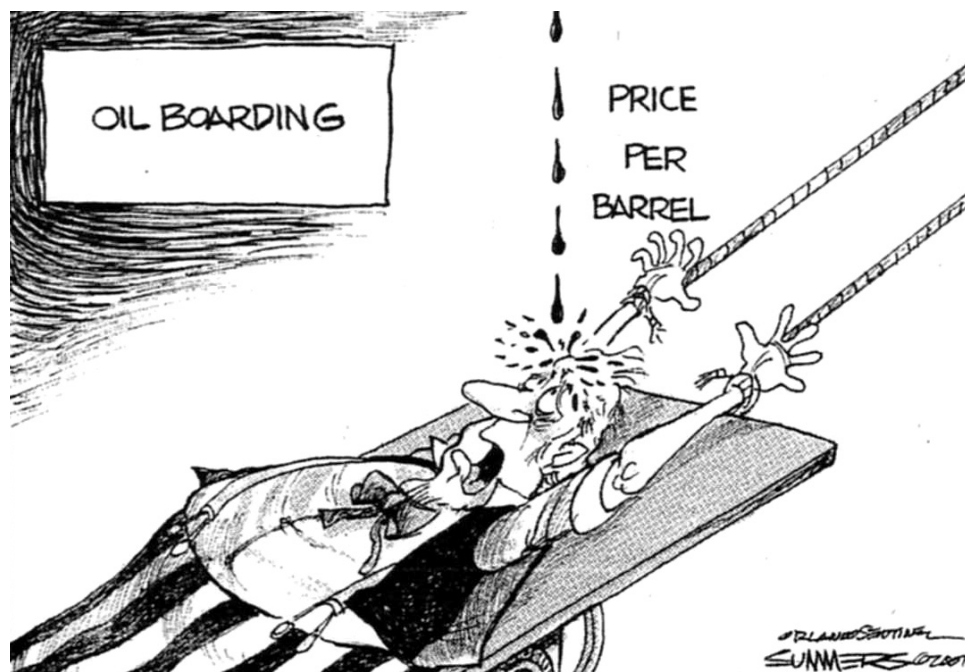
I am outraged that George Bush used a false terrorist threat in August to terrorize Congress into legalizing his illegal wiretapping – and I am outraged Congress has not impeached Bush for doing so.

I am outraged that nearly every Republican and a few dozen Democrats voted for Bush's wiretapping bill.

I therefore demand the following:

[1] Immediate repeal of the "Protect America Act of 2007" enacted in August, or at a minimum allowing it to expire in January.

[2] Defeat of any further legislation



to legalize warrantless wiretapping or give immunity to telephone companies or Bush Administration officials who participated in the illegal wiretapping of American citizens.

[3] Prosecution of Alberto Gonzales for lying to Congress when he testified that there was no "serious disagreement" inside the Justice Department over the illegal program, even though then-Attorney General John Ashcroft and his top aides dramatically threatened to resign over the program.

[4] Impeachment of George Bush for violating the Fourth Amendment and FISA over 30 times and for falsely terrorizing Congress into passing the Protect America Act.

[5] Criminal prosecution of Bush, Gonzales, and everyone else who committed these crimes.

Darla Sparks  
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

I suspect the people who keep asking me to contact my U.S. representative and U.S. senators don't know who "represents" me. If they did, they'd be asking me to recall the whole sorry bunch.

Oklahoma's U.S. delegation is really embarrassing to me. I swear I voted against them all, every chance I got.

Al Engel  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Unfortunately the healthcare proposals receiving the most attention ignore the elephant in the room which is the enormous non-benefit costs incurred by health care providers who must match their billions of billings with thousands of differing private health care plans.

This cost is tremendous but putting everyone under Medicare would eliminate that cost.

Merton C. Bernstein, a founding member of the National Academy of Social Insurance and the Coles Professor of Law Emeritus at Washington University in St. Louis, says, "Medicare's single-payer system would reduce non-benefit spending by doctors, hospitals, clinics, laboratories and health care insurers by about \$300 billion a year, providing funds to insure everyone without additional outlays."

Hundreds of private insurers offer innumerable differing plans; in contrast, Medicare has one set of charges in a region. That helps explain Medicare's low administrative costs

– about 2% of benefit outlays. In addition, Medicare does not have the marketing and advertising costs that add significantly to private insurer outlays.

The single-payer health plan is a no-brainer and the presidential candidates should be challenged to prove that their plans are better or equal to it.

Frank Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

They took his good name, his freedom, part of his fortune, his license to practice law, and control of his pride and joy, the state Senate.

His crimes? Giving more campaign money to Democrats than the law allows and mandating that the Legislature stand on three pillars – trial lawyers, teachers and labor unions.

Then, they encouraged the filing of more federal charges to put the former dean of the state Senate, Gene Stipe, along with his brother, Frances, behind bars for life.

The "they" are Oklahoma Republican kingpins – U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, ex-Gov. and ex-deputy U.S. Attorney General Frank Keating, National Republican Congressional campaign chief Tom Cole and ex-Congressman J.C. Watts Jr.

These Okie GOP "godfathers" had the power to tell the Republican White House and Republican U.S. Department of Justice to end the malicious prosecution of the 80-year-old "Prince of Darkness" who is half-dead physically, mentally and politically.

But they can't forgive Stipe for outflanking and outwitting their party for more than 50 years and protecting us poor working stiffs from the ungodly greed of Republican robber barons.

When a homicide like the Republican assassination of Sen. Stipe is committed, you ask one question, "Who benefits?"

The answer is partisan bullies Inhofe, Keating, Cole and Watts.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
Wagoner

*Editor's Note: Stipe pleaded guilty in federal court in 2003 to two counts of conspiracy and one count of perjury as part of a scheme to illegally funnel more than \$200,000 into Walt Roberts' unsuccessful congressional campaign. In October he was indicted again in federal court, this time on allegations that included money laundering, mail fraud and witness tampering.*

## Frosty Troy's

### Commencement Address

Students and their parents need to hear an up-beat send-off. No politics. A word portrait about this wonderful state

Call Helen Troy 405-525-5582 for modest rates  
But Hurry! Frosty's calendar fills fast

## Frosty's Notebook

# Bob Kerr

I was mildly disappointed in the documentary on the life of the late, great U.S. Sen. Robert S. Kerr that premiered on the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority.

It was OK as far as it went. It simply didn't go very far. No mention of the Kerr-Mills Act, forerunner of Medicare. A kiss-off on his role in space technology.

Those who were around at the time know how Kerr ended up running two committees, Finance and Space – due to an illness of the Space Committee chairman. Kerr was the ranking member.

No mention of the long and venomous editorial tirades in the Daily Disappointment, terming him "Water On The Brain Kerr."

This was Gaylord poison at its worst and a testament to Kerr's dogged love for Oklahoma and its future that he plowed on through the garbage.

Few know that one of his dreams just prior to his death was to upgrade higher education by attracting one of the foremost scientists of his time to the University of Oklahoma.

It was my good fortune to be in Washington for the Tulsa Tribune during the period when the notoriously Republican Wall Street Journal called Kerr "the uncrowned king of the Senate."

My deskmate in the Senate Press Room of the Capitol was a reporter for the Wall Street Journal, Robert D. Novak. He told me Kerr refused to talk to Journal reporters and could I get him an interview.

I asked Kerr's press aide, John Meek, if it was possible. I then took one of the worst cussings of my life. That I would even indirectly give aid and comfort to the Journal was a mortal sin.

Kerr's involvement in the space program is legendary – yet little noted in Oklahoma except by the Oklahoma Historical Society and their splendid magazine, The Chronicles of Oklahoma.

One of the fortunate circumstances of being in Washington during Kerr's time was the fact that the guy he put in charge of the space committee was Carter Bradley, former Oklahoma bureau chief of UPI.

Carter was heaven-sent for me, a young guy enthralled by the vastness of Washington. He knew all the Oklahoma angles for stories.

Kerr also brought brilliant James Webb to head the space program, a master-stroke and a primary reason why America beat Russia to the moon.

Watching Kerr in committees or debating on the Senate floor was a marvel. The key to his legislative successes was a superb staff that shared his enthusiasm for America and especially for Oklahoma.

Also conspicuously absent from the documentary was his fight to rebuild a moribund Democratic Party in Oklahoma – whistle-stopping virtually every burg in the state to tell Democrats to stand tall and be proud.

He pulled the party out of debt and enthroned one of his own, Coach McNeil, as his party surrogate in Oklahoma.

Years earlier, when I was a reporter for the Lawton Constitution, Kerr came to town to campaign on the courthouse steps. He graciously granted me an interview in his hotel room while he changed clothes.

Talk about a showman. I watched him put on a battered old pair of shoes and red suspenders. He wowed the crowd.

It wasn't the only time he showered me with kindness. I was named an associate editor of the Tulsa Tribune and was bound for Oklahoma. To my surprise, Sen. Kerr gave me a going-away dinner thronged with Oklahomans. His personal tribute to me will linger in my heart until the day I die.

I have to plead more bias in favor of Sen. Kerr. I grew up in McAlester, part of a big Roman Catholic family. I knew what it meant to be hated for my religion



– shunned and called a "Catlicker" by public school kids.

The lone McAlester radio station each morning featured the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dr. Augie Henry, who delighted in vilifying Catholics.

As the documentary noted, Kerr lost thousands of Baptist and other fundamentalist votes because of his vigorous support of John F. Kennedy.

It was the same kind of hatred we see today toward Muslims in our society – a minority beholden to a foreign power. In our case the foreign power was the Pope.

I was there when President Kennedy flew into Poteau to dedicate that highway. He seemed at home leaning on the fence railing, chatting with the senator.

He later told his speechwriter, Ted Sorensen, "I flew all the way to Oklahoma to kiss Bob Kerr's ass."

When I got the telephone call that Kerr had suddenly died in the hospital, I went into the bathroom and wept.

The next day I asked my publisher, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, if I could write the editorial page piece on the senator. He said OK.

I have lost the article but I remember making no bones about the fact that a large part of the greatness of Oklahoma died with Bob Kerr.

Rep. Ed Edmondson, Kerr's House co-author on the Arkansas River navigation program, inserted the article into the Congressional Record.

Where are the Bob Kerrs today in the Democratic Party? Moments ago I read in the Tulsa World that the lone Democrat, Congressman Dan Boren, dodged four key votes in the week, including one making it a crime to harm gay people.

Our governor, Brad Henry, said it isn't his job to build a political party but to build a state. Whose job is it?

Bob Kerr knew that to build a state you have to have widespread party support to maintain the political leadership that gets the job done.

Lacking that, it has been on a Democratic governor's watch that the House has gone Republican and the Senate is equally divided.

When you say your prayers tonight, be sure and ask for another Bob Kerr. We could sure use one.

## The Truth About Schools

Critics of public education, from grammar-challenged George Bush to the white trash operating the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, continue to ignore the truth.

Teachers in the United States spend more hours at work than their counterparts in 29 other countries, but are among the 12th lowest paid, according to an annual survey comparing the education systems in the world's leading economies.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reports that primary-level teachers teach an average of 1,080 hours each year in the United States – well above the average of 803 hours for all countries surveyed.

The average salary of just over \$40,000 for a U.S. teacher with 15 years of experience ranked the United States 12th among the countries surveyed.

In Luxembourg, the average salary for a teacher with similar experience is \$88,000 in U.S. dollars. Lowest is Hungary – it is \$16,000.

Although the average U.S. teacher salary is above the OECD average of \$37,603, the report points out that relative to the gross domestic product, "per capita teachers' pay in the United States is among the lowest in OECD countries."

The report ranks the United States 10th for its efforts to control class sizes, with 23.1 students per classroom at the primary level, higher than the OECD average of 21.5.

The United States also appeared to lag behind on participation in preschool education. The report found that while spending on U.S. pre-kindergarten students is among the highest of all OECD countries, the United States has one of the lowest participation rates for children younger than five.

In 2005, the rate of participation for 3- and 4-year-olds in the United States was 50%, compared with the OECD average of 68.5%.

In Oklahoma, most critics of early childhood education are rightwing Republicans, especially the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs' Brandon Dutcher, a homeschooler.

Dutcher wants your tax dollars to pay for the 1.1 million homeschoolers, many of whom don't educate their children, they indoctrinate them.

The report includes a host of other education statistics on factors such as education spending, graduation rates, higher education, and student attitudes about mathematics.

For instance, in the United States, 87% of the population between the ages of 25 and 34 have completed high school, one of the highest rates in the world.

America's immigration problem can be traced in part to the fact that in Mexico, only 24% of the population in that age group has completed high school.

**TORTURE**  
**and apple pie!** 

# The GOP Tax Gospel Carpetbaggers Are On Parade In OKC

By Frosty Troy

Out of state shills told state lawmakers at a Capitol hearing what they wanted to hear – additional tax cuts must be approved if Oklahoma is to remain competitive with other states. It's a lie.

Oklahoma has the nation's lowest tax rate – 50th in combined state, local and federal taxes.

"Throughout this study, we've focused on the need to keep Oklahoma's tax climate competitive with surrounding states," said state Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, one of the Legislature's worst panderers.

"We want to determine if additional tax cuts are necessary and, if so, what shape they should take to best promote economic development, growth and job creation. Today's testimony indicates, once again, that we have room to improve."

## TOP BUSINESS LEADERS NIX MORE TAX CUTS

It was probably no accident that the Tulsa and Oklahoma City Chambers of Commerce simultaneously announced that the Legislature should quit cutting taxes. Prospective businesses consider other factors.

A spokesman for the OKC Chamber said it's time the needs of the state, such as education, were addressed and not just the needs of business.

Attorney Donna Arduin, former adviser to California's Terminator, was hauled into Oklahoma by the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs – leading basher of all things Oklahoman.

She told lawmakers that some taxes imposed by the state of Oklahoma discourage business investment in the state. That whopper belies the fact that the Oklahoma economy is booming.

