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A Fractured Country We're Losing America

By Frosty Troy

When I was a kid growing up in McAlester, one of my prized possessions was a card identifying me as a Junior G-Man. It was signed by J. Edgar Hoover.

Years later, as associate editor of the Tulsa Tribune, I received a personal letter from Hoover resulting from an editorial I wrote praising a local FBI agent for a job well done.

What has happened to the FBI? All my life I considered them the most competent, brave and honest people in law enforcement.

My cousin, Pat Painter, was a lifelong FBI agent, a source of real family pride for all of us. When I headed the Tribune's Washington Bureau, I visited Pat and his family in Silver Spring, MD.

What is happening to America? Civil rights are fading as fast as George Bush can issue a "signing" letter. His administration has made war on the environment – we are paying a dear price for that.

Even if the President acted on misleading intelligence, once the truth is clear, why not a plan for withdrawing? Instead, he has fostered a civil war that his own military leaders say will last for years.

All politicians stretch the truth – remember LBJ's Gulf of Tonkin resolution? – but Bush is a stranger to the truth. You doubt it? This is a public Bush statement on Oct. 16, 2002:

"I have not ordered the use of force. I hope the use of force will not be necessary. The Iraq regime ... is armed with biological and chemical weapons, ballistic missiles, promotes international terrorism and seeks nuclear weapons."

In one of the most unpatriotic acts of our time, returning veterans are mistreated, untreated and ignored. The Walter Reed Hospital fiasco is far from the only scandal.

The Bush Administration plans to cut veterans' health care two years from now – even as badly wounded troops returning from Iraq are overwhelming the system. Check his new budget and his projections.

I was devastated to learn that FBI agents have repeatedly provided inac-

curate information to win more than 2,000 secret surveillance warrants – many of them bogus. This isn't rumor, it was announced by the Justice Department and FBI officials.

It revealed widespread violations of the use of "national security" and "exigent circumstances" letters, which allow FBI agents to collect phone, e-mail and Internet records from telecommunications firms without review by a judge.

I never dreamed my country – in the name of national security – would open secret bases abroad to hold suspects indefinitely, frequently using torture, such as waterboarding.

One of the side effects of Bush dogma is the fracturing of America along religious lines. More than 30 million fundamentalists comprise his base, using his anti-abortion stand as the reason to support him – right or wrong.

I didn't expect to live long enough to see our precious national forests clear-cut by greedy Bush contributors.

Who could have imagined polar bears desperately swimming for an ice flow until they drown? He rejects the Kyoto accord, with only Australia siding with him.

Add to this litany of abuses the most proven corruption in the history of the presidency – from Halliburton billion-dollar no-bid contracts to outing a CIA agent to wreak vengeance on her husband.

The firing of eight U.S. attorneys was not an act of patronage. They were honest prosecutors, and he could not tolerate that. His attorney general lied about it in public and is doomed.

Vice President Dick Cheney, as recently as April 5, again on Rush Limbaugh's show repeated the lie that Saddam was in league with al-Qaeda terrorists.

I have in hand a long list of proven "misstatements" by the President. Example: "I like to tell people when the final history is written, Iraq will be a comma."

Tell that to nearly 3,400 dead American troops, more than 16,000 serious-

ly wounded, and upwards of 500,000 dead Iraqis.

Recommendations from the solid bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission on the Middle East were rejected out of hand.

The Pentagon is a hotbed of corruption, with more than \$10 billion unaccounted for. Top military retirees go to work for defense contractors, the leading taxpayer gougers.

Bush's refusal to accept a rewrite of the disastrous No Child Left Behind Act deliberately demeans and discredits public education – a goal he also held as governor of Texas.

It is heartbreaking to see what has happened to the Republican Party under Bush – across America.

Despite losing Congress, they still preach intolerance, tax cuts for the rich and the end of Public Television and NPR.

If you believe the Comptroller of the Currency on TV's 60 Minutes, this nation's combined debt is \$55 trillion, growing by \$2 trillion or more a year. His prediction: Without action we will be a second-class nation.

China and Saudi Arabia now own 22% of our debt. Iraq has cost more than \$400 billion – all on credit because Bush and the GOP Congress awarded the top 1% of Americans a trillion dollar tax cut.

His antipathy to unions has fueled the loss of virtually all our manufacturing base, and he winks when multiplied billions are hidden in offshore accounts to dodge American taxes owed.

Don't misunderstand; I love this country with all the fervor of my soul. I and two brothers served in Korea. I had a brother in the Marine Corps and a brother in the Navy in World War II.

Even if George Bush called me to serve, I would answer and do whatever I could contribute.

I want to be proud again of the FBI. I want my heart to flutter when the military marches by. I want the kind of religious and political tolerance Martin Luther King Jr. preached.

We think we can't lose this country but we can. We're losing it now.

I want my country back.



Observations

No Excuse

There is simply no excuse for the unhealthy state of Oklahoma, from obese children to poor pregnancy outcomes.

Edd Rhoades, the Oklahoma Department of Health's deputy commissioner of family health services, names the factors that contribute to pregnancy outcomes.

"Our general population seems to participate in a number of these poor lifestyle choices," he said.

That includes being a national leader in smoking, a national leader in obesity, a national leader in alcohol consumption, and far too much illegal drugs.

Now, Oklahoma kids are getting high on cough medicine, an issue being addressed in the current Legislature.

Oklahoma, compared with other states, also has an increase in its uninsured population – now totaling more than 600,000.

Rhoades said that if women don't have access to prenatal care, many problems, including diabetes and urinary tract infections, are left untreated.

"Prenatal care can also lead to early recognition and intervention of pre-term labor, to prevent pre-term deliveries."

All of these conditions are subject to change simply by changing habits. Don't hold your breath. Stupid is as stupid dies.

Hey, Bro

Imagine the media dust-up if Bill Clinton had let his brother take a chunk of educational software, a \$2 billion-a-year industry that has become the darling of school systems across the country.

It has no significant impact on student performance, according to a study by the [of all people!] U.S. Department of Education.

The long-awaited report amounts to a rebuke of educational technology, a business whose growth has

been spurred by schools desperate for ways to meet the testing mandates of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act.

One of the firms involved is owned in part by Bush brother Neil.

The technology – from video game-like programs played on Sony PlayStations to more rigorous drilling exercises used on computers – has been embraced by low-performing schools as an easy way to boost student test scores.

The industry has also been plagued by doubts over the technology's effectiveness as well as high-profile bribery scandals.

The study, mandated by Congress when it passed No Child Left Behind in 2002, evaluated 15 reading and math products used by 9,424 students in 132 schools across the country during the 2004-05 school year.

This is one more example of the overt Bush Administration corruption, unparalleled in American history.

Dumb

We realize Oklahoma's newspapers are handicapped because they read and believe what they read on the editorial page of the Daily Disappointment.

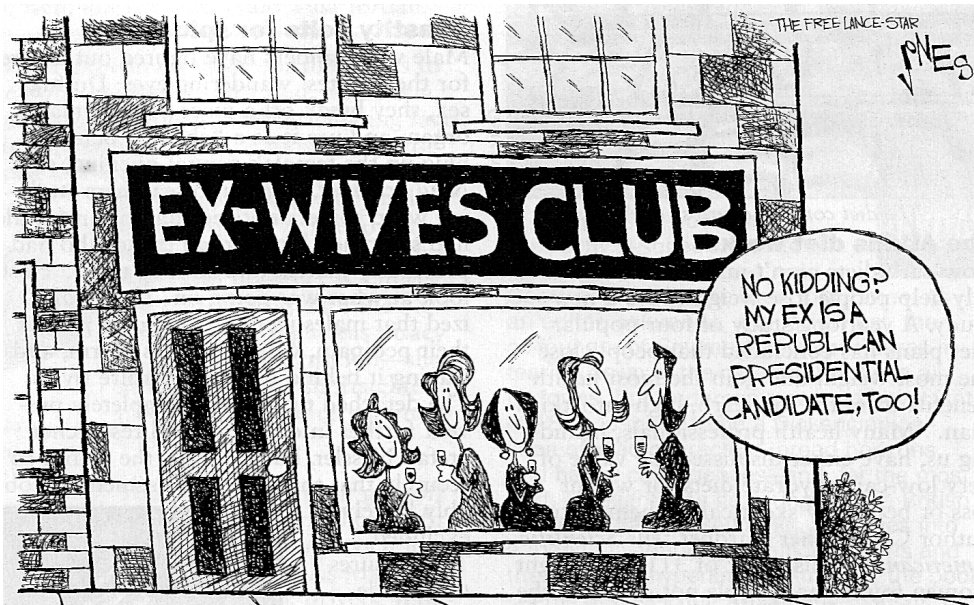
The dailies receive the Associated Press and their Capitol reporting is superb. That's what puzzles us about a wholly ignorant editorial in the Muskogee Phoenix.

The paper missed the facts on last year's special session, and blistered the governor for "whining."

We don't defend Gov. Brad Henry's absenteeism, but his veto of the sorry GOP budget was right on target, as any fair-minded observer will tell you.

The editorial said Henry should tell the GOP what he doesn't like about their budget. He did, dummy. Why should he have to submit two budgets?

There is a GOP campaign at the Capitol to defame Henry, widely consid-



ered to be the candidate to take Sen. Tom Coburn's place.

Pity the readers of the Phoenix's editorial page.

What A Priest!

As the parishioners filtered into Parnell's Holy Trinity Cathedral in Newton, New Zealand, Father Peter Murnane waited outside, showing images of deformed Iraqi children.

Father Murnane protested against depleted uranium weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan throughout the pre-Easter season of Lent outside the United States consulate in Auckland.