## NO MENTION OF THE REVENUE SHORTFALL

For example, she noted that Oklahoma's 6.65% capital gains tax rate is second to Arkansas.

Because the state generates nearly 85% of revenue from other sources [such as income, sales and severance taxes], Arduin said the "minimal amount of revenue that Oklahoma raises from capital gains taxes come at a high economic cost."

Arduin also noted that Oklahoma's top marginal personal income and corporate income tax rates "are too high – especially compared to neighboring Texas and Colorado." Living up to her billing as a rightwing shill, she urged lawmakers to lower the rates, bringing them in line with those adjoining states.

## GOV. HENRY AND THE LEGISLATURE

That would be in addition to the \$700 million in tax cuts approved by Democratic Gov. Brad Henry and the Republican-controlled Legislature in the past three years.

Although Oklahoma has experienced economic growth in recent years, that activity has not created new jobs in corresponding numbers.

Oklahoma has the sixth-fastest job growth in the nation. Despite that fact, she said: "From a jobs perspective, Oklahoma can do better."

Another shill, Chris Atkins, senior tax counsel with the Tax Foundation, was

# Your Welfare Dollar Is Being Well Spent

"... Your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing." – Abraham Lincoln

By Howard H. Hendrick

Success comes from our resolution to succeed. The families who enter our many Oklahoma Department of Human Services Centers need mostly the resolve to succeed. They need more than resolve. But they need resolve.

Lincoln also said, "You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves." Resolve and self-help are captured in the mission of OKDHS.

The mission is to help individuals and families in need help themselves lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

When resolve, self-help and the personal support of our fellow Oklahomans are present, the chemistry is right for families to begin again. Said simply, OKDHS helps Oklahomans find new beginnings.

## IT IS NOT JUST REMODELING

A new beginning isn't just remodeling a life. We can't really reboot a family, like hitting a computer screen. It seems that some families get viruses and spam and other clutter in their lives that slow their functionality.

Even with our best efforts, we can't undo some pain – the loss of a loved one; memories of relationships gone bad; lost opportunities; criminal records.

Our desire is to create hope in very concrete ways – reintegrating persons into the workforce, teaching parents how to better rear their children, helping persons with addictions find treatment, and elevating the levels of educational attainment for all.

Often the best new beginning OKDHS staff offers a family is a new perspective. A new beginning starts with new thinking. Families need more than eligibility determination. They need their dignity.

## THEIR NAME IS IMPORTANT

A family needs to hear and experience more than just the pain in which they find themselves. They need to know their name is important. They need their humanity and sense of worth restored.



hauled in to tell legislators to repeal the franchise tax, inventory tax, and reduce the state sales tax rate.

Gee, just think – one of these days when business pays no taxes in Oklahoma, Joe Sixpack will have the honor of carrying the entire burden.

Oklahoma's combined state and local sales tax rate is 6.89% percent on average, third-highest rate in the region, Atkins said.

## GUESS WHO GOES SALES TAX FREE?

He failed to note that it is as high as it is because the Legislature has consistently granted multi-million dollar exemptions, including more than \$12 million a year to the newspaper industry. Exemptions now total more than 130.

More than \$40 million a year in advertising sales is lost to the state treasury. Biggest of the lot is a \$1.3 billion exemption for manufacturing, covering materials and supplies used to make products.

Sales to private educational institutions such as Oklahoma City University total nearly \$3 million.

Never mind that total taxes on business ranks Oklahoma 40th in the nation – the cuts keep flying out of the GOP-controlled Legislature, aided and abetted by more than a few cowardly Democrats.

## BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PROMOTE

For some strange reason the OETA news folk looked up an OCU professor who called for eliminating the income tax. Subsequent budget cuts would almost assuredly include eliminating the unnecessary OETA funding.

Add another touch of irony. The day the Terrill hearing was held, the nonpartisan United Health Foundation's annual report revealed that Oklahoma is 47th in overall health of the population.

That came on the heels of an Oklahoma Health Department report bemoaning the fact that Oklahoma spends far too little protecting the general health and mental health of its people.

Those who would cut taxes in the face of human needs are typically the same hypocrites who prattle on and on about family values.

Oklahomans get what they vote for.

When we share our humanity with our fellow Oklahomans, they appreciate their own humanity. When we model dependability, enthusiasm and initiative, the friends and neighbors we are privileged to serve find hope and a fresh look at their own lives.

In fiscal year 2007, our staff authorized adoptions for 1,579 children – an all-time record. These authorized adoptions represent an opportunity for a new beginning for these children.

It is the opportunity to live in a safe, permanent, adoptive family.

## SWIFT ADOPTION INITIATIVE

The record number also boosts the total number of authorized adoptions since the creation of the Swift Adoption initiative nine years ago to 11,183.

That's more authorized adoptions than the 10,769 authorizations in the previous 31 years combined from 1967 [when Oklahoma authorized its first foster child to be adopted] to 1998, the last year before the creation of the Swift Adoption initiative.

Custodial parents received record levels of needed child support for their children this fiscal year.

For the federal fiscal year that ended during the state fiscal year, the Child Support Enforcement Division experienced a 15.24% increase in child support collections from the previous year – highest rate of increase in the nation and more than three times higher than the national average.

## GIVING CHILDREN A CHANCE TO HOPE

The Child Support Enforcement Division also achieved the highest paternity establishment rate in the nation. Child support gives children the opportunity to find hope, well-being and opportunities, and reduces custodial parent's worries about financial issues.

The ADvantage Waiver program helped a record 21,324 senior Oklahomans re-

See WELFARE Page 9

## Beware The Petition

# *It's An Affirmative Action Trojan Horse*

*By Anita F. Hill*

Given an increasing minority population and key locations where minorities are actually the majority, neither Republicans nor Democrats can risk alienating voters by being insensitive to gender or racial concerns.

For that reason, both parties should be concerned about how Ward Connerly's "Super Tuesday for Equal Rights" campaign against affirmative action will affect the November 2008 election.

Neither party wants to be seen as resorting to identity politics, but Democratic candidates know they must get a majority of the votes of white women and people of color along with a respectable percentage of white male votes.

Republican presidential candidates are keenly aware that moderate women and Latinos helped give President Bush the edge over John F. Kerry and might have carried other Republicans with him.

### **IT STARTED IN CALIFORNIA**

Connerly's mission to end affirmative action began in 1995 in California where he succeeded in convincing his fellow University of California regents to end the practice.

Since then he has been the face for successful initiatives against it in Washington and Michigan.

From now until next November, Connerly, a Republican, will be campaigning to ban affirmative action in five states – Oklahoma, Arizona, Missouri, Colorado, and Nebraska – all targeted, in part, for their growing anti-immigrant rumblings. [Editor's Note: An initiative petition is now being circulated in Oklahoma.]

According to Connerly, if large numbers of undocumented immigrants are granted legal rights, current affirmative action programs would entitle them to job or educational preferences.

### **A PROXY FOR IMMIGRATION POLICY**

By using affirmative action as a proxy for immigration policy, he is taking racial and gender politics to a new level. If he gets his way, voters will associate those who defend granting rights to illegal immigrants with those who support race-based affirmative action.

Connerly counts on anti-immigrant sentiment to attract those who are ambivalent about affirmative action.

White women and blacks, traditional supporters of affirmative action may think that a vote for affirmative action is a vote for immigrants who will displace them in the job market, and therefore stay home.

This tactic may be just enough to affect the election of Democratic candidates. On the other hand, it may also alienate Latino voters who might have voted Republican.

### **CONNERLY'S TRUE CYNICISM**

Connerly's true cynicism shows in his decision not to take his initiative to South Dakota, where he recognizes "the Indian tribes are very influential" in bringing in federal programs seen as beneficial to the entire state.

That white voters in South Dakota are thus less apt to be polarized by affirmative action and more likely to vote their community interests was part of his calculation.

By exploiting racial distrust, Connerly's campaign employs the kind of identity politics that both conservatives and liberals decry. At the core of his effort is the idea of white male victimization by racial preferences.

Moreover, Connerly promotes a fracturing of community interests along racial and gender lines, the very thing he says affirmative action does.

### **CAN PARTIES BRIDGE THE GENDER AND RACIAL GAPS?**

What may determine the outcome in the targeted states is whether either party



can bridge gender and racial issues.

According to Harvard sociology professor William Julius Wilson, effective coalition building occurs when politicians persuade different groups that they share common values and common goals, and that their common goals can best be achieved with the participation of all groups.

Wilson adds that politicians should not ignore differing race and gender perspectives or concerns but should name the issues "in a way that is consistent with the broader political agenda to benefit all ordinary Americans."

Yet in Missouri, Connerly's group is challenging the secretary of state, Robin Carnahan, over his interpretation of the measure.

### **DON'T CONCEDE THE TARGETED STATES**

Carnahan wants language on the ballot that expresses the state's constitutional interests and suggests that passage will negatively impact Missouri's ability to fight discrimination.

This episode transcends the issue of affirmative action and Democrats don't have to concede states where it appears on the ballot.

They can continue to bridge groups around domestic issues and antiwar sentiments that are of particular concern to white women and minorities.

Certainty, the Democrats have fielded a more diverse slate of presidential candidates. Republicans need not rely on the kind of ill will Connerly fosters.

Rudy Giuliani's tough law and order message could find support among white voters and people of color whose communities suffer from high crime rates and violence.

### **HOW MIKE HUCKABEE MIGHT WOO MINORITIES**

Mike Huckabee, the Baptist minister, may use that part of his identity to woo the growing number of Hispanic and black evangelicals as well as white values voters.

Commonality of issues may not be enough. Effective coalition building may also require some personal identification with the candidate, whether on gender, race, class or religion.

But whether it's the Democrats or the Republicans who, ultimately, best speak across different gender and racial lines, how well political leaders bridge the divides has great power to determine how well individuals treat one another.

– Anita F. Hill is professor of law, social policy, and women's studies at the Heller School of Policy and Management at Brandeis University and a visiting scholar at Wellesley College, the Newhouse Center for the Humanities, and Wellesley Center for Women.

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# *A Simple Route To Better Highways*

*By Charles Chastain*

If you want to drive on Oklahoma roads, you better own an SUV. City, county and state roads more closely resemble the surface of the moon than modern thoroughfares.

Not since the Dark Ages when rivalries between cities led to ineffective central government and a breakdown in the transportation system have roads been in such poor condition.

There was a time in the not too distant past when Oklahoma was viewed as locked in its own dark age filled with dust, buffalo and wagon trains. Slowly, we have begun to lift our state out of obscurity and onto the national and international stage.

Our hard-won success is being threatened at all levels by governmental neglect of state highways, county roads and bridges.

### **HIGHWAYS: MOST VALUABLE ASSET**

Our most valuable asset, the highway system, is valued at \$36 billion by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation [ODOT]. These freeways, authorized and built during the Cold War period for both public and emergency use, have been a driving force in fostering economic growth for our state.

The benefits are beyond dispute, yet no adequately funded system exists for their proper care and maintenance.

ODOT reports that we have 12,266 miles of state roads and highways. Of that total, 3,000 miles, or 25%, are in critical need of repair.

To date, the legislature has provided funding to correct grave deficiencies for only 589 miles of this sum and that is to be spread over an eight-year period.

### **NO SERIOUS PLAN FOR REPAIRS?**

No single issue highlights the desperate state of government leadership. To leave 2,400 miles of Oklahoma roads at risk with no serious plan for the future boggles the mind.

Taxes are like utilities – no one likes to pay them but they are necessary if we are to gain the quality of life we desire.

Legislative feuds and one-up-man-ship games with the governor's office have replaced serious discussion about serious problems.

It seems that the only way to produce results is to make the process automatic, removing the need for legislative action.

### **TIME FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP**

Tough and potentially unpopular decisions must be made. We will know whether we have strong, capable leadership if those decisions take place during the next legislative session.

See HIGHWAYS Page 8

# More Oklahoma Lies? High Court Opinion Corrupts Campaign

By Jim Ruten

The so-called Wounded Warriors Act, legislation intended to improve health care for veterans, has attracted nearly unanimous, bipartisan support in Congress.

Why would the newly formed Foundation for a Secure and Prosperous America begin running a television commercial urging the citizens of South Carolina to tell Congress to pass it?

The answer lies in the commercial's glowing images of Sen. John McCain, the Arizona Republican banking on a South Carolina victory to jump-start his cash-poor Republican primary campaign.

The 527 group that paid for the advertisement operates independently of McCain's campaign, but was set up and financed by his supporters seeking to help him as much as possible.

## IT IS A TRICKLE BEFORE THE FLOOD

It represents the first trickle in a flood of hundreds of millions of dollars that are expected to pour from all sides into groups reminiscent of the Swift Boat liars of 2004.

That smear campaign was funded in part by the brass at Oklahoma's Chesapeake energy and \$1 million from T. Boone Pickens.

The amount this year could swamp the record-breaking tens of millions that the top candidates are raising for their own, closely regulated campaign accounts.

Thanks to a recent decision by a venal Supreme Court, most of these politically corrupt groups will be able to operate with even less public disclosure than such entities did in 2004.

The lack of disclosure makes it hard to tell how the group spends its money, and impossible to say where it gets its money, and whether its donors have already donated directly to candidates.

## ATTACKING KERRY'S SUPERB RECORD

The group was started by Rick Reed, whose firm helped produce the 2004 Swift Boat lies that questioned Sen. John Kerry's superb war record. John McCain

# Blackwell Laments Sheriffs' Dilemma

The Legislature has got to quit ducking the funding crisis in corrections and start doing something about it.

That's the word from state House Speaker Pro Tempore Gus Blackwell, R-Goodwell.

"Oklahoma county sheriffs continue to suffer financial problems because the state has burdened them with paying their criminals' health care costs – and those deficits may ultimately put citizens in danger," Blackwell said.

Blackwell conducted an interim study to look at the state's failure to compensate county sheriffs being forced to pay for Department of Corrections inmates' medical costs.

"We need to do everything possible to ensure we lend a helping hand to the county sheriffs – not a push that puts them in situations they struggle or can't get out of," he said.

"This study is a tool for us to see what areas the legislature can" start changing to get county sheriffs back on their feet and better yet back on firm financially sound ground."

The biggest issue of the meeting was the how county sheriffs' departments are being burdened with DOC's inmate medical costs when the sheriffs are already doing DOC and the state a service by providing inmate lodging.

Garfield County Sheriff Bill Winchester said the inmates are coming in with pre-existing conditions and the counties are stuck with the medical bills.

# HIGHWAYS

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Solutions to this problem exist, though none are perfect and none are free. Two possible steps that can be taken in the near term are:

Expansion of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority [OTA] to include all state highways, roads and bridges. Ask that the authority assume responsibility for 10% of the mileage total each year for 10 years after which time all state roads and bridges will fall under its authority.

Next, remit a portion of the sales tax – one-half cent collected by counties and municipalities – back to them annually for the exclusive purpose of infrastructure maintenance and repair.

Finally, during the transition to OTA control, implement the Transportation Revenues Used Strictly for Roads [TRUST] recommendations to provide needed road maintenance funds on an interim basis.

Each year as the OTA assumes greater responsibility for road upkeep, an increasing percentage of road tax revenues can be allocated to the general fund for other needs.

Adoption of these proposals would provide an ongoing source of revenue to meet road maintenance and repair needs. The process is in line with the responsible concept of pay-as-you-go government. Pay today for the needs of today.

The time for action is now. Delaying maintenance will only lead to higher future costs. Equally important, we will stall business growth and impair our tax



decried that attack – but it worked.

The South Carolina group is an early example of changes in the legal landscape that are combining to push more spending on the 2008 election out of the glare of public disclosure.

In June 2007 the Supreme Court struck down a ban in the 2002 McCain-Feingold campaign finance laws on political advertisements by corporations, including nonprofit groups, within 30 days of a primary and 60 days of a general election.

It's now only free speech for the wealthy.

The decision removed virtually any restrictions on these groups' ability to advertise, and made nonprofit corporations, with their few disclosure requirements, the tool of choice for big donors looking to influence elections because of their wide latitude to advertise.

The Federal Election Commission has made it increasingly difficult for outside advocacy groups to operate as many did in 2004, creating so-called 527 groups, named for a section of the tax code that allows them to try to influence elections as long as they disclose their donors and expenses.

The FEC issued fines against many of the most active outside groups in 2004 for violating the accounting rules – including more than \$300,000 against the Swift Boat liars.

© Truthout

Winchester said that for the past 20 years DOC took care of their inmates' medical costs but now the counties are responsible for everything unless it is considered emergency care. One of the DOC inmates had a \$20,000 bill.

Winchester said his jail budgets \$180,000 for medical treatment of inmates. Due to the state wanting to house more convicts in his jail, the budget has increased by another \$50,000, leaving them financially burdened.

Tulsa County Undersheriff Brian Edwards said it affects bigger cities even more. Edwards said their medical budget has increased by \$1 million due to paying DOC inmate medical costs.

Edwards said at any given time they have 140 to 300 DOC inmates and are not making 50 cents on the dollar for lodging them.

Edwards said there are many factors and costs that go into taking care of a sick inmate. He said inmates have to be accompanied by at least two deputies when going to the hospital, which also increases costs because of overtime.

Inmates are constantly battling tuberculosis and other illness that are highly contagious.

Several sheriffs also said they have to negotiate with judges to keep low-felony charged individuals out of prison because they have no room with all the DOC inmates they are having to house.

Will the 2008 session be one in which the Legislature finally faces the truth and does the right thing?

base. Jobs and economic growth are at risk. Infrastructure improvement encourages private investment and development and reflects the confidence of a state on the move.

So the next time you see a legislator, tell him to get into the fast lane or get out of the way.

– The author lives in Tulsa

## It's A Miracle

One evening a husband, thinking he was being funny, said to his wife, "Perhaps we should start washing your clothes in Slim Fast. Maybe it would take a few inches off of your butt!"

His wife was not amused, and decided that she simply couldn't let such a comment go un-rewarded.

The next morning the husband took a pair of underwear out of his drawer. "What the hell is this??" he said to himself as a little "dust" cloud appeared when he shook them out.

"April," he hollered into the bathroom, "why did you put talcum powder in my underwear?"

She replied with a snicker: "It's not talcum powder ... It's Miracle Grow."

## PUBLIC FORUM

# Edwards' Proposal Empowers Public

By James Stovall

Recently, presidential candidate and former U.S. Sen. John Edwards proposed an idea that would bring together millions of citizens in a series of town hall meetings and on-line forums as part of his "One Democracy Initiative."

The purpose of this sort of Citizens Congress would be to bridge the gap between those currently involved in government and the growing numbers of others that feel alienated from public decision-making processes.

Regardless of what anyone thinks of Sen. Edwards' other positions [I am currently supporting a different candidate], surely people from both major parties and everyone else can support opportunities for citizens to be involved in the choices that affect us all.

The current polarization and win/lose approach to governance does not serve us well.

### CONGRESS FREQUENTLY IS PARALYZED

Too often, Congress cannot take action on important issues like energy policy, immigration and health care if the American people are deeply divided. Often the divisions in Congress reflect the divisions among the American people.

Elections are too focused upon polls and winning at all cost and rarely brings about any real dialogue or discussion of policy options.

Both of the major political parties are often guilty of playing partisan games with the future.

The Edwards proposal centers on the idea of creating a safe atmosphere in which ordinary people can both listen and speak to one another about important policy matters.

I have personally seen many instances in which people who think they dis-

ceive services in their homes. The number represents an increase of more than 50% over just 36 months ago.

This program serves seniors who are medically and financially eligible for nursing home care to receive services in their homes. Oklahoma's gems can safely and more independently age in place.

### SERVING THE DISABLED IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Medicaid waivers helped record levels of Oklahomans with developmental disabilities be served in community settings. Oklahoma continues to be a national leader in employment services for Oklahomans with developmental disabilities.

In child-care services, the OKDHS licensing program continues to be recognized as one of the top licensing programs in the nation.

Our standards are high, and the required three monitoring visits per year for each licensee is the highest standard in the nation.

Our "Reaching for the Stars" tiered reimbursement system for child-care facilities continues to help create more and more nationally accredited child-care centers.

The number of nationally accredited child-care facilities in the state has tripled in the last five years to almost 200 at the end of fiscal year 2007.

### FOOD STAMP PROGRAM WINS HIGHEST AWARD

For the first time in state history, the Food Stamp Program received the highest award given by the regional administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

OKDHS received the Director's Award, given to the state with the best overall performance in the Food Stamp Program.

Our participation rates for the current fiscal year dropped slightly from the prior year, but remain substantially higher than their levels five years ago.

Approximately 75% of Oklahomans eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program do participate. The national average is about 60%. Increasing the penetration rate into the number of Oklahomans eligible is one way OKDHS is aggressively combating hunger.

### FEEDING CHILDREN AND THE POOR

Ninety percent of the Food Stamp recipients are either children or persons with earned income. The average benefit is about \$3 per day per person.

Besides the outstanding administration of the Food Stamp Program, our Family Support field staff certified a record number of Oklahomans for participation in SoonerCare, the state's Medicaid program.

Throughout the agency, OKDHS completed many new initiatives during fiscal year 2007.

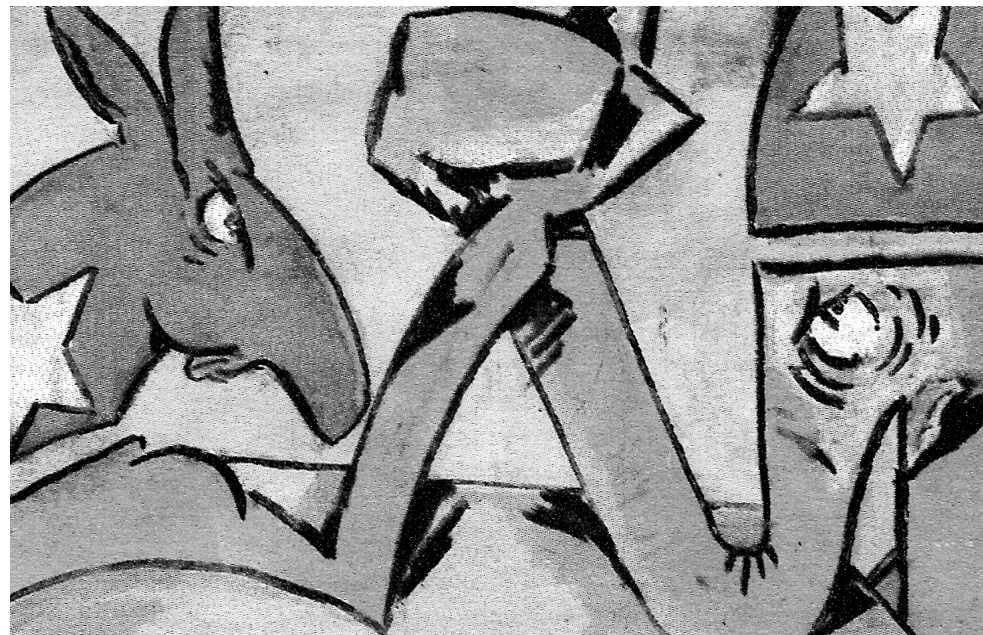
We opened new or remodeled facilities in Bartlesville, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and in Kiowa County.

We saved our funding for the replacement of our statewide network of computer devices for three years. OKDHS staff successfully drop-shipped and installed nearly 9,000 desktop or tablet laptop devices in almost 200 locations across the state.

### DATA SYSTEMS ARE UPGRADED

This year virtually all of our child welfare and adult protective services staff will have the ability to receive remote access into our data systems while in court or doing home visits.

What did we do with the older computers we replaced? Through a cooperative



agree discover that they have more in common than they realized at first. In many cases, common ground can be found even in the most divisive issues.

### EMPOWERING, EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

National discussions can serve to empower the public and increase the capacity of our governing institutions to address difficult policy questions.

Citizen forums, like the ones proposed by Edwards, allow people to become educated about policy choices and then offer a more informed perspective.

All forms of government would benefit if citizens were given greater opportunity to provide meaningful input into the decision-making processes.

New approaches are needed to involve people in discussions around the critical issues of the day.

Democracy is not a spectator sport. It requires willingness on the part of ordinary citizens to be involved and openness on the part of government officials to listen and incorporate creative new ideas.

- The author, director of the Mediation Institute, lives in Oklahoma City. He can be reached at [j\\_Stovall@site.net](mailto:j_Stovall@site.net)

## WELFARE

From Page 6

agreement with Microsoft, more than 4,000 of the computers we retired were refurbished by our staff.

Then we delivered these fully functioning systems to hundreds of not-for-profit organizations right in the hometowns of the offices from which the computers were replaced.

We saved thousands of dollars in shipping and salvage costs while helping hometown organizations support their communities.

We also converted tens of thousands of Oklahomans who receive the Aged, Blind, and Disabled benefit from a check printing and mailing system to a more efficient system.

### AUTOMATIC BANK DEPOSIT

OKDHS automatically deposits funds into their bank accounts or adds the funds to the Oklahoma MasterCard Debit Card, used only for OKDHS benefits.

Child Support Enforcement also deployed this same electronic banking method to tens of thousands of custodial parents who receive child support payments.

Moving to this form of electronic banking will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in printing costs, paper and postage.

These savings have been essential for us to balance the agency's budget.

OKDHS continues to experience many cost increases over which we have no control. These include the rising cost of our employee's health insurance, which remains legislatively unfunded.

I applaud our many successes this fiscal year. I'm also constantly reminded of those who still desperately need our help, protection and services.

The number of children in foster care continues to increase. The number of adult protective services investigations also continues to increase.

As Oklahomans, we all have a responsibility to help our most fragile citizens lead happy, healthy, safe lives. I am pleased to serve with our dedicated staff on this human services journey.

It's a mission worthy of our continued best efforts.

- Editor's Note: The author, a former Republican state senator, is director of DHS. The agency has taken more than a few lumps from the Daily Disappointment over child-care problems. How many stories have you read about what's right at the underfunded, understaffed DHS?

## Communicating Oklahoma History

Last January the New Orleans Times Picayune reported that a Cajun amateur archeologist, having dug to a depth of 10 meters, found traces of copper wire dating back 100 years ... and came to the conclusion that their ancestors already had a telephone network more than 100 years ago.

Not to be outdone by the Cajuns, Texan scientists dug to a depth of 20 meters. Shortly after, the Dallas Morning News reported: "Texas archaeologists have found traces of 200-year-old copper wire, and have concluded that their ancestors already had an advanced, high-tech communications network 100 years earlier than the Cajuns."

One week later, the Daily Disappointment reported: "After digging as deep as 30 meters in wheat fields near Watonga, Bubba Williams, a self taught archeologist, reported that he found absolutely nothing. Bubba has therefore concluded that 300 years ago, Okies were already using wireless." - From Darla Sparks

## BOOKS

# Book It! These Are Real Holiday Pleasers

By Mike Nobles

Well, it's that time of year to again recommend to the reader what I believe to be first-rate books worthy of your time. As usual, it is an eclectic list not necessarily on the so-called best-seller list but one I suspect will please and stimulate the discerning reader. There are university press books and a few others, some from major publishers and some from smaller ones. I recommend them all as wonderful gifts – for you or a friend.

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### BOOKS ON TRIAL

*Red Scare in the Heartland*

By Shirley A. Wiegand and Wayne A. Wiegand  
University of Oklahoma Press  
280 pages, \$24.95

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Don't buy one of these books. Buy two and give one to a friend. This is an absolute must-read for any reader interested in Oklahoma history and the First Amendment.

This is the chilling story of the 1940 raid by police on the Communist Party Progressive Bookstore in Oklahoma City and the arrest and detention of 20 customers and proprietors.