Some of our own troops have been poisoned by depleted uranium but that hasn't penetrated the American media.

Those bunker busters are manufactured at the Army ammunition plant in McAlester. The union members refused to add the depleted uranium so the bombs are sent to another part of the plant for final assembly.

The priest chose Good Friday to make a statement about the metal, which causes birth defects and cancer, as a parallel between Jesus' crucifixion and the devastation in Iraq.

"Jesus says, 'Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me,'" said Father Murnane, a Dominican friar at St. Benedict's Church.

"The whole country of Iraq is being re-crucified today with weapons of mass destruction."

Amen?

Tragic Rank

Wonder why more than 662,000 Oklahomans have no health insurance? Premiums for Oklahoma's working families have rocketed nearly 60% since 2000.

Health insurance premiums rose 4.6 times faster than median earnings in the state, the study by Tulsa's Community Action Project reported. The study was based on Human Services data.

Employers who continue to provide coverage to their employees are now asking workers to pay a greater share of the premiums.

Health insurance premiums for employment-based health insurance coverage rose rapidly for Oklahoma individuals – from \$6,937 to \$11,090 for families.

During the six-year period, premi-

um costs paid by Oklahoma workers alone for family coverage rose from \$1,845 to \$3,050.

More than half of bankruptcies are now due, at least in part, to problems with medical costs.

The lunatic Legislature continues to cut taxes when some of that revenue could make a difference in insurance coverage through Insure Oklahoma. But that would require a conscience.

NCLB Fails

Don't say you didn't know the truth – your Observer has been warning you about the No Child Left Behind Act since the beginning. We actually read the bill.

The goal of 100% proficiency for every student in the United States is unattainable. The fact is that no nation or state has ever achieved 100% proficiency.

The only way to reach such a goal is for the Democratic Congress to redefine "proficiency" to mean functional literacy.

Setting the bar far too high virtually guarantees that every year the number of public schools labeled "failing schools in need of improvement" will grow as the goal of 100% proficiency recedes.

Since a school is declared to be "in need of improvement" if only one subgroup, i.e., special education students, slips behind schedule, many fine schools find themselves on that list and see their reputations unfairly tarnished.

Sanctions mandated by NCLB are not working. At a conference in November 2006 at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., a series of commissioned papers by outstanding scholars and journalists reviewed what is happening in a variety of districts across the nation.

The papers demonstrated that, for a variety of reasons, often less than 5% of those eligible are availing themselves of either choice or tutoring services.

In many districts, there were not enough places available in better schools or students did not want to leave their school or the school was not making the information available. So, too, with the tutoring, few students were taking advantage of the service.

The evidence is inescapable – NCLB is a disastrous failure. Apparently nobody can talk slow enough to explain that to George W. ["Is our children learning?"] Bush.

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

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

- Adapted by Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

Sen. Susan Paddock of Ada cast the lone Democratic vote for the GOP's sorry tort reform scheme. Her husband is a Republican physician. The governor is expected to veto the bill.

Laurel: To Rep. Doug Cox, R-Grove, for his courageous but losing battle to stop legislation that would interfere with a physician's treatment decisions. He is the only MD in the Legislature.

Dick Cheney will be posing for pictures with high-dollar Tulsa Republicans on April 27 as a guest of Sen. Jim Inhofe. Meld them and you wouldn't have one good IQ. [Make sure Cheney isn't armed.]

Dart: To Pat McGuigan, ousted editorial page editor at the Oklahoman. He is so hard up, he's spewing voucher drivel for the scummy Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

We don't excuse it but we quit joking about GOP Rep. John Trebilcock's DUI arrest in Tulsa when we learned his wife of less than a year left him and he lost his private sector job.

Laurel: To Elaine Dodd, elected Tulsa County Democratic chair, assuring that proportional representation will continue.

Senate Co-Leader Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, received a campaign donation - a \$100 bill. He later discovered another \$100 bill had stuck to the first one. He faced an ethical decision - should he tell his partner, Co-Leader Glenn Coffee, R-OKC?

Dart: To Ex-Rep. Forrest Claunch, R-Midwest City, for his crybaby op-ed in the Daily Disappointment on the lottery. He was a supporter of SQ 640 that killed any chance of a tax increase - no matter what.

The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that more than 1,800 American troops have suffered traumatic brain injuries caused by penetrating wounds. Most will be disabled for the rest of their lives. [Washington Post, 4.8.07]

Laurel: To U.S. Rep. John Sullivan, R-Tulsa, for convening a widely covered Tulsa meeting designed to push for mental health coverage by insurance companies. A bill by U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy would require it.

The Oklahoman and OKC's KWTV Channel 9 have divorced, with KWTV preferring to run its own web site. That's the TV station claiming "gavel to gavel" coverage of the Legislature but is seldom ever there.

Dart: To the continuing lies about Oklahoma's tort system. Claims that Oklahoma is losing doctors due to lawsuit abuse are false. In the past 10 years, Oklahoma has added 883 physicians! [American Medical Association]

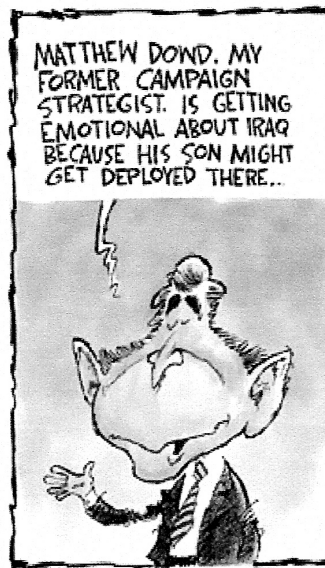
Lone Oklahoma Democratic U.S. Rep. Dan Boren said we should declare victory and pull out immediately. Days later he voted for funds to continue the war and against a pullout date. Will the real Dan Boren please stand up?

Laurel: To Preston School District in Okmulgee County. Achievements of the 560 students prove that small schools are the best. Consolidation proponent Rep. Dave Dank, R-OKC, should visit.

Dart: To the Department of Justice, winning an historic income tax evasion case against telecommunications mogul Walter Anderson. The judge said he could not levy the \$100 million fine because Justice cited the wrong statute!

Remember, this is a journal of free voices. We welcome your opinion, even if you disagree with the Observer. They must be typed - preferably double-spaced - and signed with a bona fide name and address. They also may be e-mailed [letters@okobserver.net]. Fire away!

Laurel: To House Speaker Pro Tempore Gus Blackwell, R-Goodwell, one of the few legislative leaders praising the Department of Corrections for doing a good job.



Leave it to the Sooner Catholic newspaper to attack the new vaccine for HPV [cervical cancer], despite the facts: It is voluntary, with minimal side effects, and affordable.

Dart: To the House GOP for killing Rep. Chuck Hoskins' HB 1747 to reduce the number of uninsured Oklahomans by as many as 50,000 at no cost to the taxpayers. They tossed all Democratic bills. The Senate won't hear them, either.

"There is an old saying in Tennessee ... I know it's in Texas, probably Tennessee ... that says fool me once and shame on ... shame on you. Fool me but you can't get fooled again." George W. Bush. [?????]

Laurel: It's official - Oklahoma teachers have risen all the way to 47th in teacher salaries. If the '07 GOP budget is adopted they will drop further behind. It's a proposed \$600 raise but only for teachers at the bottom of the pay schedule.

The national NAACP has booted all seven executive committee members of the Oklahoma affiliate. They require six youth chapters but Oklahoma has only five. State officials dispute the ruling.

Dart: To what passes for legislative leadership for denying that Gov. Brad Henry has a budget. Maybe they can't read. Maybe they weren't listening to his message at the joint session. His is better than the sorry document they passed.

Finally the state Board of Corrections is standing up. They say they will not endure a 10th consecutive year of deficit funding or they will cancel the state private prison contract. Their treatment by the Legislature is a disgrace.

Laurel: To two courts for swatting George Bush. The U.S. Supreme Court shot down his anti-global warming position, and a federal judge has said his rules to allow raping the federal forests are not legal. Yeah!

Family values? There has been no legislative increase in funding for domestic violence services in three years. Oklahoma's rapes are 38% above the national average.

Dart: To legislative Republicans for supporting SB 714 and HB 1317, anti-abortion bills that the Oklahoma Medical Association said are dead wrong, impeding a doctor's ability to practice medicine.

Latest accurate figures from the Pew Hispanic Center report that there are 12.8 million naturalized citizens in America.

Laurel: To Oklahoma's fabulous 4-H program. Many of the 150,000 members flooded the Capitol. When it comes to teaching leadership, citizenship and life skills, 4-H has no equal.

Then-Gov. Henry Bellmon worked his heart out to create the Ethics Commission. It is yet to be adequately funded by Republicans or Democrats, coming in a share less than \$500,000 a year. They have ONE investigator.

Dart: To those who keep prattling that secondhand smoke is a myth. The Centers for Disease Control now reports 21% of Americans smoke while 43% of non-smoking Americans have signs of secondhand smoke in their blood.

The Republican Texas Legislature walloped GOP Gov. Rick Perry's voucher scheme [129-8 in the House] and redirected his \$183 million in merit pay to an across the board teacher pay raise!

Laurel: To a jump in Oklahoma personal income, from \$29,949 to \$32,210. But be warned, it is still only 88% of the national average of \$36,276.


Latest figures show that 2.5 million U.S. women are 38.8% of top wealth holders, with a combined net worth of \$4.2 trillion. Because of their longevity they will end up in charge of \$41 trillion over the next 50 years. [Indiana U. study]

Dart: To Sinclair Tulsa Refining Co., criminally fined \$5.5 million by the U.S. Justice Department for manipulating wastewater discharges from January 2000 to 2005. Two employees drew six-month home detention for felonious conduct.