Thousands of books and pamphlets were seized. Those arrested were held incommunicado and some were incarcerated for months on unreasonably high bail.

Four individuals were ultimately tried under Oklahoma's "criminal syndicalism" law, convicted and sentenced to 10-year sentences.

It is a sorry chapter in Oklahoma history and a perfect example of how innocent people can be swept up in the hysteria of their times. One is reminded of the present-day hysteria surrounding real and imagined foreign threats and the government restraints on personal freedom in the name of protecting us all, kind of like destroying a city to save it.

This is one of the most important books of the year.

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### WOMEN WHO PIONEERED OKLAHOMA

*Stories From The WPA Narratives*

Edited by Terri M. Baker and Connie Oliver Henshaw  
University of Oklahoma Press  
280 pages, \$29.95

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This is a must-have book for anyone remotely interested in Oklahoma history and especially the often neglected role of women in the founding and settling of the Sooner state.

Culled from thousands of interviews conducted by the WPA in 1936-37, the editors have skillfully compiled the words and stories of women pioneers from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographical backgrounds, providing the real story of early Oklahoma seldom included in history books.

This is the real thing that will please any reader.

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### A GREAT DAY TO FIGHT FIRE

*Mann Gulch, 1949*

By Mark Matthews  
University of Oklahoma Press  
280 pages, \$24.95

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The Mann Gulch, MT, fire of 1949 was a seminal point in modern wildfires fire-fighting for the U.S. Forest Service. The deaths of 13 firefighters caused the Forest Service to implement training programs and develop safety equipment and protocols still being refined today.

Not since Norman MacLean's award winning book *Young Men and Fire*, published in 1992, has there been an authoritative treatment of the personal dimension of the tragedy as provided by the victim's families, close friends, and coworkers.

This is a heart stopping, minute-by-minute personal account of the men who fought a wildfire that has forever remained in the nation's consciousness. A first-rate effort.

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### SWIMMING WITH TROUT

By Chad Hanson

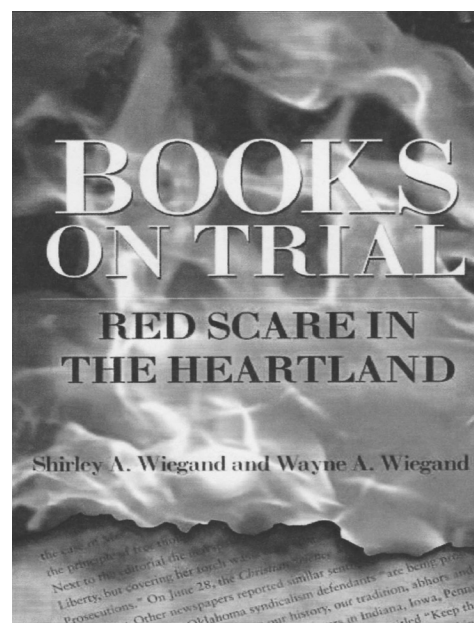
University of New Mexico Press  
112 pages, \$19.95

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This is a fun book about growing up, nature, politics, fly-fishing and a host of other issues that have at one time or another occurred to the author while fly-fishing over a lifetime.

In 11 literary sketches with such unlikely titles as *Fly Casting with Crazy Horse*, *Carp Unlimited*, *Jonathan Livingston Brook Trout*, and *Swimming with Trout*, Hanson provides a sometimes humorous, sometimes bittersweet, always readable account of things that come to him while fishing.

From camping in the northern Rockies to fishing in northern Minnesota; from



the Tomorrow River of northern Wisconsin to college days in Flagstaff, AZ, the author ruminates on such matters as the state of the environment, Native Americans, the depth of human friendship and other things that matter. Don't miss this one. It is really well done.

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### STRUGGLE OVER UTAH'S SAN RAFAEL SWELL

*Wilderness, National Conservation Areas, and National Monuments*

By Jeffrey O. Durrant  
University of Arizona Press  
272 pages, \$29.95

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There seems to be a never-ending flow of books about the constant battle over the use of American public lands, especially in the West. This is one of the better efforts to explain the issues that precipitate such battles and the consequences for the public.

The author has wisely chosen to tell the story of the changing users and shifting policies regarding the million-acre desert in southeastern Utah known as the San Rafael Swell and the actions of the Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency responsible for its protection.

The book is timely due to the current political and environmental battles between county commissioners and environmental activists, the ever-present conflicts over water rights, and the issue of recreation vs. preservation vs. grazing and mining rights that is currently being debated in the Swell.

This is a good bet for those interested in the ultimate uses of public land in the West.

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### OLD TRADING POSTS OF THE FOUR CORNERS

By Richard C. Berkholz

Western Reflections Publishing Company  
195 pages, \$16.95

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This is a unique guide book for anyone planning to travel in the four-corner region of the Southwest or simply interested in early-day trading posts that were established on or around the Navajo, Hopi, and Ute Mountain Ute reservations.

I have personally consulted this book while traveling the four-corner region and can safely say it is a wonderful and accurate guide to the area. The history provided of each trading post is informative and the directions are accurate and indispensable in many cases for those seeking either the present day post or, in many cases, the ruins of ancient dwellings and places of early day commerce.

This type of book is unusually rare and will probably go out of print early.

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### THE TECATE JOURNALS

*Seventy Days on the Rio Grande*

By Keith Bowden  
The Mountaineers Books  
320 pages, \$16.95

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This is an adventure story of a 1,185-mile-long river – the Rio Grande that is a border between the U.S. and Mexico.

To be sure, it receives a good deal of attention given the immigration issues facing the United States but surprisingly little is known about the real story playing out along this watery border.

Bowden sets out to rectify this oversight and along the way he faces environmental issues, in-your-face action, political furor, cultural differences, and a host of other issues that help fill in the blanks on a river that is much discussed and little understood.

This is a well-written narrative of an epic journey by bike, canoe, and raft along a dividing line between cultures and humanity. Well worth the reader's time.

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### PLAYING THE ODDS

*Las Vegas and the Modern West*

By Hal K. Rothman  
University of New Mexico Press  
352 pages, \$24.95

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This is a collection of 66 essays by the late brilliant historian of the American West, originally published in the *Las Vegas Sun*, *High Country News*, the *Los*

See HOLIDAY BOOKS Page 11

# Debunking Iranian Holocaust Myths

By Alan M. Dershowitz

In his speeches, most especially the one at Columbia University, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeats two myths about the Holocaust.

The first every reasonable person knows is a total lie: namely that the Holocaust did not occur.

The second myth, however, is one that escapes critical attention for the most part, because many people are not aware of its falsity. It is that the Palestinian people and their leadership had absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust.

The conclusion that is supposed to follow from this "fact" is that the establishment of Israel in the wake of the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people was unfair to the Palestinians. This is the way Ahmadinejad put it in his Columbia talk:

"...Given this historical event [the Holocaust], if it is a reality, we need to question whether the Palestinian people should be paying for it ... The Palestinian people didn't commit any crime. They had no role to play in World War II."

## HIS WORDS AT COLUMBIA WERE FALSE

These statements about the role of the Palestinians are demonstrably false. The truth is that the Palestinian leadership, supported by the Palestinian masses, played a significant role in Hitler's Holocaust.

The Palestinian leader at the time was Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. As Professor Edward Said has acknowledged:

"Hajj Amin al-Husseini represented the Palestinian Arab national consensus, had the backing of the Palestinian political parties that functioned in Palestine, and was recognized in some form by Arab governments as the voice of the Palestinian people."

Husseini was "Palestine's national leader" and it was in that capacity that he made his notorious alliance with Hitler and played an active role in promoting the Holocaust. Here is the true story that Ahmadinejad tried to mythologize.

## THE GRAND MUFTI WELCOMED HITLER

Shortly after Hitler came to power, the Grand Mufti decided to emulate him. He informed the German consul in Jerusalem that "the Muslims inside and outside Palestine welcome the new regime of Germany and hope for the extension of the fascist anti-democratic, governmental system to other countries."

In an effort to bring it to his own country, Husseini organized the "Nazi Scouts," based on the "Hitler Youth." The swastika became a welcome symbol among many Palestinians.

The mid to late 1930's were marked by Arab efforts to curtail immigration and Jewish efforts to rescue as many Jews as possible from Hitler's Europe.

These years were also marked by escalating Muslim violence orchestrated by Husseini and other Muslim leaders. In 1936, Arab terrorism took on a new dimension. In the beginning the targets were once again defenseless Jewish civilians in hospitals, movie theaters, homes and stores.

## NAZIS AND FASCISTS SUPPORTED THE VIOLENCE

This was followed by strikes and shop closures, and then by the bombing of British offices. The Nazi regime in Germany and the Italian fascists supported the violence, sending "millions" to the Mufti.

The SS, under the leadership of Heinrich Himmler, provided both financial and logistical support for anti-Semitic programs in Palestine. Adolf Eichmann visited Husseini in Palestine and subsequently maintained regular contact with him.

The support was mutual, as one Arab commentator put it: "Feeling the whip of Jewish pressure and influence, the Arabs sympathized with the Nazis and Fascists in their agony and trials at the hands of Jewish intrigues and international financial pressures."

## PALESTINIANS ANYTHING BUT NEUTRAL

The Palestinians and their Arab allies were anything but neutral about the fate of European Jewry. The official leader of the Palestinians, Haj Amin al-Husseini, spent the war years in Berlin with Hitler, serving as a consultant on the Jewish question.

He was taken on a tour of Auschwitz by Himmler and expressed support for the mass murder of European Jews. He also sought to "solve the problems of the

# HOLIDAY BOOKS

From Page 10

Angeles Times, Las Vegas CityLife and on blogs at newest.org.

The essays are basically commentary on current events as they relate to Las Vegas and the new West. He embraces themes of community and change with his sharp wit and no-holds-barred manner of speaking and writing.

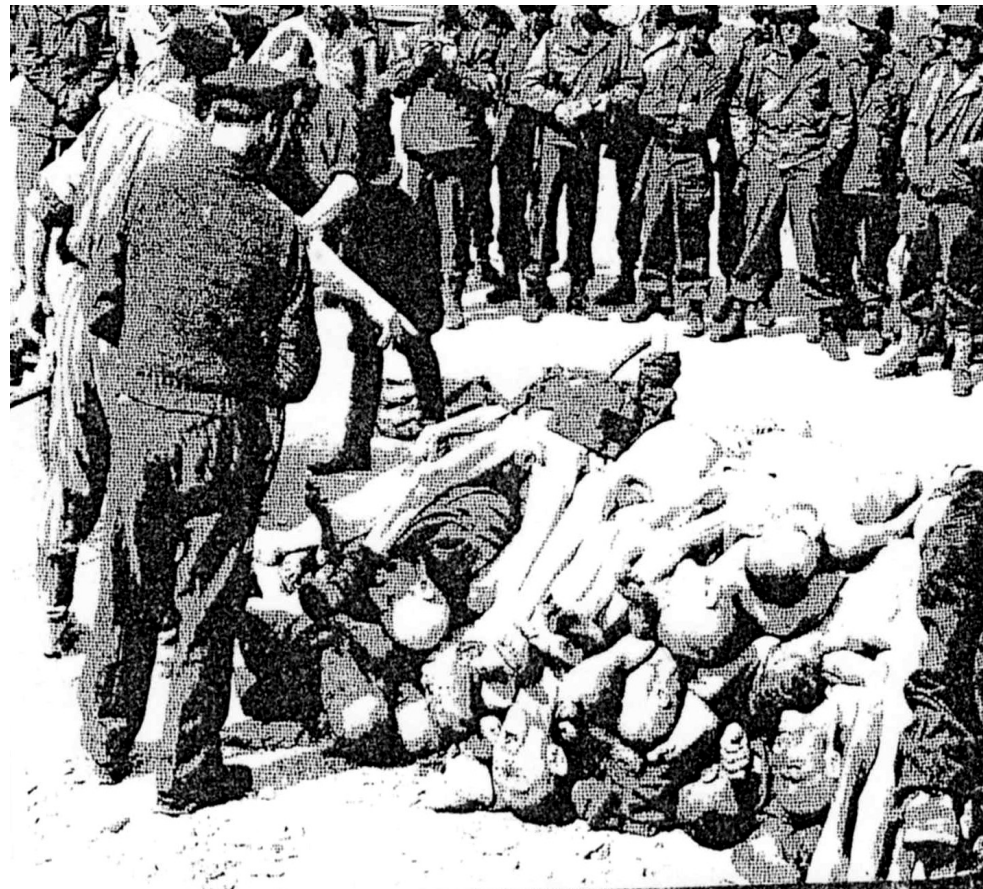
Rothman writes of Las Vegas as a community, social responsibility or the lack thereof, environmental issues, prostitution, taxation, water issues, Elvis and a host of other topics in a manner both highly readable and refreshing. He says what he thinks of a city he clearly loves, but also recognizes it has faults and fallacies as well as attributes.

I like this book not only for its content but also since the essays are short [1-3 pages]. I can go to any essay and read it in a short period of time and since it is self-contained I don't have to read the entire book from start to finish.

Not all newspaper columnists make for great reading. This one does and the book deserves a widespread audience.

- The author, cofounder of A Gathering of Writers, lives in Tulsa

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Jewish element in Palestine and other Arab countries" by employing "the same method" being used "in the Axis countries."

He would not be satisfied with the Jewish residents of Palestine - many of whom were descendants of Sephardic Jews who had lived there for hundreds, even thousands, of years - remaining as a minority in a Muslim state.

Like Hitler, he wanted to be rid of "every last Jew."

## HERE IT IS IN HIS OWN WORDS

As Husseini wrote in his memoirs:

"Our fundamental condition for cooperating with Germany was a free hand to eradicate every last Jew from Palestine and the Arab world. I asked Hitler for an explicit undertaking to allow us to solve the Jewish problem in a manner befitting our national and racial aspirations and according to the scientific methods innovated by Germany in the handling of its Jews. The answer I got was: 'The Jews are yours.'"