According to a disgusted technician who had first-hand knowledge, Wal-Mart has a large surveillance operation, spying on employees, critics, vendors and consultants. [Associated Press]

The fact that Democratic bills disappeared in House committees and the Senate was advised to ignore House Democratic bills was proof that "transparency and accountability" were a GOP smoke screen.

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

As a small businessman who employs 100 people in the restaurant business, I am appalled that the Oklahoma Legislature has wasted taxpayer dollars on SB 1804, which attempts to regulate federal laws on immigration that are clearly unconstitutional, out of the Legislature's jurisdiction and unenforceable by the state of Oklahoma.

HB 1804 is not about solving immigration problems. It is a platform for grandstanding by mean-spirited legislators trying to get free publicity. They have not taken the time to understand current immigration or the naturalization process. If this legislation passes, it will hurt a lot of innocent children and hardworking adults that contribute to our economy.

Yes, we do have immigration problems – but this is a federal problem. Foolishly attempting to resolve it with state legislation will only tie up the state of Oklahoma in endless lawsuits based on infringement of constitutional rights. It's time for the Oklahoma Legislature to quit wasting its time and my taxpayer dollars. They should vote NO on HB 1804, and if they don't, Gov. Henry should veto this worthless legislation.

Tim Wagner
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Sixty percent of the American people agree with Congress's recent non-partisan vote to bring U.S. troops home and approve of their plan to fund the troops' redeployment and safe return. Yet, President Bush has announced plans to veto the troops' funding as a strategy to keep the country at war in Iraq no matter what the cost.

Ironically, he is trying to make the American people believe Congress is to blame for taking the funding away, when it is his veto of the funding bill that is the real cause.

President Bush has abused the language of patriotism for years to get his way and divide the country. When Congress funds the troops with a plan to bring them home, they are supporting the troops. When Bush vetoes that funding, he and nobody else is responsible for blocking the money the troops depend on.

Jackie Gaston
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

A couple of months ago I heard on NPR why American schools did not get copies of the movie "An Incon-

venient Truth." Al Gore's foundation offered to send to the NSTA, the National Science Teachers Association, 25,000 copies of the film for FREE to distribute to every [high school?] science teacher in the U.S. Apparently, NSTA balked at the cost to mail all of them, so the foundation said, OK, we will pay for the DVDs and the postage.

The spokesperson for NSTA on NPR hemmed and hawed, citing administrative issues, misunderstandings, etc.

But the truth came out. ExxonMobil has apparently bought the NSTA's whorish fealty with a large donation, turning NSTA into another factual house of ill repute for the oil industry! So, this august body of learning, representing our nation's science school teachers, has been politicized into another sycophantic lobbying group for Big Oil. How said and how utterly unsurprising.

Jeff Brown
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Traveling on our interstates is becoming more and more lethal ... drivers already have been exposed to leaky uranium cargo being hauled from the Gore facility.

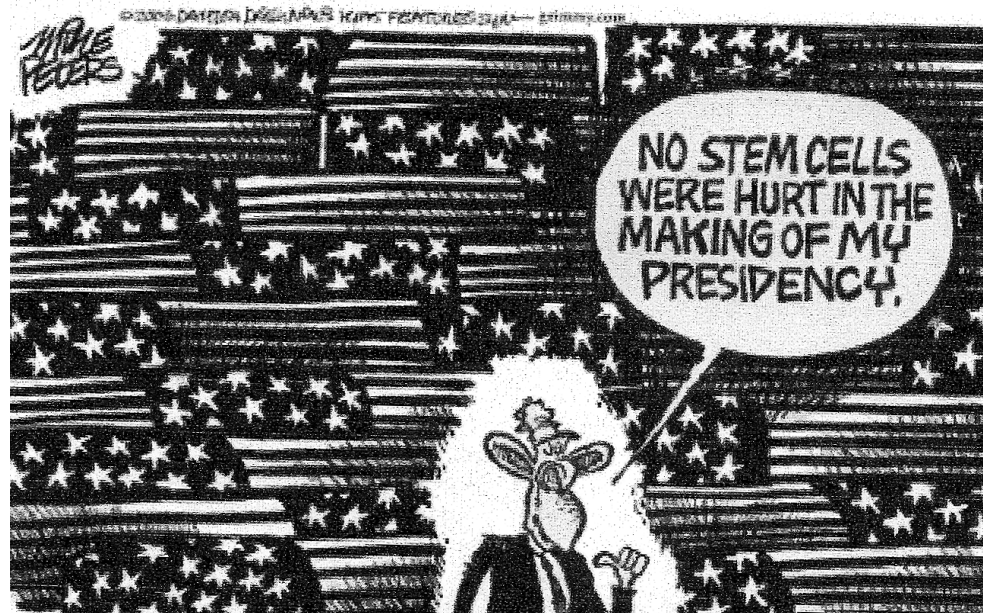
They also are faced with the possibility of ruptured cargo when one of these trucks crashes on the highway. It is a harrowing experience to tangle with the truck congestion and, now, it's becoming more and more deadly!

Under such conditions, do you wish to drive in Oklahoma? Swim in lakes or eat fish caught from waterways? [Gore facility stored this stuff in unlined ground storage to leak into our waterways!]

Why doesn't our state have much stronger laws regarding this stuff? Our citizens deserve better safety monitoring, safety precautions and security than they are getting from this Legislature.

Meanwhile, this bunch of yahoos at the Capitol wants to give back taxes? To whom? We have one of the lowest state taxes of any state in the union. We don't collect enough taxes to properly secure our lives in this place. If we did, we would have laws against contaminating our beautiful waterways and allowing trucks to haul poisons through our land.

We would have alternate and safer rail transportation for handling cargo thus relieving our congested roadways with far too much truck traffic. Don't forget that these trucks that



haul this deadly cargo are traveling over condemned bridges! We citizens deserve better but we won't get better until we throw out the bums who have fomented this mess.

Vote these incompetents out of our Legislature. Vote in fresh, honest and competent replacements. Then demand a total investigation of ODOT!

The Oklahoma citizens are being shortchanged by both!

Darla Sparks
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Seems anger is the fashion nowadays – it's democratic; an American right! Anger is also one of The Seven Deadly Sins [others are pride, greed, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth].

Anger is the most general noun of this group, providing no clue as to direction. Rage usually implies loss of self; is directed at others. Fury, strongest noun, suggests a rage violent enough to approach madness. Indignation denotes anger based on morality. Wrath connotes strong anger directed at a specific person or thing.

These emotions can be tantrums, contemptuous writing, loathing, or electronic primal screams to be witnessed by an audience, not an effort to impress the uncommitted.

Today's furies are a coping device; unless one feels angry, one feels nothing.

The Bible, James 1:19 – "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

An American proverb – "Anger improves nothing but the arch of a cat's back." "You are not a dynamic person simply because you blow your top."

So, what's in your gullet today? Well, that's too much!

Cecil Acuff
Perkins

Editor, The Observer:

Finally, U.S. Congressmen [excluding Oklahoma's] voted to increase the minimum wage for the first time in nine years. However, they attached an amendment to allow more tax cuts for the business community.

John Q. Public seems oblivious that America's economic system is no longer capitalistic free enterprise! Businesses have gained through their Chamber of Commerce Union access to our city, country, state and federal treasuries.

Our economic system in America has eroded into a "Public Funding Private Business Partnership." Why

is it that the public dole to business is never labeled "socialism?" It would take an entire separate article to tell all the benefits subsidizing businesses in America.

It is time to dissolve this partnership that bankrolls the already rich corporations and companies, so they can become super markets for the world.

Carol L. Seim
Owasso

Editor, The Observer:

I am not an electrical engineer, economist, mathematician or scientist. I am just a curious individual and many things tickle my fancy and cause me to ask a lot of complex questions. Below I am listing three that could be the core essentials for doctoral degrees.

1. There is a big push for wind powered electrical generators, since fossil fuel is finite. How much energy will it take to build a generator and its associated network from earth's raw material to the consumer?

It has not delivered a watt of energy yet. How long will it take to wind the system out of debt? How long will it take to store enough energy to reproduce itself? When these questions have been answered then we can depend on wind power as a source of energy.

2. You can hear, many times over, how much of our dollar goes for taxes. How much of our tax dollar goes for transportation, communication, safety, and a multitude of other services? How much of the tax dollar is wasted?

I believe the answers to these questions would put to rest the tax cutting arguments.

3. Can the world, humanely, convert food plants into ethanol, while many people of the world are starving?

John B. Gordon
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

The Daily Disappointment is like a shark in chum-infested waters regarding their investigation on the Stipe/Phipps illegal contributions scam and attempting to tar and feather a number of Democrats, including Gov. Brad Henry. I wonder if they have been just as judicious in expanding their investigation into political contributions to Republican candidates? Probably not.

Robert J. O'Connor
Bethany

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Frosty's Notebook

My Brother

My brother Johnny was an authentic American hero, the kind who never talked about his military service in detail.

He was one of the sapper squad with the Army engineers who blew the Han River bridge when China unleashed 150,000 soldiers on us, kicking U.N. forces all the way back to Pusan. He will never know how many lives he saved.

After Korea he decided to make it a career and briefly attended Officers Candidate School. He said it was "too childish" for him and he preferred the enlisted ranks, rising to master sergeant.

While stationed in Germany he married and began a family.

After his tour of duty as a crew chief in Vietnam, he returned to his family. He was barely there when he was recalled to Vietnam – it was turning out to be far more intractable than the commanders in the field first believed.

It was his second tour when he was crew chief on a helicopter equipped with a Gatlin gun. They called it Puff the Magic Dragon. He ruefully told me that if they took enemy fire from a village, they leveled it. When he said it, his eyes dropped.