The Mufti was apparently planning to return to Palestine in the event of a German victory and to construct a death camp, modeled after Auschwitz, near Nablus.

Husseini incited his pro-Nazi followers with the words, "Arise, o sons of Arabia. Fight for your sacred rights. Slaughter Jews wherever you find them. Their spilled blood pleases Allah, our history and religion. That will save our honor."

In 1944, a German-Arab commando unit, under Husseini's command, parachuted into Palestine and poisoned Tel Aviv's wells.

## BACKED A PRO-NAZI COUP IN IRAQ

Husseini also helped to inspire a pro-Nazi coup in Iraq and helped to organize thousands of Muslims in the Balkans into military units known as Handselar divisions that carried out atrocities against Yugoslav Jews, Serbs and Gypsies.

It is fair to conclude that the official leader of the Muslims in Palestine, Haj Amin al-Husseini, was a full fledged Nazi war criminal and he was so declared at Nuremberg and sought by Yugoslavia as a war criminal after the war. He escaped to Egypt where he was given asylum and helped to organize many former Nazis and Nazi sympathizers against Israel.

It is also fair to say that Husseini's pro-Nazi sympathies and support were widespread among his Palestinian followers, who regarded him as a hero even after the war and the disclosure of his role in Nazi atrocities.

It is a myth therefore - another myth perpetrated by Iran's myth-maker-in-chief - that the Palestinians played "no role" in the Holocaust.

Considering the active support by the Palestinian leadership and masses for the losing side of a genocidal war, it was more than fair for the United Nations to offer them a state of their own on more than half of the arable land of the British mandate. The Sudeten Germans got a lot less.

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

For nearly 40 years, The Observer has been Oklahoma's only journal of free voices, providing news, analysis and commentary that can't be found in the state's lock-step, right-wing mainstream media. We've never wavered in our commitment to speak truth to power and to shine the spotlight on rank hypocrisy and public corruption.

But here's a truth we confront daily: We don't own the deep pockets of the Gaylords or the Lortons or the big national media chains. Our feisty journal relies on the generosity and support of its subscribers and small advertisers to keep challenging the status quo.

You can help ensure The Observer's future for generations by making us a part of your legacy and remembering us in your will. In return, we promise to continue delivering messages the silk-stocking elite don't want rank-and-file Oklahomans to receive. And to remain true to our motto: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

# Raids Leave Children Of Illegals Parentless

By Antonio Olivo

The federal government's escalating enforcement against illegal immigration is taking a heavy toll on children.

For every two adults arrested in workplace raids, one child is left without proper care or psychological support, creating lingering trauma with potentially broader social effects, according to the report by the Urban Institute and the National Council of La Raza.

The report came out the same day 23 workers were picked up in a raid in Joliet, IL. The arrests were part of an ongoing investigation into a Bensenville, IL, job contracting firm and part of an intensifying crackdown against illegal hiring that has boosted arrests nationwide nearly tenfold since 2000, with nearly 5,000 so far this year.

The Joliet arrests showed how complicated family fallout can be. One day laborer arrested was a mother who had been ordered out of the country previously, an offense that mandates immediate deportation proceedings without release, said Gail Montenegro, spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

## SHE WILL CARE FOR HER SISTER

The woman's 18-year-old daughter, also arrested, was released on her own recognition so she can care for her teenage sister, Montenegro said.

The report by the Urban Institute and the NCLR focused on 900 adults arrested during three workplace raids – in Greeley, CO; Grand Island, NE; and New Bedford, MA – this year and last, affecting 500 children, most of whom were U.S. citizens 10 years old or younger.

According to the study, adults were often not allowed proper access to telephones to arrange for child-care before they were deported.

As more arrests continue, the report's authors recommended that federal immigration officials be more attuned to child-care problems that surface after a parent is deported.

## THEY CALL FOR ADVANCE WARNINGS

Among other things, they called for advance warnings to social service agencies prior to raids.

Although immigration officials have shown some sympathy to family predicaments, "They could do better and they could do it more consistently," said Randy Capps, a senior researcher at the Urban Institute who co-wrote the report.

Montenegro said that typically, "Anyone we take into our custody has multiple



opportunities to raise concerns about any humanitarian issues."

But, she added, negative effects felt by families "must lie squarely on the person who violated the law and not the agency that is mandated to uphold the immigration law."

Still, the potential impact on children carries broader social repercussions, touching extended families, churches and neighbors who try to shoulder the burden of care, Capps said.

## CHILDREN ARE SET ADRIFT

The report found that some single parents were kept in jail hours after school let out and, in some cases, overnight, leaving local school officials to figure out what to do with the students.

Several children expressed feelings of depression or abandonment that could later lead to deeper problems in school or elsewhere, Capps said.

"We don't know the extent of that yet, and we don't know what the longer-term consequences are," he said.

In Joliet, some children were trying to figure out what was going on.

Mario Monroi is the adult nephew of a worker arrested in the raid, Jose Garcia. Monroi said he and other relatives in Chicago plan to pool resources to try to help Garcia's wife and 10-year-old daughter.

"He was the one who was taking care of practically everything for them," Monroi said. "The girl is really sad ... She thinks her father has gone – who knows where?"

© Chicago Tribune

# CBS News Sinking As Costs Are Cut

By Michael Winship

It's a fact: Media conglomerates' labor practices are harming the quality of TV and radio news.

A CBS television news writer says: "We take a lot of stuff from 'Entertainment Tonight.' We watch it at 6:30 and decide what to use."

Most Americans still get their news from "old Media" like newspapers, TV and radio. There's concern about how Rupert Murdoch will gut the Wall Street Journal when he gets his hands on it.

MSNBC Anchor Mika Brzezinski recently tried to burn a script on air in frustration over being asked to lead the day's news with a story about Paris Hilton rather than Richard Lugar's declaration that Bush's Iraq strategy is failing.

## WHO CAN YOU TRUST FOR THE REAL NEWS?

Who can we trust to tell us what's really going on?

Now, a new study of broadcast journalists from the Writers Guild of America, East [WGAE] gives an inside look at how the media conglomerates are destroying broadcast news quality with the same tactics other big companies are using against their workers.

Replacing full-time newswriters with part-timers and temps, cutting staff and resources, and requiring more and more "multi-tasking" in the newsroom, equals bad news for the public, literally.

## CAN YOU BELIEVE CBS NEWS?

The question to ask is "Can you believe what you see on CBS?" A recent article in New York magazine about Katie Couric noted that CBS' Evening News budget was cut almost in half from 1991 to 2000 [\$65 million to \$35 million].

CBS has cut the number of full-time news staff by about 60% since 1980, replacing many of them with temps and part-timers.

In 1989, CBS network television news employed 28 researchers; by 1999, those positions were all gone.

What do these staff cuts mean to the public? Half the WGA members reported that at least several times a week, they use no more than a single website to check the accuracy of stories.

## WORKING OFF THE CLOCK

I wonder how often that single website is Wikipedia. Some WGA members work "off the clock" to ensure that they are up-to-date on news developments and that facts are properly checked.

Members tell lots of stories about how management pressures them for more fluff, more often. In fact 49% of all WGA members responding to the survey said that hard news stories were bumped for fluff or puff at least once a day. For local news outlets, that number went up to 57%.

It is clear that the TV and radio news stations – "in an attempt to save money" – are undermining their own ability to report on issues that matter to the public.

## WHAT ABOUT FOLLOWING THE LAW?

Broadcast stations are failing to live up to the responsibility that they were charged with by the Telecommunications Act of 1935, which required broadcasters using the public airwaves to "serve the public interest."

Our study asked WGA members: "Do you think your news outlet spends enough time and energy making sure that your audience has enough information to make sound judgments on issues relevant to public life?" 72% of members responded "Not enough" or "Not nearly enough."

You've probably heard of Video News Releases [VNRs] – video press releases from corporations, government or NGOs that TV stations often present as "news" without disclosing their sources.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE SHORT-STAFFED

As one member explained, "VNRs are used to fill the time because we are short-staffed."

Some members cited "daily" and "chronic" use of video news releases, only rarely identifying them as press releases – not objectively gathered, independent news.

Others said they were used at least once a week. Even at stations that cut back after the Center for Media and Democracy fingered them for relying on VNRs, usage is creeping back up due to even more staff cuts.

In order to keep the public from being subjected to advertisements masquerading as news, news shows need to have enough staff to do real reporting or else they are breaking the public's trust.

## LACK OF PROFESSIONALS DAMAGES THE PRODUCT

The problem of replacing full-time, unionized employees with low-pay, low-rights "permatemps" has damaged news quality, as well. It's clear how turning good jobs into permatemp gigs is bad for the employees, but did you know it also undermines the quality of your news?

In the survey, the members who reported speaking out on news quality were three times more likely to be full-time staff than temporary employees.

Some permatemps have worked at ABC or CBS for 15 years, yet never achieved full-time status or benefits. It's unfair to the employees and unfair to viewers, too.

The media are supposed to be watchdogs, but how can staff operate that way if they can be fired at the drop of a hat for speaking out?

– The full study is online at the Writers Guild of America.

# Eight-Hour Day: What Happened?

By Steve Norris

One afternoon in mid-August, Sen. Hillary Clinton visited a Nevada hospital to participate in a union-sponsored "Walk a Day in My Shoes" program for presidential candidates.

There she learned firsthand about the new realities of work schedules for nurses – and many other wage-earners.

Clinton expressed amazement at the workload of a typical healthcare professional.

"Your mother worked me to the bone today," she told the children of Michelle Estrada, RN, during a dinner-table conversation at their home later that evening.

What's really amazing – and appalling – is that Estrada's 12-hour days are not unique. Americans today spend far more time on the job than workers in any other advanced capitalist country.

## NO LEGAL PROTECTION

Whether unionized or not, most lack the legal protection necessary to resist forced overtime and "nonstandard" shifts.

As a result, one of labor's greatest 20th Century achievements – the eight-hour day and 40-hour week – is rapidly becoming a thing of the past for millions of people, with neither the AFL-CIO nor "labor-friendly" Democrats doing much about it.

For unions, the decline of the eight-hour day is no minor embarrassment. Their 19th Century movement to shorten 10-, 12- and 14-hour work days spawned general strikes in the 1880s, the Haymarket Martyrs and worldwide celebrations of May Day ever since.

Until the New Deal, U.S. workers rallied, marched and lobbied for humane work schedules that would – in the words of the old labor song – provide "eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will."

## EIGHT-HOUR DAY BECAME STANDARD

When Congress finally enacted the Fair Labor Standards Act [FLSA] in 1938, the eight-hour day became standard, thanks to union bargaining and the FLSA requirement of "time-and-a-half" pay for any hours worked in excess of 40 during a single week.

Well into the 1970s, some union activists – particularly in the auto industry – even sought a reduction in the 40-hour week.

Extra pay for overtime hours – whether legally mandated or privately negotiated – was not intended to fatten weekly paychecks.

It was supposed to be a financial penalty, encouraging employers to expand their workforce rather than rely on overtime to meet production needs.

## EMPLOYERS TOOK THE CHEAPER ROUTE

As Kim Moody and Simone Sagovac explain in *Time Out: The Case For A Shorter Work Week*, "When job-based benefits like health insurance began to bulk up labor costs, premium pay ceased to be a deterrent to overtime. It became cheaper for employers to schedule overtime than hire new workers."

Offering lots of overtime – and creating worker dependence on the additional income derived from it – paved the way for today's widespread "alternative work schedules."

These can require 10- and 12-hour days as part of a "compressed work week" or regular weekly shifts that include Saturday and Sunday, with no extra pay for weekend work [as once required in most union contracts].

## MILLIONS EXEMPT FROM OVERTIME

The FLSA doesn't impose any limit on daily or weekly working hours [and excludes millions of workers, such as home-care providers, from its overtime pay



Rita Corbin

requirement].

In the absence of union contract language making overtime voluntary at some point in the day or week, workers such as nurses in understaffed hospitals often face management pressure to work beyond their basic 12-hour shifts.

Job safety and health studies have long documented the connection between longer hours, worker fatigue and increased rates of workplace accidents and injuries.

That's why the schedules of interstate truckers, train crews, nuclear power plant operators, air traffic controllers and pilots are federally regulated.

## EVEN LEGAL LIMITS CAN BE STRESSFUL

Even legal limits on working hours in stressful, high-risk occupations can be undermined in the Bush era by corporate lobbying.

For example, freight carriers persuaded the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration [FMCSA] to let long-haul truckers spend 11 hours a day behind the wheel of 70,000-pound tractor-trailers, rather than 10 [a cap in effect for decades].

Fortunately, a federal appeals court didn't ignore the link between commercial driver drowsiness and hundreds of fatal crashes every year.

In July, it struck down the agency's "hours of service" rule change, which applies to both Teamsters and non-union truckers. Since then, however, the American Trucking Association got a stay of the court's decision, which leaves the new 11-hour limit in effect for now.

## NURSES CAN HURT PEOPLE

Like truck drivers on the highway, tired nurses can hurt other people, as well as themselves, when they make errors.

With healthcare union backing, nurses have won curbs on mandatory overtime in a few places. But even one of the best state laws, in Maine, gives them the right to refuse additional work only after 12 hours.

There's a big difference between leaving overtime decisions up to individuals and capping everyone's permissible hours to protect patients from any hospital staffer – nurse or doctor-in-training – unable to work safely.

Nurses are allowed by hospitals, often with union acquiescence, to work as many shifts, 12 hours or longer, per week as they wish.

## MEDICAL INTERNS STAY UP FOREVER

Meanwhile, American Medical College Association guidelines allow notoriously sleep-deprived interns and residents to be on duty 80 hours every week.

Both practices fly in the face of studies showing that, among nurses, error rates increase after 10 hours on the job, plus personal health suffers because of more back, neck, shoulder and needlestick injuries, stress-related illnesses, and smoking.

The Take Back Your Time organization – a national campaign for shorter hours and more paid time off – is sponsoring teach-ins and other events around the country aimed at getting presidential candidates to take up these issues.

That's not likely to happen, however, until organized labor rejoins the fight and politicians hear from union members that over-work puts us all at risk.

# Illicit Drugs Infect 1 In 12 American Workers

Hard to believe, but one in 12 full-time American workers admits using illegal drugs in the past month. Most using illicit drugs are employed full-time, with the highest rates among restaurant workers, 17.4%, and construction workers, 15.1%.

About 4% of teachers and social service workers reported using illegal drugs in the past month, the lowest rates.

Federal officials said the newest survey was a snapshot and not designed to show whether illicit drug usage in the workplace is a growing problem or a lessening one.

The current usage rate is 8.2%. Two previous government surveys reflected a usage rate of 7.6% in 1994 and 7.7% in 1997, but those studies involved a much smaller sample of interviews.

The latest study comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services.

## EACH SURVEY INVOLVED MORE THAN 40,000

The data are drawn from three annual surveys of the civilian, non-institutionalized population. Each survey included interviews with more than 40,000 people, who were each paid \$30 to participate.

The most illicit drug use involved marijuana.

Anne Skinstad, a researcher and clinical psychologist, called the survey's results "very worrisome" because there are fewer treatment programs than there used to be to assist employees and employers with a dependence on drugs.

However, testing programs for drug use are fairly prevalent, with 48.8% of full-time workers telling the government that their employers conducted testing for

drug use.

The study also showed that the prevalence of illegal drug use reported by full-time workers in the past month was highest among younger workers.

Nineteen percent of workers ages 18 to 25 said they used illegal drugs during the past month, compared with 10.3% among those ages 26 to 34; 7% among those ages 35 to 49; and 2.6% among those ages 50 to 64.

Men accounted for about two-thirds of the workers – 6.4 million – who reported using illegal drugs in the past month, the government said. Men also were more likely than women to report illegal drug use in the past month.

## 3-DAY HUNTS

## DEER AND TURKEY

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# Millions Of Women Are Still Not Voting

By Jacqueline Lee

American women marked their 87th year of suffrage under the 19th Amendment this year, but millions of women remain stubbornly disenfranchised by factors such as under representation, social instability and culture gaps.

In "Election Day," a documentary about the experiences of voters in the 2004 election, an Ohio woman is shown having trouble casting her ballot.

She had moved, and despite re-registering, went to three different poll locations because her name didn't appear on the books.

"The woman in Shaker Heights is carrying her small child in the morning and she had been getting the run around and go around, going from one polling place to the next," said Maggie Bowman, producer of Election Day.

"A lot of the challenges faced by working people in general are more extreme for working women."

## MORE WOMEN VOTE THAN MEN

Women have turned out to vote at a higher rate than men since the 1980s. In the 2006 midterm election two million more young women voted than in the previous comparable cycle, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at the University of Maryland.

They credit the rise in part to the Feminist Majority Foundation's "Get Out Her Vote" effort aimed at college women.

Moreover, 55% of female voters cast their ballots for Democrats in House races, while only 50% of male voters did. In fact, female voters were responsible for key Democratic victories in the House and the Senate.

However, those figures do not reflect the fact that many women's votes are missing from the count.

## CENSUS BUREAU PAINTS DISMAL PICTURE

In the last presidential election, eight million women registered but did not vote; another 36 million potential female voters were not registered at all, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Faith Winter, national field director of the New York-based White House Project, a nonpartisan group working to elect a female president, says the paucity of elected women is discouraging.

Unmarried women are the fastest growing major demographic group and represent the largest potential group of new voters, according to "The State of Unmarried America," an annual report.

## MILLIONS ARE UNREGISTERED

Many of their votes aren't there to be counted. Of the 49.5 million single, separated, divorced or widowed women to the United States, 18 million are unregistered and five million are registered but don't vote.

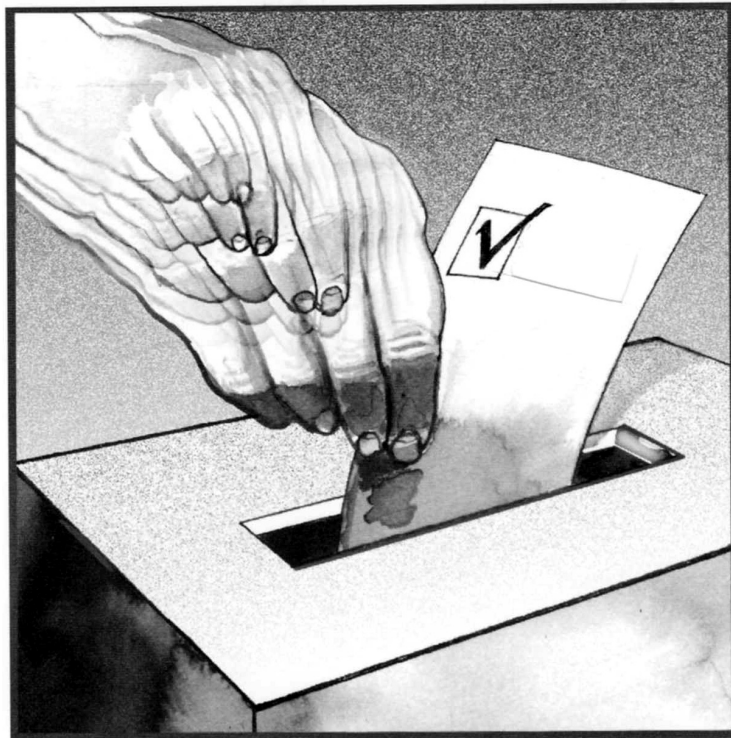
"What would make them most likely to participate is if they have more information from sources that they trust: nonbiased, nonpartisan information," said Joe Goode, executive director of Women's Voices Women Vote.

"They don't have the same social network or are not as politically engaged as married couples. The second major thing holding them back is cynicism towards politicians and politics."

## A HIGH DEGREE OF INSTABILITY

Goode says the women sitting out elections are hindered in general by a high degree of instability; 40% of young women move every three to four years and need to re-register.

"A woman's name does not change automatically and it costs money to change your name. You have to change your Social Security card, your voter registration



card, then the roster or your license may be wrong and your name doesn't match up."

Frances Talbott-White, vice president of voter services for the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles, notes that among older people there are more frail women living in assisted living facilities or in hospitals.

## NURSING HOME PATIENTS CAN BE ABUSED

"An abuse that can happen is that somebody can go to their nursing home and say, 'Let me help you with your absentee ballot,' and fill it in the way they think it ought to be filled in," Talbott-White said.

The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum in Washington, DC, has reported that Asian female voters face obstacles unique to their culture, as do many immigrant populations.

Among those Asian-American women who were registered, 84% voted in the 2004 election and voted at a rate higher than men for the first time, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

## FOREIGN BORN WOMEN VOTED

"In the last 2006 election, two-thirds of all first-time voters were foreign born," said Priscilla Huang, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum's policy and program director.

"Immigrant women take voting very seriously, and they are excited to do so. So it's problematic when all the tools are not available to them."

Huang said political causes and campaigns often fail to target this group, which means they often don't feel confident enough to vote and are further marginalized.

A struggle still exists for married women, especially among immigrants, to vote independently of their husbands' or relatives' political views, Huang said.

Women living in domestic violence shelters or other temporary residences can be hindered from voting by fears of an abuser finding their address on public voter rolls, said Cheryl O'Donnell of the Washington-based National Network to End Domestic Violence.

The organization's VotePower initiative seeks to boost domestic violence survivors' participation by educating them about safe and confidential ways to vote.

- Jacqueline Lee is a Los-Angeles-based reporter interning with Women's eNews.

# Disrespecting Black Women Must Stop

By Allison Samuels

Will 2007 be remembered as the year black women said, "Enough is enough"?

At no small personal cost, Anucha Browne Sanders stood up and demanded an end to the kind of abuse African-American women regularly tolerate from some black men.

We are not "bitches" or ho's," to be harassed sexually or otherwise, she declared.

It was a brave thing for an African-American woman to do. Our community is reluctant to talk openly about the problem of black men mistreating black women.

Our leaders will rise up in unison against Don Imus for his detestable slur against the Rutgers women's basketball team. Yet they remain silent when Isaiah Thomas says it's less offensive for a black man to call a black woman "bitch" than it is for a white man.

Black leaders are justifiably in an uproar over the Jena Six, yet none rushed to West Palm Beach, FL, this summer when an African-American mother in a public housing project was gang-raped.

Nor did they talk about domestic violence when self-help minister Juanita Bynum told police in August that she'd been beaten by her husband, which he denies.

"We have to say no more!" said author Terry McMillan, who has made a career writing about the complicated and sometimes strained relations between African-American women and men.

"No other culture disrespects their women the way our culture does, and it has

to stop," she said. "Black men have to start taking responsibility for being a part of the reason black women are so disrespected in the first place."

McMillan has never shied away from challenging the ways black men portray women in film, videos and rap songs, but plenty of blacks - men and women alike - are loath to point fingers publicly.

The reasons for the silence are complicated, but mostly it's about not wanting to make things tougher for black men than they already are. [For the record, this reporter is conflicted about adding to the woes.]

More black men are in jail than college, they face unemployment twice that of white men and they are subjected to plenty of negative media attention. So any additional attacks from black women are seen as betrayal.

Yet without open dialogue nothing is solved.

Two years ago, when Spellman College, a historically black women's college campus in Atlanta invited rappers to discuss misogyny in hip-hop, most of the big names declined.

"There's not been a lot of willingness to talk about this until now, with Imus," said Beverly Bond, founder of the group Black Girls Rock, a nonprofit dedicated to raising young black girls' self-esteem. "It's a shame it took that but finally rappers - if they are honest - understand the damage."

"I was glad Imus got fired, and I was glad that a black woman won the case in New York," says 16-year-old LaTisha Johnson of Inglewood, CA.

"But I don't see that changing the boys I know or the rappers I see on TV. They don't think it's wrong, and a white man getting fired doesn't change that."

But perhaps a black woman talking about it will.

# Giuliani's Pattern Of Non-Stop Lies

By Paul Krugman

"My chance of surviving prostate cancer – and thank God I was cured of it – in the United States? 82%," says Rudy Giuliani to a new radio ad attacking Democratic plans for universal health care.

"My chances of surviving prostate cancer in England? Only 44%, under socialized medicine."

It would be a stunning comparison if it were true. But it isn't. And thereby hangs a tale – one of scare tactics, of the character of a man who would be President and, I'm sorry to say, about what's wrong with political news coverage.

Let's start with the facts: Giuliani's claim is wrong on multiple levels – bogus numbers – wrapped in an invalid comparison embedded in a smear.

## A SOURCE THAT COOKS THE BOOKS

Giuliani got his numbers from a recent article in *City Journal*, a publication of the conservative Manhattan Institute. The author gave no source for his numbers on five-year survival rates – the probability that someone diagnosed with prostate cancer would still be alive five years after the diagnosis. And they're just wrong.

You see, the actual survival rate in Britain is 74.4%. That still looks a bit lower than the U.S. rate, but the difference turns out to be mainly a statistical illusion.

The details are technical, but the bottom line is that a man's chance of dying from prostate cancer is about the same in Britain as it is in America.

## WHAT HE CLAIMS IS ENTIRELY FALSE

So Giuliani's supposed killer statistic about the defects of "socialized medicine" is entirely false. In fact, there's very little evidence that Americans get better health care than the British, which is amazing given the fact that Britain spends only 41% as much on health care per person as we do.

Anyway, comparisons with Britain have absolutely nothing to do with what the Democrats are proposing.

In Britain, doctors are government employees. Despite what Giuliani is suggesting, none of the Democratic candidates have proposed to make American doctors work for the government.

## CLINTON'S PLAN NOT THAT DIFFERENT

As a fact-check in the *Washington Post* put it: "The Clinton health care plan" – which is very similar to the Edwards and Obama plans – "has more in common with the Massachusetts plan signed into law by Gov. Mitt Romney than the British National Health System."

Of course, this hasn't stopped Romney from making similar smears. At one level, what Giuliani and Romney are doing here is engaging in time-honored scare tactics. For generations, conservatives have denounced every attempt to ensure that Americans receive needed health care, from Medicare to S-chip, as "socialized medicine."

Part of the strategy has always involved claiming that health reform is suspect because it's un-American, and exaggerating health care problems in other countries – usually on the basis of unsubstantiated anecdotes or fraudulent statistics.

## THEY ARE PROPAGATING PROPAGANDA

Opponents of reform also make a practice of lumping all forms of government

# Rev. Pat Embraces Draft Dodger Rudy

By Gail Collins

Back in mid-2001, when Mayor Rudy Giuliani was busy committing adultery – lurching into his divorce and third marriage and rooming with a gay couple he promised to marry as soon as the law allowed – who among us would have imagined that one day he would be endorsed for President by Pat Robertson?

Truly, Sept. 11 changed everything.

Actually, Robertson, the founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, has had peculiar positions on the terror attack.

He once said it was nowhere near as big a deal as the problem of judicial activism, and on another occasion he explained that the destruction of the World Trade Center was God's punishment for abortion and "rampant secularism" on television.

It's hard to understand what drew the two men together. Rudy has hedged his positions on quite a few issues lately – but he has yet to suggest that New York had it coming.

It's been quite a busy time for Giuliani, who recently tried to establish himself as the toughest dude on the anti-terror block by making fun of torture victims, drawing the wrath of John [Actually Tortured] McCain.

Let it be known that nothing, including the extensive evidence that prisoners being tortured confess to things that aren't true, is going to stop a President Giuliani from wringing every last drop of inaccurate information out of the evil-doers.

"They talk about sleep deprivation. I mean on that theory, I'm getting tortured running for president of the United States. That's plain silly," he said at a town hall meeting in Iowa.