His third and final tour turned out to be a nightmare. Enlisted men – especially those on drugs – began "fragging" officers' quarters. In the wee hours they would open the door and roll in a live grenade and slam the door. He lost a pilot.

America will never know the tens of thousands of troops who came home drug addicted. It was cheap and available, creating many more casualties than the 57,000 Americans killed, the two million wounded.

We exchanged letters, and he told me in one what a huge mistake Vietnam was. "Hell, Brother, they won't even defend their own country."

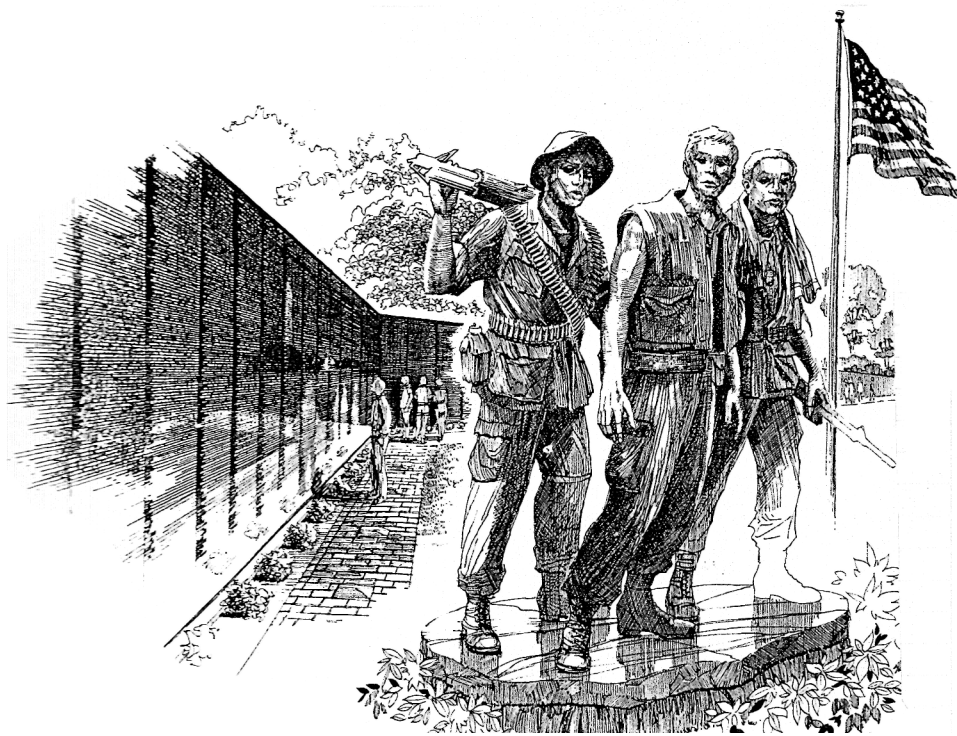
I know his service affected him – it almost always does. I just want the record to show what he did for his country – four Bronze Stars, one for Korea and one for each tour in Vietnam.

We met in Korea only once. He told me not to tell Dad that he was handling explosives. I asked him why in the world he would do it, and he said he got extra pay for it!

When Kevin was killed on Heartbreak Ridge, I was in Korea and they said I would accompany his body home. I was miserable, unable to believe it. When I emerged at the airport on the way to the Oakland facility where the bodies were brought, there was Johnny!

I am too old to lie. I fell in his arms and cried my heart out.

I can still see him standing at attention and saluting at the graveside services in McAlester as taps echoed across the landscape. Kevin was awarded the Silver Star for Bravery.



We were always childhood chums who resented having to have little brother Jerry Bob wagging along. It was orders. We sneaked into the movies together, swam in Chadwick Park, caught crawdads in the Second Ward canal, and were always good pals as well as brothers.

Johnny hated school but loved to work with his hands. He was the reason Mother was invited to join the McAlester Garden Club and won "Yard of the Year" thanks to Johnny's work.

He was always good with machinery. Dad bought one of the first gasoline-powered lawn mowers. He came home from the cleaners one evening and it was in the driveway – Johnny had taken it apart. With encouragement from Dad's ever-ready belt, Johnny reassembled it and it ran just fine.

His heart was enormous. If he encountered someone with a flat tire, he's the guy who pulled over and asked if they needed help. No one will ever know his devotion to Mother; not just his monthly money, but his loving care.

He had a fight with the phone company so Helen and I couldn't take him to Pete's in Krebs because we couldn't reach him. We had done that many times with Mother.

I am thankful I wrote him to tell him he was my hero, my role model, my brother and I would always love him. If St. Peter's lawnmower is ever on the blink, he now has a first rate guy to fix it.

I miss you Johnny.

Sorry Pentagon

I will put my patriotism up against anybody's, so when I say that the \$500 billion a year Pentagon is the most poorly run and corrupt in America's history, the record proves it.

Citing a few recent examples: It was Oklahoma Gen. Tommy Franks & Co. who urged Bush to go into Iraq despite what the U.N. inspectors said about WMDs.

It was the American commanders such as Franks who disarmed the Iraqi army – certainly a stupid blunder resulting in the looting of every office, library and museum in the country.

It was the Pentagon hacks that failed to order our forces to guard Iraq's considerable munitions dumps. Today, those same unguarded munitions are being used to kill Americans and Iraqis.

The nonpartisan General Accountability Office [GAO] said, "The U.S. military's faulty war plans and insufficient troops in Iraq left thousands and possibly millions of tons of conventional munitions unsecured or in the hands of insurgent groups after the 2003 invasion – allowing widespread looting of weapons and explosives used to make roadside bombs that cause the bulk of U.S. casualties."

Some weapons sites remained vulnerable as recently as October 2006, accord-

ing to the GAO report, which said the unguarded sites "will likely continue to support terrorist attacks throughout the region."

For example, it said hundreds of tons of explosives at the al Qaeda facility in Iraq that had been documented by the International Atomic Energy Agency were lost to theft and looting after April 9, 2003.

Pentagon programs have secured or disposed of more than 417,000 tons of munitions, the report said. But it said an unknown quantity – ranging from thousands to millions of tons of conventional munitions – remain unaccounted for.

And why didn't the Pentagon brass inquire as to the care of the returning wounded military?

This is the same Pentagon that has been given billions that are still unaccounted for – the same military whose retirees go to work for defense contractors.

Somehow it's "un-American" to tell the truth about these blithering incompetents. The hell it is! Where are the whistle blowers? Where is Congress?

Another Lie

Hello, tax cuts. Goodbye, the promised regional-average-pay for Oklahoma's public school teachers.

A new AFT survey ranks Oklahoma 47th among the states in average teacher salaries – \$37,879, an increase of 8% from the previous year. That's up from 49th two years ago.

Gov. Brad Henry and legislative leaders have promised teachers would reach the regional average. It began with a \$3,000 across-the-board salary increase last year.

Teacher pay nationally averages \$47,602, up 2.2% from the previous year but not enough to cover the cost of inflation.

Shelly Hickman, spokeswoman at the state Department of Education, said Oklahoma has been ranked as low as 49th by the AFT so the new report shows improvement.

A sorry legislative budget plan recently vetoed by Henry proposed teacher pay raises of \$600. Henry said it was too low, so he proposed raises of \$1,100 in his February budget.

That was before the state Board of Equalization lowered from \$500 million to about \$277 million the amount of new money available for lawmakers to spend.

The real culprit isn't the Equalization Board's official estimate, it's mindless tax cuts of nearly \$900 million in the past three years.

GOP Perfidy

The rich get richer under the Bush Administration and an unlamented Republican Congress. Income inequality grew significantly in 2005, with the top 1% of Americans – incomes averaging more than \$348,000 – receiving their largest share of national income since 1928.

The top 10%, those earning more than \$100,000, also reached a level of income share not seen since before the Great Depression.

While total reported income in the United States increased almost 9% in 2005, average incomes for those in the bottom 90% percent dipped slightly compared with the year before, dropping \$172 or 0.6%.

The gains went to the top 1%, whose incomes rose to an average of more than \$1.1 million each, an increase of more than \$139,000, or about 14%.

The new data also shows that the top 300,000 Americans collectively enjoyed almost as much income as the bottom 150 million Americans.

Per person, the top group received 440 times as much as the average person in the bottom half earned, nearly doubling the gap from 1980.

Who says we can't lose this great country? If we keep going the way we're going, it is entirely possible.

Henry Says No To "Abortion" Bill

Gov. Brad Henry has vetoed Senate Bill 714, an abortion bill supported by the Legislature's foremost political fundamentalists.

The governor, who is pro-life, said the bill did more harm than good, with no exemption in the cases of rape, incest or medical necessity – such as a fetus with no brain.

Sens. Johnnie Crutchfield, D-Ardmore, and Jim Wilson, D-Tahlequah, promised they could deliver the Democratic votes needed to sustain the veto. The bill passed 32-16.

The governor's veto fell on the same day a Roman Catholic majority on the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a national ban on "partial birth" abortion.

The Oklahoma bill was authored by Sen. James Williamson, R-Tulsa, a strong fundamentalist who at one point in the Senate debate referred to abortion as "murder." He subsequently said he meant some people feel that way.

Far from being just an abortion bill, it was a two-pronged attack on women and the poor and a political tool for next year's election.

It also would micromanage the doctor-patient relationship.

DOCTORS AND NURSES BACK THE GOVERNOR

"I do not issue this veto lightly. I believe every abortion is a tragedy," the governor said, flanked by 40 doctors and nurses from across the state.