You would really think after all the trouble Mitt Romney got for equating life in the Mitt Mobile with service in Iraq, people would be a little careful about comparing the perils of the campaign trail with military service.

It also gave McCain the opportunity to remind the nation that Rudy got a de-



BY LUCKOVICH FOR THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

intervention together, pretending that having the government pay some health care bills is just the same as having the government take over the whole health care system.

But here's what I don't understand: Why isn't Giuliani's behavior here considered not just a case of bad policy analysis but a character issue?

For better or [mostly] for worse, political reporting is dominated by the search for the supposedly revealing incident, to which the candidate says or does something that reveals his true character. And this incident surely seems to fit the bill.

## MITT ROMNEY ALSO IS BUSY LYING

Leave aside the fact that Giuliani is simply lying about what the Democrats are proposing; after all, Mitt Romney is doing the same thing.

But health care is the pre-eminent domestic issue for the 2008 election. Surely the American people deserve candidates who do their homework on the subject.

Yet what we actually have is the front-runner for the Republican nomination apparently basing his health care views on something he read somewhere, which he believed without double-checking because it confirmed his prejudices.

By rights, then, Giuliani's false claims about prostate cancer – which he has, by the way, continued to repeat, along with some fresh false claims about breast cancer – should be a major political scandal. As far as I can tell, however, they aren't being treated that way.

To be fair, there has been some news coverage of the prostate affair. But it's only a tiny fraction of the coverage received by Hillary's laugh and John Edwards' haircut.

And much of the coverage seems weirdly diffident. Memo to editors: If a candidate says something completely false, it's not "in dispute." It's not the case that "Democrats say" they're not advocating British-style socialized medicine; they aren't.

The fact is that the prostate affair is part of a pattern: Giuliani has a habit of saying things, on issues that range from health care to national security, that are demonstrably untrue. And the American people have a right to know that.

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ferral from serving in Vietnam by convincing his boss, a federal judge, to pull strings and have him declared an "essential" civilian employee for his critical work as a law clerk.

But we digress.

Robertson said that America's Mayor had won him over because "to me, the overriding issue before the American people is the defense of our population from the bloodlust of Islamic terrorists." [So much for judicial activism.]

"Our second goal should be the control of massive government waste and crushing federal deficits."

Now this is the part that I have never been able to get. When did government spending become part of the divine agenda? Is there something in the Bible about smiting down federal bureaucrats?

Who among us will forget the time he claimed that the special protein shake he was marketing had enabled him to leg-press 2,000 pounds?

Or the time he said God had given Ariel Sharon a massive stroke because he let the Palestinians run Gaza?

It's a mystery why even someone as loopy as Robertson would pass up the exhaustingly virtuous family man Romney for a longtime hound dog like Rudy, who has been qualifying his liberal social positions but never really retracting them.

It does seem true that miraculous things happen when conservative leaders meet with Giuliani behind closed doors. Maybe they just find Romney extremely irritating. Maybe Rudy has a secret grip, like the Vulcan mind-meld or one of those sleeper holds they used to have in professional wrestling, that fills his victims with an irrational degree of trust.

Or maybe his leadership is so powerful that people exposed to it find it impossible to doubt the sincerity of his every word.

In which case I've got a protein shake I'd like to sell you.

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# 2008's Phony Social Security Debate

By Joe Conason

As Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton spar over Social Security, their argument has shed little light on America's most successful domestic program but has instead revealed unattractive aspects of both candidates.

Clinton has proved herself again to be excessively elusive in explaining exactly what she believes and why – while Obama has exhibited once more his own strange combination of naivete and opportunism.

This peculiar debate between the leading Democrats – with John Edwards adding his two cents as well – began when Obama glimpsed a chance to not only portray himself as the brave and forthright challenger, but to question the candor and courage of the front-runner as well.

Seizing upon her reticence when the issue of Social Security's future funding arose at a candidate forum in Iowa, he and his advisers fashioned a strategy of hitting Clinton from both the left and the right simultaneously.

## OBAMA'S LEFT-RIGHT TV APPEAL

Soon a commercial aired showing the Illinois senator talking to senior citizens with his sleeves rolled up.

"If we have failed to have a real, honest conversation about Social Security, it will not get fixed," he warns them, while the caption scrolls below with promises to oppose privatization, defend current benefits and tax the rich to replenish the program.

By suggesting that Social Security faces a problem that must be fixed, he nods to the program's conservative and centrist critics, especially certain figures in the mainstream media; by offering liberal promises, he appeals to the program's defenders in the Democratic base.

In that same ad, he returns to his usual themes of bipartisan cooperation and refreshing honesty. "I don't want to just put my finger out to the wind to see what the polls say," he says sternly. "I want to bring the country together to solve a problem."

## EXACTLY WHAT PROBLEM IS HE SOLVING?

At this point, someone might reasonably ask what problem Obama is proposing to solve – and why he believes that the Republican Party's ideologues, who still want to abolish Social Security as we know it, would ever join with a new Democratic president for that purpose.

His assumption that the Social Security program poses a problem that he will have to solve if elected president is incorrect. His assumption that he will be able to bring the country together is almost laughably naive, especially after the Bush administration's humiliating defeat on this issue two years ago.

Taken together, both assumptions could be dangerous to the program he is proposing to "save."

But Obama cannot resist the role of the last honest man. According to him, Clinton is "not alone in ducking the issue. Because conventional thinking in Washington says that Social Security is the third rail of American politics. It says



you should hedge, and dodge, and spin, but at all costs, don't answer."

## EMPLOYING BUSH'S POLITICAL PLAYBOOK

Merely by demanding an "honest conversation" on the subject, however, Obama plays into the old tactics used by President Bush and other conservative leaders, who hoped to convince voters that Social Security was on the brink of bankruptcy.

In truth, the program will be solvent for decades to come, despite White House propaganda to the contrary.

How solvent will depend on future rates of economic growth, immigration, life spans and a host of other factors, but unless historic trends suddenly turn sharply downward, there is no need to rush into any "solutions" that involve raising taxes or cutting benefits.

The president's alarming assertions about the program's future insolvency always contradicted his sunny predictions of burgeoning economic growth, let alone the promises of big returns on privatized retirement accounts.

It was simply a case of what the president used to call fuzzy math.

## HILLARY SHOULDERS BLAME, TOO

But if Obama is mistaken in his opportunism, at least part of the blame lies with Clinton, whose reluctance to speak forthrightly about Social Security dates back to the Bush privatization campaign.

As the most celebrated Democrat in the Senate and a likely presidential candidate, she ought to have taken a leading role in the fight to preserve her party's keystone legislation. She should have said then what she can still say now. And she should tell both Obama and Edwards to stop playing primary politics with Social Security when there are real fiscal issues that require our attention.

Someday in the distant future, Social Security may need adjustments. What we must confront much sooner are the exploding costs of Medicare and Medicaid – and that will mean a new health care system that combines cost controls with quality care and universal coverage.

That is what the Democrats should be debating.

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# Huckabee Needs Big Media Scrutiny

By Quin Hillyer

With Sen. Sam Brownback now out of the presidential race, only two candidates in the Republican presidential field – California's U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee – can lay claim both to a high degree of purity on the hot-button issues for social conservatives and to a personal life that seems in keeping with those traditional values.

But only one, Huckabee, seems to be gaining major traction – even though the record in Arkansas suggests that he might be the wrong one to rally around.

Ask lots of folks in Arkansas, including Republicans, and a fair number will probably tell you that Huck is for Huck is for Huck.

National media folks like David Brooks, dealing in surface appearances only, rave about what a nice guy Huckabee is, and a moral exemplar to boot.

If they only did a little homework, they would discover a guy with a thin skin, a nasty vindictive streak, and a long history of imbroglios about questionable ethics.

Once, Gov. Huckabee even had the gall to file suit against the state Ethics Commission. He lost.

## REPEATEDLY PROBED BY ETHICS COMMISSION

Fourteen times, the Ethics Commission – a respected body, not a partisan witch-hunt group – investigated claims against Huckabee.

Five of those times, it officially reprimanded him. And, as only MSNBC among the big national media has reported at any real length, there were lots of other mini-scandals and embarrassments along the way.

He used public money for family restaurant meals, boat expenses, and other personal uses. He tried to claim as his own some \$70,000 of furniture donated to the governor's mansion.

He repeatedly, and obstinately – against the pleadings even from conservative columnists and editorials – refused to divulge the names of donors to a "charitable" organization he set up while lieutenant governor – an outfit whose main charitable purpose seemed to be to pay Huckabee to make speeches.

## MISREPORTED INCOME FROM A 'CHARITY'

Then, as a kicker, he misreported the income itself from the suspicious "charity."

Huckabee has been criticized, reasonably so, for misusing the state airplane

for personal reasons. He and his wife, Janet, actually set up a "wedding gift registry" [they had already been married for years] to which people could donate as the Huckabees left the governorship, in order to furnish their new \$525,000 home.

According to the Arkansas News Bureau [Feb. 1, 2003], "Huckabee's personal lawyer, Kevin Crass of Little Rock, has said Huckabee believes there should be no limit on gifts short of a bribe."

After all, said Janet Huckabee, public officials like her husband should be automatically trusted: "Until you absolutely positively know that the man has outright lied to you, it should be enough that the man's word is that everything was done appropriately, legally, to the best of his knowledge to the letter of the law."

## WHAT IS A 'MAN OF HIS WORD'?

Of course, her reasoning refutes itself: If one is precluded from even questioning "the man's word," how can one possibly find out in the first place whether the official has outright lied to you?

It must be said that a fair-minded journalist ought to tread lightly in scrutinizing a candidate's spouse, but in Janet Huckabee's case, she is a politician in her own right, having run unsuccessfully for Arkansas Secretary of State.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected her, perhaps because they remembered her propensity for other outrageous statements – such as the time when she defended secrecy about the donors to her husband's "charity" by saying that a donor's name wouldn't be enough.

"Then you'd want to know who he was married to, and then his wife would be German descent, and you'd have Mike, you'd have him responsible for 600,000 killings of Jews," she said. Huh?

## NOTORIOUS FOR BEING THIN-SKINNED

Of course, nobody accused Huckabee of genocide. But his skin is so thin that when various underlings in his administration, even for bureaus as small as the state film office, crossed ethical lines [some of them, admittedly, rather minor], the governor consistently and angrily attacked the media for reporting the transgressions rather than demanding that the transgressors make things right.

See HUCKABEE Page 18

# The Gloves Are Off **The Pope Versus Bush's War In Iraq**

**By Heather Wokusch**

The Vatican's recent snub of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is only the latest salvo in the battle between Pope Benedict XVI and President George W. Bush.

This tug of war has profound implications for both U.S. foreign policy and the critical Catholic vote in the 2008 presidential race.

The Pope is increasingly furious at Bush over a war he said should not have happened and Bush won't end.

Things haven't always been tense between Bush and Benedict. They share similar views regarding abortion, gay marriage, and other hot-button conservative issues.

Today, the war in Iraq trumps those issues and fuels the growing prediction that Bush is killing any chance Republicans will win the White House.

## **RATZINGER HELPED ELECT BUSH**

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger [as Benedict was known before becoming Pope in April 2005] helped Bush secure the White House for a second term.

Specifically, after Bush visited the Vatican in June 2004, complaining that "not all the American bishops are with me," Ratzinger sent a letter to U.S. bishops, ordering them to refuse Communion to "a Catholic politician ...consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws" – a thinly-veiled reference to John Kerry.

Ratzinger added that any person even voting for this Catholic politician "would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil and so unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion."

Probably no surprise, then, that Bush increased his margin among Catholics by 6% from 2000 to 2004. He carried 52% of the vital Catholic vote. [One in five Americans is a Catholic.]

## **A BOOK DEAL WITH NEIL BUSH**

In an interesting twist, Ratzinger partnered with George W. Bush's black sheep brother Neil in a foundation "to promote ecumenical understanding and publish original religious texts" in 1999.

Oddly, business credit reports listed the foundation as a "management trust for purposes other than education, religion, charity or research," leaving the true nature of the Neil Bush/Cardinal Ratzinger venture unclear.

In 2005, Ratzinger was named as a defendant in a U.S. lawsuit accusing him of conspiring to cover up the sexual abuse of minors.

At the center of the controversy was a May 2001 confidential letter he sent Catholic bishops across the world ordering them to keep evidence of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy secret until 10 years after the child had reached adult status.

## **JUDGE DISMISSES POPE FROM THE CASE**

Soon after becoming Pope, however, Ratzinger was dismissed from the case.

# **Bush Is Pushing The War Industry**

Not to stoke any of the inane conspiracy theories running wild on the Internet, but if Osama bin Laden weren't on the payroll of Lockheed-Martin or some other large defense contractor, then he deserves to have been.

What a boondoggle 9/11 has been for the merchants of war, who just announced yet another quarter of whopping profits made possible by George W. Bush's pretending to fight terrorism by throwing money at outdated Cold War-style weapons systems.

Lockheed-Martin, the nation's top weapons manufacturer, reaped a 22% increase in profits, while rivals for the defense buck, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, increased profits by 62% and 22%, respectively.

Boeing's profits jumped 61%, spiked this quarter by its commercial division. But Boeing's military division, like the others, has been doing very well indeed since the terrorist attacks.

## **INCREDIBLE DEFENSE STOCKS**

As Newsweek International put it in August: "Since 9/11 and the U.S. led wars that followed, shares in American defense companies have outperformed both the Nasdaq and Standard & Poor's stock indices by some 40%."

"Prior to the recent cascade of stock prices worldwide, Boeing's share prices had tripled over the past five years, while Raytheon's had doubled."

Bush the younger exploited the trauma of 9/11 as an occasion to depose the de-fanged dictator of Iraq and thus provide a "shock and awe" showcase for the arms industry.

The bin Laden boys only had an arsenal of \$3 box knives, but Bush claimed Hussein had WMD. Sadly for the military-industrial complex, Hussein's army collapsed all too suddenly.