"First and foremost, the measure is flawed in that it does not include exemptions for cases of incest and rape. That means many victims of rape or incest would have no option but to carry a fetus to term, no matter how horrific and violent the circumstances.

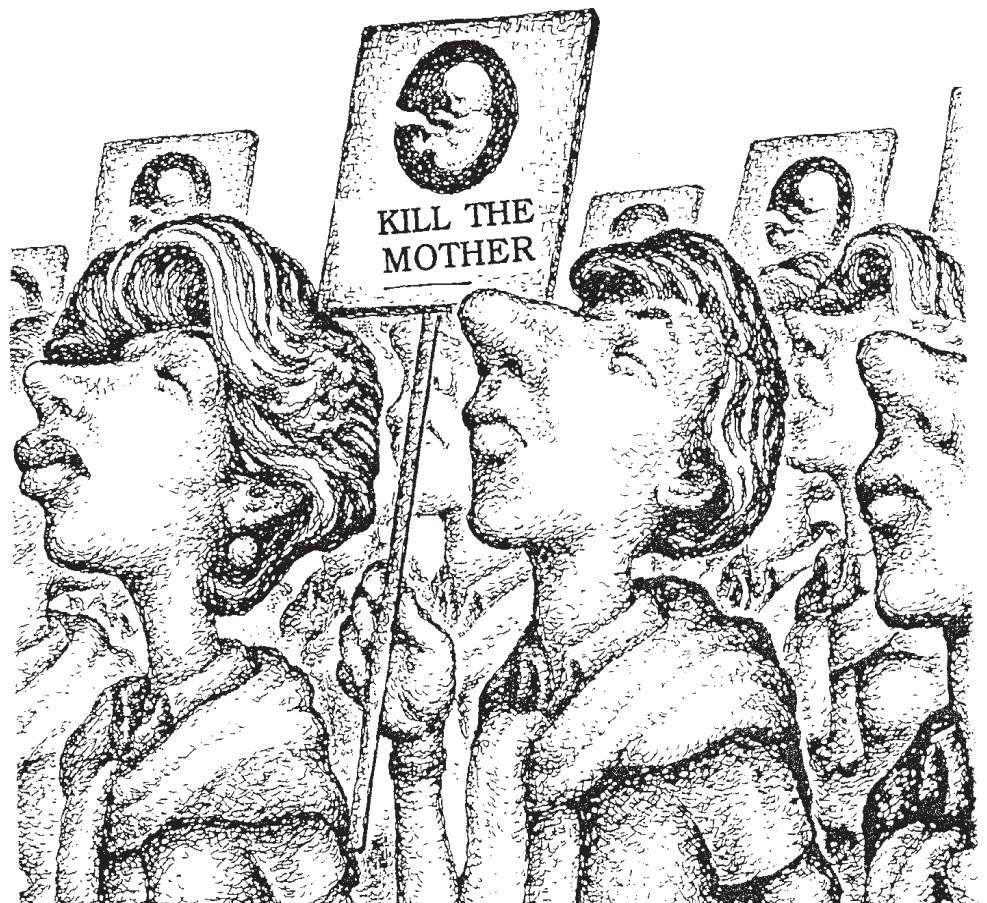
"In addition, I share the concerns of a majority of medical experts who believe this bill would severely compromise health care in our state by placing undue restrictions on the sacred relationship between doctor and patient.

"Under this measure, a woman may have no option but to carry to term a fetus with a fatal birth defect. There are a number of fatal birth defects in which there is no chance of survival, and yet SB 714 would add to a family's suffering and medical costs by forcing a woman to carry that fetus to term."

PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTIONS ALREADY ILLEGAL

Asked about the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, he said Oklahoma already has a law against it and he supported that law.

SB 714 was opposed by the Oklahoma State Medical Association, the Okla-



homa section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and the Oklahoma Nurses Association.

"Although designed to simply prohibit taxpayer-funded abortions, in reality the bill reaches much further, impacting most community hospitals in the state and severely compromising the quality and availability of medical care," Henry said.

"Furthermore, because of its flaws, it was questionable whether this legislation could withstand the legal challenges that would have awaited it. For instance, the bill disproportionately impacts healthcare options for low income women and families."

Williamson says he was "shocked" by the governor's veto, saying the measure was bipartisan.

Dems Vote To Make Rapists Into Fathers

By Karen Webb

Here's one subscriber's take on the abortion bill adopted by the Legislature: Oklahoma Democratic senators who hate poor women enough to force them to make their rapists fathers are Burrage, Corn, Easley, Garrison, Gumm [shame, shame on you, Jay Paul], Ivester, Laster, Paddock.

Believe it or not, Easley and Paddock are women who hate poor women enough to force them to make fathers of their rapists.

Oklahoma Democratic representatives who hate poor women enough to force them to make their rapists fathers:

Braddock, Brannon, Carey, Dorman, Ellis, Hamilton, Harrison, Hilliard, Hyman, Inman, Lamons, Luttrell, McMullen, Morgan, Morrisette [shame, shame on you, Richard], Pruett, Proctor, Renegar, Rousselot, Shumate, Walker.

Only one Democratic woman hates poor women so much she wants them to be forced to make fathers of their rapists: Rebecca Hamilton.

Easley, Paddock and Hamilton aren't the only women legislators who believe rape is such a joyous occasion that poor women should be thrilled at making dads of their rapists.

Billy, Coody, Cooksey, Kern, Tibbs, Winchester and Wilcoxson also hate poor women.

Thank you Debbe Leftwich for standing up for women this time and I wish we could count on you every time.

- The author lives in Moore

Anti-Gay Commissioner Is Toast

By James Nimmo

Oklahoma County Commissioner Brent Rinehart from District 2, a practicing public homophobe, was formally arraigned earlier this month for serious Oklahoma campaign law violations [10 by my count] ranging from perjury and filing false campaign reports to accepting illegal contributions from third parties and conspiracy against the state during his campaign in 2004.

According to Attorney General Drew Edmondson's office, Rinehart, and his campaign manager, former state Rep. Tim Pope, are charged in Oklahoma County District Court with one count of conspiracy against the state, two counts of money laundering and three counts of knowingly accepting a contribution to a political candidate through an intermediary or conduit with unlawful intent. Additionally, Rinehart faces four counts of perjury.

Run-of-the-mill political shenanigans you might yawn, but stay with me.

If you're LGBT or a friend of one of us, you know that Mr. Rinehart, only just past the halfway mark in his first term, is finally getting his comeuppance as a public figure.

RINEHART OBSESSED WITH 'GAY AGENDA'

From day one of his term he has ragged on Commissioner Jim Roth, District 1, for advancing what Rinehart thinks is the much talked about, but seldom seen, "gay agenda."

Why does Rinehart think he's had a look at the "gay agenda?" I haven't seen it and I've paid lots of dues in time and money. Does Rinehart know somebody I don't? Does he have a secret handshake? He seems to walk and talk in the normal way.

The only gay agenda I've seen is my own: to be treated under law in the same

way as any other tax-paying citizen, irrespective of my sexual orientation, and according to my own observance of existing law. I'm paying the same fare as a straight man; I expect the same first-class ticket.

Rinehart, one of three 'no' votes in January of 2005, wanted to rescind a non-discrimination, LGBT-neutral, hiring/employment policy in Oklahoma County that was put in place under the sponsorship of Commissioner Roth just a month previously. Such a policy is good government because it saves money in discrimination lawsuits and attracts good potential employees.

[Pope, meanwhile, carried a gun in his boot onto the floor of the state House because, he said, gays were after him. He was also found guilty of illegal campaign telemarketing in March for calls directed against Commissioner Roth.]

DOESN'T PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS

There have been numerous articles in the Oklahoma City media about Rinehart being unable to work effectively with the other county officeholders. All of the county's elected officials issued a group letter the same day as Rinehart's arraignment in which they promised to maintain character and integrity in the face of these serious allegations of misconduct by Rinehart.

In his defense, Mr. Rinehart has spoken of a personal vendetta being directed against him by the attorney general and the "good ol' boy" system he claims is responsible for his predicament.

At a press conference Rinehart said, "I will continue to serve the public despite the good old boy demands that I abandon public office. I look forward to my day in court where the facts will reveal that I am innocent of the politically motivated

See COMMISSIONER Page 8

The Lege Creating Rich & Poor Schools

By Bill Bentley

Did you ever wonder why some school districts in Oklahoma have beautiful structures where you would love to work, while other schools struggle to maintain their old buildings and have little or no ability to build new facilities?

After playing an athletic contest in a school district which has attractive new buildings, one of my parents made the comment, "Why don't we have those kinds of facilities?"

The answer is that the Oklahoma Legislature has not taken steps to establish an equitable system of funding capital improvement projects for Oklahoma school districts.

School districts receive revenue for two purposes. *Operational expenses* include employee salaries and benefits, school supplies, fixed charges such as fuel, utilities, and other items.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

This revenue is placed in schools' "General Fund." Revenue for operational expenses come from local ad valorem taxes and state appropriated moneys through the state aid formula.

Revenue in this category cannot be used for building construction. This revenue is equalized for each school district through the state aid formula.

The purpose of the formula is to insure that each district receives the same amount for each child, which is established in the formula. A second grader in Tulsa receives the same amount as Oklahoma City, Dibble, Mangum or any other public school district in the state.

The formula established by the Legislature equalizes funds through a simple process of balancing the amount of local revenue against the amount of state aid: The computation basically equalizes revenue by subtracting the local revenue from the amount of state aid the district receives.

IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE FAIR TO ALL

Consequently, the more local revenue a school receives the less state aid they are awarded. Through this process the formula insures all districts receive the same amount of funding based on the number of students in the district.