## **PRETENDING WE ARE AT A REAL WAR**

The insurgency, much of it fueled by the Shiites, who were ostensibly on our side, provided the occasion for pretending that we are in a war against a conventionally-armed and imposing military enemy.

Of course, we are in nothing of the sort with this so-called war on terror, a propaganda farce that draws resources away from serious efforts to counter terrorism to reward the corporations that profit from high-tech weaponry that has little if anything to do with the problem at hand.



A U.S. federal judge decided the lawsuit would be "incompatible with the United States' foreign policy interests."

Benedict's Vatican has taken a firm stance against global warming, even acquiring a carbon offset forest to make the Vatican the first entirely carbon neutral sovereign state.

The gloves came off, however, regarding the war in Iraq. In an interview, Ratzinger said, "There was not sufficient reason to unleash a war in Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'"

## **JOHN PAUL II ALSO OPPOSED THE WAR**

The U.S. invasion of Iraq was similarly contentious for former Pope John Paul II, who sent a special envoy to the White House in March 2003 in an effort to prevent an attack. The papal envoy's pleas fell on deaf ears.

Vatican criticisms of the Bush Administration's military intervention in Iraq have continued unabated. French Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, referred to the invasion and occupation as a "crime against peace."

He also said that Christians in Iraq "paradoxically, were more protected under the dictatorship" of Saddam Hussein.

As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that Benedict failed to honor Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's urgent request for a private meeting last month.

The powerful United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] has taken a firm stance against the U.S. presence in Iraq.

A July 2007 letter to House Republican Leader John Boehner, R-OH, from the USCCB noted, "The current situation in Iraq is unacceptable and unsustainable, as is the policy and political stalemate among decision makers in Washington ...Our nation must have the moral courage to change course in Iraq."

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The main challenge is not killing terrorists but finding them, and the capabilities most applicable to this task are intelligence and special operations forces. It does not require half-a-trillion dollars worth of conventional and nuclear forces.

## **SPENDING MORE THAN DURING THE COLD WAR**

That half a trillion only covers the Pentagon budget for expenses beyond the cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars or the Department of Homeland Security. Those last three items total more than \$240 billion in Bush's 2008 off-budget requests.

Add to that the \$50 billion spent on intelligence agencies and an equal amount of State Department directed efforts, and you can understand how we manage to spend more fighting a gang of Mujahedeen terrorists – once our "freedom fighters" in that earlier Afghanistan war against the Soviets – than we did at the height of the Cold War.

"The Pentagon currently absorbs more than half of the federal government's discretionary budget," writes Lawrence Korb, "surpassing the heights reached when I was President Reagan's assistant secretary of defense."

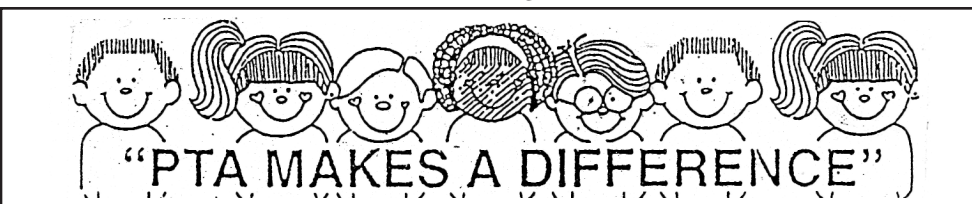
"Much like the 1980s, we are spending billions of dollars on weapons systems designed to fight the Soviet superpower."

Thanks to bin Laden and Bush's exploitation of "war on terror" hysteria, the taxpayers have been hoodwinked into paying for a sophisticated military arsenal to fight a Soviet enemy that no longer exists.

The Institute for Policy Studies calculated last year that the top 34 CEOs of the defense industry have earned a combined billion dollars since 9/11.

They should give bin Laden his cut.

© Truthdig.com



# Rising Obesity Rate Linked To Farm Aid

By Rob Howell

If you're feeling fat these days, blame Congress.

That's just what the nation's doctors are doing, saying that federal lawmakers are responsible for the fact that a salad costs so much more than a Big Mac.

Hoping to produce thinner waistlines, many doctors, including the American Medical Association, want Congress to stop subsidizing the production of foods that are high in fat and cholesterol and spend more to promote fruits, vegetables, legumes and grains that are not.

Farm Belt lawmakers are on the defensive.

"I agree that obesity and health are serious issues in America today," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-KS, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

"However, blaming the cause on the crops that we grow in Kansas and/or the U.S. farm program is overlooking the personal responsibility we all have in our daily lives and diets."

## A SENATE COMMITTEE AWAKENS

The Senate Agriculture Committee approved a bill that would give a record \$2 billion for specialty crops, which include fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops. That's at least four times as much as what Congress provided in 2002, when it approved the last farm bill.

The 2007 farm bill will determine which food industries get the most help from U.S. taxpayers over the next five years.

"The real scandal in Washington is the farm bill," said Neal Barnard, president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

"Senators take millions from corporations that produce bacon, burgers and other fatty foods. Then Congress buys up these unhealthy products and dumps them on our school lunch program. Companies get rich, and kids get fat," he said.

## HEALTHY FOOD ADOCATES OPTIMISTIC

Fruit and vegetable growers, who have long felt ignored on Capitol Hill, are confident they'll cash in this year. They want to persuade Congress to broaden subsidies beyond traditional farm crops such as corn, wheat, rice and cotton.

On any given day 45% of children eat no fruit at all, while 20% eat less than one serving of vegetables. All U.S. children would benefit if Congress offered subsidies to lower the prices that consumers pay for fruits and vegetables.

With the nation's obesity rates rising dramatically in recent years, doctors are jumping into the debate with increased fervor.

From 1995 to 2004, nearly three-quarters of farm bill agricultural subsidies for food – or more than \$51 billion – went to producers of sugar, oil, meat, dairy, alcohol and feed crops used for cattle and other farm animals.



The group said that in 2005 alone, Tyson Foods, the nation's largest meat producer, received \$46.6 million in USDA commodity contracts. Less than half of one percent subsidized fruit and vegetable production, according to the physicians.

## FATTENING SCHOOL LUNCH MENUS

Physicians are alarmed, saying the high-fat, high-cholesterol foods subsidized by the farm bill then find their way into the national school lunch program, contributing to obesity.

Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League, noted that since 1985, the actual price of fruits and vegetables has increased 40%, while the price of sugar and fats has declined by 14%.

He said that "underserved communities cannot be denied access to the same healthy and affordable food that is available to more affluent Americans."

Childhood obesity and the adult diseases associated with it have reached "epidemic proportions," Government projections show that children born in 2000 now have a one in three lifetime risk of developing diabetes.

U.S. farm subsidies ensure that high-fat foods, such as corn syrup and corn oil, are cheap and widely available, while fruits, vegetables and healthier grains are not, he added.

All of the lobbying is paying off.

– Source: Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Center for Responsive Politics.

# Cell Phone Jams Illegal But Active

By Matt Richtel

One afternoon in early September, an architect boarded his commuter train and became a cellphone vigilante. He sat down next to a 20-something woman who he said was "blabbing away" into her phone.

"She was using the word 'like' all the time. She sounded like a Valley Girl," said the architect, Andrew, who declined to give his last name because what he did next was illegal.

Andrew reached into his shirt pocket and pushed a button on a black device the size of a cigarette pack. It sent out a powerful radio signal that cut off the chatterer's cellphone transmission – and any others in a 30-foot radius.

"She kept talking into her phone for about 30 seconds before she realized there was no one listening on the other end," he said.

## HE FELT HE HAD BEEN DELIVERED

His reaction when he first discovered he could wield such power? "Oh, holy moly! Deliverance."

As cellphone use has skyrocketed, making it hard to avoid hearing half a conversation in many public places, a small but growing band of rebels is turning to a blunt countermeasure: the cellphone jammer, a gadget that renders nearby mobile devices impotent.

The technology is not new, but overseas exporters of jammers say demand is rising – one is shipping 400 a month to America from abroad.

This is prompting scrutiny from federal regulators and new concern from the cellphone industry. The buyers include owners of cafes and hair salons, hoteliers, public speakers, theater operators, bus drivers and, increasingly, commuters on public transportation.

A supplier in India said the cost has gone down from several hundreds dollars to \$50 due to the demand.

## BATTLE OVER CLOSE-RANGE AIRSPACE

The development is creating a battle for control of the airspace within earshot. And the damage is collateral. Insensitive talkers impose their racket on the defenseless, while jammers punish not just the offender, but also more discreet chatterers.

"If anything characterizes the 21st Century, it's our inability to restrain ourselves for the benefit of other people," said James Katz, director of the Center for Mobile Communication Studies at Rutgers University.

"The cellphone talker thinks his rights go above that of people around him, and the jammer thinks his are the more important rights."

The jamming technology works by sending out a radio signal so powerful that phones are overwhelmed and cannot communicate with cell towers. Larger mod-

els can be left on to create a no-call zone.

Using the jammers is illegal in the United States. The radio frequencies used by cellphone carriers are protected, just like those used by television and radio broadcasters.

The Federal Communication Commission says people who use cellphone jammers could be fined up to \$11,000 for a first offense. Its enforcement bureau has prosecuted a handful of American companies.

They have no way of prosecuting PhoneJammer.com, a site with holiday gift orders of more than 2,000.

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## HUCKABEE

From Page 16

Finally, Gov. Huckabee had a propensity to be almost as prodigal with pardons as was his famous predecessor by the name of Clinton.

Indeed, Hillary Clinton's campaign team can only dream of Huckabee's nomination because one of his pardons was so outlandish as to make Willie Horton's case in Massachusetts seem almost child's play by comparison.

After Huckabee helped secure the release of already-well-known rapist Wayne Dumond, the released convict sexually assaulted and murdered a woman in Missouri.

All of which leads one to ask two questions: First, how can voters whose primary concerns are moral look beyond so many of a candidate's problems with ethics?

Second, if Republicans in general have concluded, as most of them have, that repeated scandals among Washington GOPers played a huge role in Republican defeats to 2006, how could they possibly nominate somebody who seems to have such big ethical blind spots?

Give this to Huckabee: The man gives a good speech. But so does Duncan Hunter.

If the question is public ethics, all the other major Republican candidates have rather solid records. With so little scandalous material to look into, why hasn't the usually scandal-ravenous national media delved into the record of the one GOP candidate whose ethics have been repeatedly questioned in his home state?

Has even the cynical big media been fooled by a Huckster?

– Quin Hillyer is a senior editor of The American Spectator

# We Need Your Help – Now, More Than Ever

Fourteen months ago, Beverly and I embarked on the adventure of a lifetime. We accepted Frosty and Helen's invitation to grab hold of the torch and lead the Observer into Oklahoma's second century.

We did so for two very basic reasons: We believe in the Observer. And we believe in what Oklahoma can be.

I grew up with the Observer. My mother was an early and devoted subscriber and as yellow a Yellow Dog as I've ever known. She often dialed-up Frosty for rollicking discussions of incorrigible Republicans and mugwump Democrats. Articles clipped from the Observer were scattered throughout the house.

It was a thrill when, in 1980, I became a state Capitol press colleague of Frosty's. He already was a legend and I was a wet-behind-the-ears, 22-year-old Tulsa Tribune correspondent, but he welcomed me as if I were a seasoned veteran and a lifelong friend.

He freely shared his encyclopedic knowledge of state government – and more than few "news tips" that I was able to parlay into page-one exclusives.

A year later, Beverly and I left Oklahoma to pursue my career dreams. We spent eight remarkable years in Texas and California, where I covered government and politics for the Dallas Times Herald and the San Jose Mercury News.

Our hearts, though, never left our home state. When the Dallas Morning News offered to make me Oklahoma Bureau Chief, it was a dream come true: We could raise our two sons near our parents and families, and I could work for one of the Top 10 newspapers in America – in one of the greatest news states.

Several years ago, at one of our regular lunches, Frosty first broached the idea of us taking the Observer's reins. Helen was getting especially serious about retirement. I was flattered and intrigued, but the prospect of following two legends was daunting.

After all, I had watched successors to Bud Wilkinson, Henry Iba and Barry Switzer fare poorly by comparison.

In the summer of 2006, everything fell into place. After 18 years as Oklahoma Bureau Chief, the Dallas Morning News was downsizing. It offered a buyout that allowed us to undertake this new endeavor.

With Frosty and Helen's generous help, guidance and encouragement, we've just completed our first year with the Observer. We always knew it provided an invaluable service to Oklahoma and the nation – afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted, pricking consciences, telling stories that no one in the mainstream media would dare to tell.

We believe the best days are ahead for the Observer and for Oklahoma. We believe that as long as our journal of free voices endures, we can make a difference. And we believe we can help create an Oklahoma of limitless possibilities for all – not just the privileged few.

These are difficult times, however, for independent voices like the Observer.

We don't have the deep pockets of the big chains or the Gaylords or Lortons. Like other media, we struggle to engage younger readers and to familiarize more



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progressive-thinking Oklahomans with this important, alternative voice.

In addition, we were hit with three increases in printing costs last year. And just this summer, the cost of mailing the Observer [and other smaller, independent journals] skyrocketed more than 30%, while the silk-stocking giants like Time-Warner negotiated a price break.

Even so, we've hiked the Observer's subscription price only once in the last 15 years, working diligently to ensure it remains affordable for all our readers.

The truth is, we need your help to secure the Observer's future.

In this holiday season, won't you please consider gift subscriptions for family and friends who aren't already receiving the Observer? How about underwriting subscriptions for your school's perpetually under-funded library or other worthy organizations?

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2008 promises to be a remarkable year – a landmark presidential election, an all-out war for control of the state Senate, a potentially explosive ethics investigation of the state House speaker and critical legislative battles over education, taxes, corrections and immigration, just to name a few.

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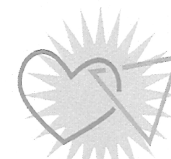
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