Schools also receive revenue for *capital improvement projects*. The revenue is generated from local district ad valorem taxes, which are placed in the school "Building Fund."

The revenue can be used to repair facilities and construct buildings. As a practical matter, the amount that is generated by the building fund, in most instances, is not enough to build new schools.

Many district building funds do not generate enough to even maintain their current facilities. Consequently, there exists a need for local bond issues that are used to construct buildings, repair facilities and purchase other items like buses.

WHY THE INEQUITY OCCURS

Here is why the inequity occurs. The amount each school district receives in its building fund is based on the assessed valuation of the district. A district can bond for 10% of their assessed valuation.

If your school district has \$8 million in assessed valuation and the district has no current bonded indebtedness the voters could elect to pass a bond for \$800,000. *The state of Oklahoma does not provide any funds for capital improvement.*

Local schools must rely upon their assessed valuation and their ability to pass bond issues to build and maintain their facilities.

State Sets Another Anti-Child Record

Oklahoma has the third highest infant-mortality rate in the nation, prompting two lawmakers to call on the Legislature to find new ways to provide prenatal care and education to poor mothers.

Sen. Judy Eason McIntyre and Rep. Anastasia Pittman are working to call attention to the problem, citing lack of prenatal care and proper pregnancy education as major factors in infant-mortality rates.

"We have to make a commitment to our families that their health is a priority and begin to promote initiatives and programs that will provide our expecting mothers, especially our poor mothers, access to proper care and education so their babies have a chance at a healthy life," said Pittman, D-OKC.

"Proper prenatal care is essential to preventing low-birth weight, which is one of the leading causes of death among infants."

A DISMAL RANKING OF 44TH

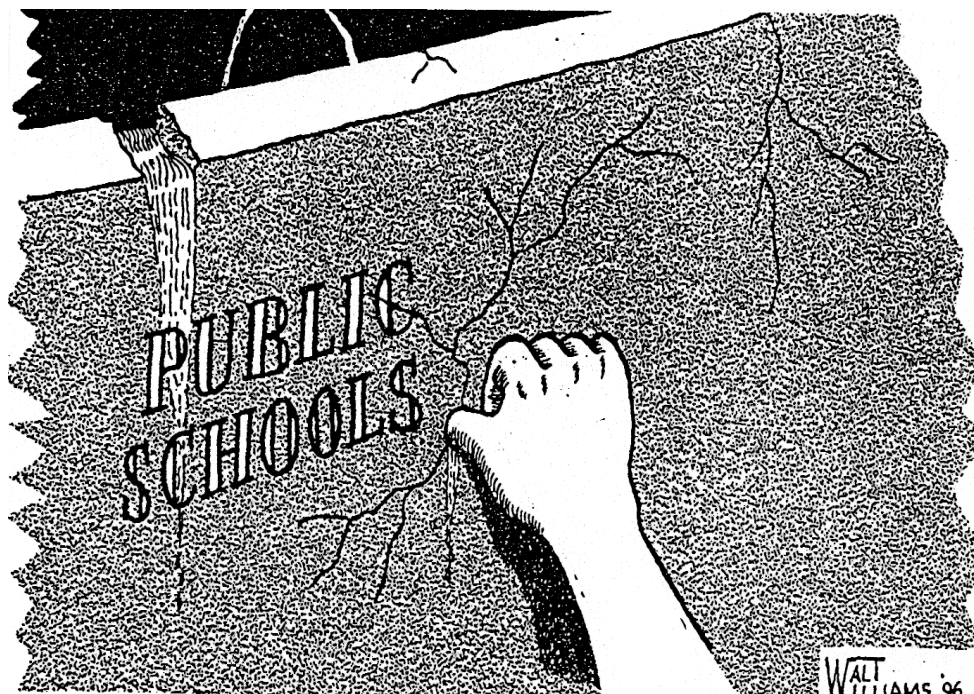
According to the United Health Foundation's 2006 "America's Health Rankings," Oklahoma, at 68.6%, ranks 44th in the nation in the number of mothers who receive prenatal care while pregnant.

The national average is just over 84%. On average, 53 babies are born in Oklahoma every day who haven't received either proper or any prenatal care.

Those babies are three times more likely to have low-birth weights and are five times more likely to die before reaching the age of one than babies born to mothers who do get prenatal care.

The cost of providing care to low-birth-weight and premature babies is millions of dollars, said Pittman.

It could be reduced by providing education and access to quality care to mothers. Medicaid reimbursement for prenatal care is typically less than \$1,000 com-



The amount of district valuation varies greatly from district to district. This system creates *rich* and *poor* schools, and they can be seen all across Oklahoma.

In one community you will find new and up-dated state of the art facilities while another school district has WPA buildings and metal structures that could be blown away in a strong wind. Something is wrong with this picture.

A number of years ago our Legislature provided a way to equalize funding for all school districts for operational expenses.

WHY HAVE THEY NOT ACTED?

Why have they not created an equitable system for school facilities?

States across America have already dealt with this problem by creating systems that fund public school operational expenses and capital improvement needs in an equitable fashion.

In many states lawsuits by concerned citizens as well as school districts have forced state legislatures to provide equitable funding for both categories of expenses for all schools.

The Legislature needs to take a serious look at devising a system that provides equitable funding for capital improvement for *all schools and students*. Public school students in all schools in Oklahoma deserve the same quality of facilities.

If this is not the case, why did the Legislature a number of years ago equalize funding for operation expenses for *all* Oklahoma schools?

For the last several years I have heard politicians and college presidents talk about the need to increase Oklahoma's number of college graduates as a way to improve economic development within the state. I agree.

However, you do not increase the number of college graduates by pouring more money into higher education. College graduate numbers increase when larger numbers enter college from our common ed high schools.

If we want true economic growth within our state, build equitable quality common ed facilities. Growth starts from the bottom up, not top down. Take a look at states surrounding Oklahoma and notice the type of public education facilities they are building with state dollars.

- The author is superintendent of Dibble Public Schools

pared with the average daily cost of \$1,250 for a hospital to provide care for an infant born with a low-birth weight.

IMMORAL NOT TO PROVIDE THE CARE

"Frankly, it is immoral for us to not provide prenatal care when we know how important it is to the health of an infant," said Pittman, who has experience in developing public health policy.

"Unless we begin working in conjunction with the medical community to develop and fund ways to get these women the necessary care they and their babies need, we are going to continue to spend millions of dollars each year providing care to babies for a problem that is easily preventable."

The Coalition for Healthy Babies, a statewide organization that promotes quality of life initiatives for babies, also went to the Capitol.

MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS SUCCESSFUL

Dr. Robert Mannel, chairman for the group, declared the visit a success.

"We came here to get the message across to Oklahoma legislators that prenatal care is critical to the health of our tiniest citizens - little babies," he said.

"We want the Legislature to understand that in most areas of medicine, prevention is the cure. That's why for every dollar we spend on prenatal care we save between \$1 and \$3 in the baby's first year of life and it continues throughout childhood."

"Prenatal care is essential if a baby is to be born healthy," added McIntyre, D-Tulsa. "That is why I am a strong advocate for legislation that will provide health care to all babies and their mothers.

"It doesn't make financial sense to not provide prenatal care when we know in the long run thousands of dollars will be saved."

Playing Politics With Immigration 'Reform'

With the Senate giving its blessing, the so-called immigration reform package could reach Gov. Brad Henry's desk before month's end.

The upper chamber approved HB 1804 by a lopsided 41-6 margin, sending it back across the rotunda, where the House was expected to rubber-stamp Senate revisions, leaving its fate in the governor's hands.

Henry's spokesman Paul Sund said the governor "supports responsible and effective immigration reform," but won't "pass final judgment" until he reviews the bill's fine print.

The package by Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, and Sen. James Williamson, R-Tulsa,

By Harry Coates

If you are playing politics, then the smart thing to do is look at how the public feels about an issue, and then vote for a bill on that topic, even if you know the bill won't really accomplish anything—even if you know the bill could make things worse. When it comes to Oklahoma businesses and legislation dealing with illegal immigration, or any topic for that matter, I refuse to play politics. That's why I voted no on House Bill 1804.

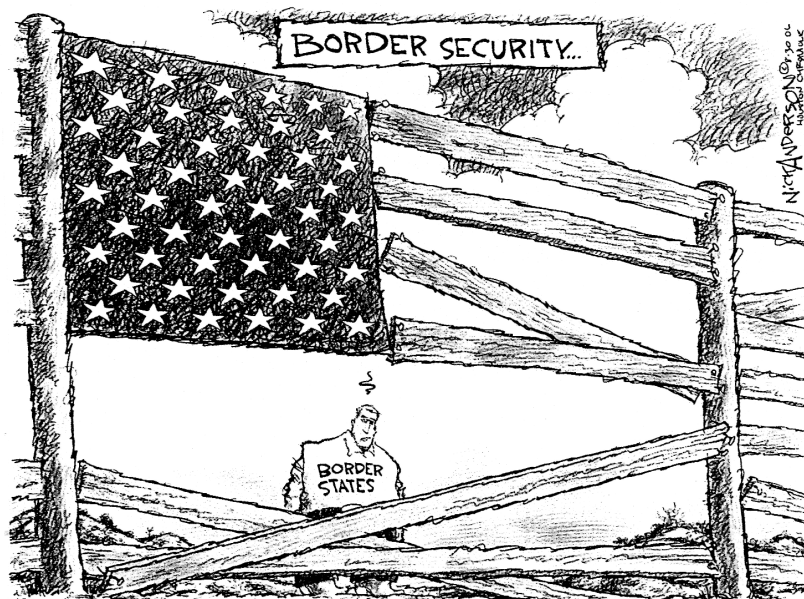
I'd like to share my reasons for voting no on this legislation.

First of all, this bill places the burden of immigration enforcement on the backs of Oklahoma businesses – most of which are small businesses with limited time and resources to try and do what the federal government has failed to do. It is an unfunded mandate that basically makes targets out of small businesses. Why not? They're easier to go after than the illegal aliens. They have an address, can be found and are much easier to prosecute.

Secondly, this bill will simply foster an environment of litigation. Small businesses will be forced to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars defending themselves against charges that they did not do enough to stop illegal immigration. Any litigation we hope to limit through tort reform will be more than made up as a result of this legislation.

Third, the domestic labor pool is simply unavailable or unwilling to do the type of manual labor being done by this population. Specifically, look to construction, agriculture or oil and gas. Entry level jobs in these industries command twice the minimum wage, yet they are not attracting domestic workers. Career Techs are having a difficult time attracting students because the emphasis in education is toward intellectual pursuits rather than trade skills.

The businesses I'm talking about simply cannot hire enough domestic workers to perform labor-intensive and sometimes distasteful tasks at



any wage level.

For those who wonder why this population doesn't just come into this country legally – well, the federal government has made that nearly impossible.

Since 9/11, applications for legal residence are not being processed for those already in this country. In order to apply for legal residence, the individual must first return to their native country and then begin the application process. But at this point in time, it can take literally years for that paperwork to go through.

Federal policies have placed them in the so-called "Catch-22" situation.

I do share concerns about homeland security and other social problems stemming from illegal immigration that were raised during debate on the bill.

Nothing I heard convinced me that HB 1804 will solve those problems.

I simply cannot in good conscience vote for a bad bill out of fear that my no vote will be used against me in the next election. That's not why I ran for the Senate. I'm here to do the right thing.

Sometimes, that means voting no on a politically popular bill.

– The author, R-Seminole, represents Senate District 28

plays to a noisy group of nativists who actually believe it's going to slow, if not reverse, the growth of undocumented immigrants.

The truth is, much of the measure already is federal law. Opponents are worried it could lead to increased problems with racial profiling.

Question: Will the governor have the good sense to veto it? Maybe. A better question: Could a veto be sustained in either house? Not likely.

Two senators – Harry Coates, the lone Republican legislator to vote against HB 1804, and Democrat Jay Paul Gumm, who endorsed the measure – offer their perspectives:

election.

Fear may drive the deliberative process in a dictatorship, but not here in a nation whose freedom was bought with the blood of patriots.

Putting fear first, and injecting it into a thoughtful and reasoned debate on an important issue, is beneath the process by which we make critical decisions about our future.

Every member of the Legislature should approach issues with an eye to the future; the cynical injection of fear puts elections ahead of posterity.

We should cast our votes based on what we feel in our hearts is best for the future of our state.

Voters get to pass judgment on those decisions as all of us in public office stand for election; during elections and campaigns our records are examined and voters have the final say.

Those decisions are only as good as the foundation we use to make them. Fear is an extraordinarily poor foundation on which to make critical decisions.

It was ironic that on a bill about protecting our country, one of the foundations on which our country was based – that free expression of ideas among the people leads to the best decisions for us all – was harmed.

If we are going to respect this country, then there has to be room for us to disagree on political issues in an agreeable fashion.

I would never challenge the heart or mind of anyone who disagrees with me.

Issues are far too important to be trivialized, and everyone deserves respect for the positions they hold.

That did not happen on the immigration reform measure, and while the bill is a good measure, the process was tainted.

The people of Oklahoma deserve better than that.

– The author, D-Durant, represents Senate District 6

For more immigration reform coverage, go to www.okobserver.net

By Jay Paul Gumm

The Senate gave final approval to a bill to strengthen Oklahoma's laws relating to illegal immigration.

It is an important bill I am proud to have supported.

The measure was, however, borne out of frustration with the abject failure of the federal Congress and president to deal with this critical issue.

That frustration, while understandable, has led to threats and intimidation directed toward legislators about their votes on the bill.

The frustration, threats and intimidation on this issue injected what I called a poison into the body politic that makes it harder for elected leaders to come to the right decision.

Politics is a rough-and-tumble business that is not for the squeamish.

Despite that, some of the debate on the floor on this bill – and some of the grassroots efforts in support of the measure – crossed a line that should never be crossed.

One senator on the floor during debate said that "fear" should motivate members to vote in favor of the bill.

That senator indirectly suggested that those who, in good faith, did not believe the bill is in the best interest of Oklahoma should fear losing re-

COMMISSIONER

From Page 6

charges made by Drew Edmondson."

Does the "good ol' boy" system include the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation which did the ground work for the indictments? Does it also include the Oklahoma County District Attorney David Prater who, on April 11, 2007, made the legal determination that there is no current law that can remove Rinehart from office under only allegations of wrongdoing? Conviction must first be found in court, concluded DA Prater.

RINEHART THINKS HE COULD BE ELECTED GOVERNOR

It's so easy to tease Rinehart as he leaves himself so wide open, and his delusions are indeed grand. In an interview with KFOR he said [and I paraphrase] "the good ol' boys want to get me, want to get me, right now, want to get me, take me down, because they know one day I'll be governor."

These words are nearly verbatim, repetitions included. His mantra of referring to the "good ol' boys" so often makes me think no one played with him as a child.

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He still feels like an outsider. He prides himself on his role as a maverick yet he has nothing constructive to show for it. He never learned to socialize and he's carrying this grudge even now as he digs his hole of seclusion ever deeper.

Who would have thought he wanted to be governor? Would such a mark of victory expunge the feelings of exclusion from his psyche? Does he need something bigger than a county commissioner's office to assuage his private demons?

Personally, I can hardly wait for Rinehart's day[s] in judicial court as well as the court of public opinion. Even should he be found not guilty, I doubt if the voters of District 2 will want to continue Rinehart's employment for another term as commissioner.

Challengers from all political viewpoints now have a good lead time in establishing themselves with the voters of District 2.

Who wants stale toast to represent them at the county office?

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

From The Backroom ...

On Taxes, Roads And Drug Problems

By Mack Miller

The Oklahoma Legislature doesn't understand economics. They have been cutting taxes for the last two sessions and now don't understand why there is a revenue shortfall.

The first tax cut, which was passed two legislative sessions ago, didn't take effect until this year. Last year's Legislature passed a second tax cut and the House this year is trying to pass yet another tax cut.

One state representative is even trying to do away with income taxes all together.

We have a lot of our local schools hurting due to the cut in expected revenue. Plus the Legislature passed a teacher pay increase which they failed to fund even though they had excess revenue last year.

Rep. Rob Johnson lives in a different world than you and I. Last spring when the House was arguing over the budget and wanting to cut taxes, I e-mailed him.

My e-mail said while they have some extra money they need to shore up our public schools, which are the backbone of our rural communities, and fix our roads.

WORST ROADS IN THE STATE

Our roads in Northwest Oklahoma are the worst in the state! I have traveled to the Panhandle, to Southwest Oklahoma and to Northeast Oklahoma and by far, the worst roads are in our part of the state.

If Rep. Johnson would travel his district, he would find that out! Come on legislators! Use the money to shore up our schools and our roads and quit worrying about buying votes in two years!

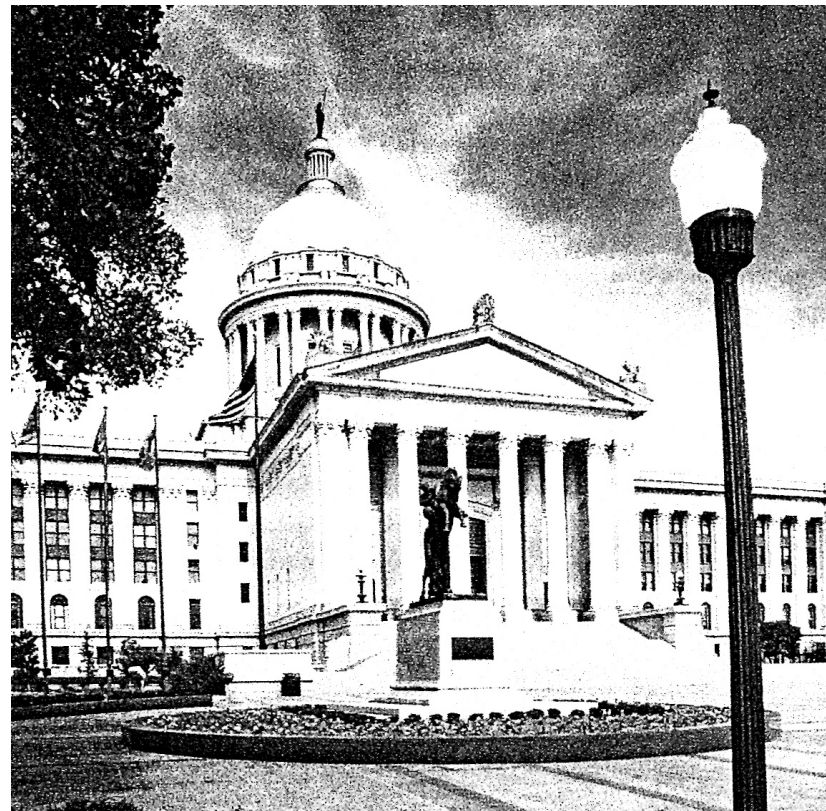
Many of us "older" ones have talked about how our generation didn't have the drug problems that seem so rampant today. The following will help explain that and would help today's youth ...

The other day, someone at a store in our town read that a methamphetamine lab had been found in an old farmhouse in the adjoining county and he asked me a rhetorical question: "Why didn't we have a drug problem when you and I were growing up?"

DRUG 'PROBLEMS' IN MY DAY

I replied I had a drug problem when I was young.

I was drug to church on Sunday morning.



I was drug to church for weddings and funerals.

I was drug to family reunions and community socials no matter the weather.

I was drug by my ears when I was disrespectful to adults.

I was also drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents, told a lie, brought home a bad report card, did not speak with respect, spoke ill of the teacher or the preacher, or if I didn't put forth my best effort in everything that was asked of me.

I was drug to the kitchen sink to have my mouth washed out with soap if I uttered a profanity.

I was drug out to pull weeds in mom's garden and flower beds and cockleburs out of dad's fields.

I was drug to the homes of family, friends, and neighbors to help some poor soul who had no one to mow the yard, repair the clothesline, or chop some firewood; and, if my mother had ever known that I took a single dime as a tip for this kindness, she would have drug me back to the woodshed.

Those drugs are still in my veins and they affect my behavior in everything I do, say, and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack, or heroin; and, if today's children had this kind of drug problem, America would be a better place.

God bless our parents who drugged us.

- The author lives in Chester

A 'Conversation' With A Republican

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Well, it wasn't really a conversation, but better described as a series of short exclamations back and forth. Conversations with some Republicans about politics tend to be like that.

A true conversation suggests give and take, proper consideration for the expressions of one another, and measures of thought and civility.

Perhaps the foregoing better defines a discussion than a conversation. But real Republicans don't normally have political discussions, either.

Verbal political interactions with real Republicans tend to be a series of exclamations, a shouting match, or a one-sided monologue with "guess who" doing all the talking.

THE TV AGE AND CONVERSATION

How often have we noted on television that so-called balanced panel discussions tend to be dominated by self-assured Republican advocates who have all the answers and keep repeating those [prescribed talking points]?

While this is not always the case, and Democrats are learning the tactic, some Republican advocates have tended to interrupt to disagree, shouting if necessary. Even though the moderator may intervene, the orderly thought chain of the opponent has been successfully disrupted.

But then we stray.

The Militant Moderate was in a public place of activity in which there was a television set tuned to CNN's afternoon program. The reporter was giving the news of Speaker Pelosi's trip to Syria, the White House criticism, and the Democrat response pointing to the three Republicans who were just there.

EARTH TO REPUBLICANS

The conversation went like this:

Republican: "They ought to shoot her!"

Militant Moderate: "Maybe they should do something with Bush instead."

Republican: "Nothing wrong with him."

Militant Moderate: "He is the cause of our problems, not her."

Republican: "He is the only honest one up there."

A Second Republican: "At least we don't have Hillary in charge."

Militant Moderate: "We could do a lot worse. We have worse right now."

Silence.

This was an elderly Republican. He spoke loudly. So the Militant Moderate spoke loudly to be sure that he could hear. Perhaps this man thought the Militant Moderate, a bit elderly as well, was also hard of hearing.

One would surmise that this elderly Republican might ordinarily behave in a

gentlemanly manner. But his political outburst was not.

HE WAS NO GENTLEMAN

A gentleman does not call loudly for the shooting of our nice lady Speaker of the House. Being a gentleman, the Militant Moderate did not call loudly for the shooting of the president. Nor did he call loudly for his impeachment. But he admits having the urge to do the latter.

Other than being difficult to converse with, real Republicans are also difficult to reason with about politics. Their minds are made up. They were not made up today, yesterday, or last year. Their minds were made up a long time ago. And, real Republicans practically never change their minds.

Facts don't matter. Experience doesn't matter. Seeing events occur before their eyes doesn't matter. The current president still runs as much as 30% or more approval rating. Those are the diehard Republicans who believe nothing bad about another Republican, even if they see it happen.

A bunch of these live in Oklahoma.

- The author, aka The Militant Moderate, lives in Enid

Historian Defines The Republicans

As for the Republicans - how can one regard seriously a frightened, greedy, nostalgic huddle of tradesmen and lucky idlers who shut their eyes to history and science, steel their emotions against decent human sympathy, cling to sordid and provincial ideals exalting sheer acquisitiveness and condoning artificial hardship for the non-materially-shrewd, dwell smugly and sentimentally in a distorted dream-cosmos of outmoded phrases and principles and attitudes based on the bygone agricultural handicraft world.

They revel in [consciously or unconsciously] mendacious assumptions such as the notion that real liberty is synonymous with the single detail of unrestricted economic license, or that a rational planning of resource-distribution would contravene some vague and mystical "American heritage" ... utterly contrary to fact and without the slightest foundation in human experience?

Intellectually, the Republican idea deserves the tolerance and respect one gives to the dead.

- Historian H. P. Lovecraft

PUBLIC FORUM

Vietnam And Iraq Are Both Tragedies

By Frank Silovsky

This was my response to an invitation to the 40th anniversary of my OCS graduation. As you can imagine, it shocked the hell out of my former classmates, some of whom became 30-year men and retired as colonels.

Sorry about your broken ribs. We heal slowly in our dotage. My battle has been with peripheral neuropathy which limits my physical activity. In any case, I would not attend any reunion at Fort Sill, though I do have fond memories for most of you guys and our struggles and joys during OCS.

During 1968, I was right on the edge of resigning my commission and risking court martial as a protest over the war we made on the Vietnamese people.

After studying the causes, I concluded that the war was both a travesty and a great tragedy. What held me back from the court martial idea was leaving my young wife and our new baby to fend for themselves.

WHY HE STUCK IT OUT

So I stuck it out, but without any pride or feelings of patriotism. My pregnant wife was able to join in the protests, but the Hatch Act limited me. After my release, I joined the anti-war movement with great commitment and enthusiasm.

The Vietnam War was founded on lies about the Gulf of Tonkin. More than 57,000 of our generation, including good guys like York Osborne and Reggie Stancil from 26-66, bit the dust for absolutely no good reason.

More than two million Vietnamese also died. With Agent Orange we poisoned their people, their country and our own troops. Many still suffer the effects.

In addition, we left land mines that are still killing people. That war had nothing to do with defending our nation or our national security. It was one big waste of good human beings for no good reasons.

Bush is doing the same type of thing in Iraq. That country was never a threat to us and Bush knew it. Our arms inspectors found nothing ahead of the war and that's exactly what we found, nothing.

HORRENDOUS CIVIL WAR

Now we've started a horrendous civil war that will not end in our lifetime.

Our grandchildren and their grandchildren will be paying for it.

In the meantime, Bush has ruined our army, killed over 3,000 of the best kind of our people, maimed another 22,000, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed, maimed or fled their country in terror.

For what? No good reason, and it's long from over. World War III may be next if Bush attacks Iran and Israel gets involved.

Coburn Sells Out To Contractors

By Tom Elmore

Some are bending over backwards to congratulate U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn for his "leadership" in opposing the "railroad to nowhere."

Remember this: "Doctor-Senator Coburn," in the thrall of the downtown OKC developers and the Association of General Contractors, "chooses not to" oppose earmarks already approved for the "New Crosstown" in Oklahoma City.

That project involves moving perfectly good rail lines now occupying – not a flood plain like those in Mississippi – but one of the highest quality, grade-separated, urban rail corridors in the nation.

Why? So we can drop a hyper-expensive, absolutely unnecessary, four-mile, 10-lane expressway into a ditch that may well flood in storms now that the North Canadian River through OKC has been turned into a series of dammed-up lakes.

This has raised the water table – such that the Walker underpass one block west of OKC Union Station recently flooded. It was said to be "storm water" – only there had been no storms.

BASEMENTS FLOODED REGULARLY

When I went down to survey the situation, one of the city boys overseeing the roadblocks they'd erected on Walker said, "Well, you know that before the Oklahoma Department of Transportation [ODOT] tore down all the commercial buildings in this rail corridor, the basements in them would flood regularly in times of big rains."

The demolition contractor bidding for the task of excavating OKC Union Station's rail yard told me that core samples had also shown much of the "New Crosstown corridor" to lie along areas land-filled when the historic path of the river was altered some years ago.

He indicated that ODOT can never put the highway in as deep a ditch as originally planned – because the earth at the level originally chosen simply won't support the new road.

NO PLACE FOR A HIGHWAY

So, despite all its claims of "intricate planning," ODOT is carefully concealing the reality that this path is simply no place for such a highway.

That cuts no ice with "Doctor-Senator Coburn." He's been bought and paid for in this matter by the big contractors and power brokers.

By the way, ODOT has already spent over \$15 million upgrading a circuitous alternative route for one of the historic Union Station rail corridors. They're spending over \$8 million to build a "temporary railroad bridge" on the north-south Santa Fe line so they can dig a 10-lane gap through the long-standing earthworks on which this elevated rail line has run since the 1930s. Life expectancy of this



World War III is unacceptable. We are not a nation of sheep. Protesting this war is patriotic, and the way we support our troops is to bring them home and out of harms way now.

BOTH BUSH, CHENEY DUCKED

What especially irks me is that all the masterminds of this war hid out during "our war" in "safe units" [see George W. Bush and his "Champagne" National Guard unit], or had multiple deferments because they had "other priorities," like Dick Cheney.

Were York and Reggie being killed in place of 'W' and Cheney? Think about that, and consider your feelings if your child or grandchild would be killed during George Bush's "surge" or anytime else in this mindless war.

My fond hope is that none of you have already experienced that and, if that is the case, you have my very deepest sympathy and I will cry if you tell me.

This letter is not meant to offend anyone; it's simply where I "am." Please share this with your wives, family and friends. Conversation about these issues is important even if there is disagreement.

Blessings, peace and love to all,

– Frank Silovsky, 26-66, winner of the class "Shooter's Award" for best ability to adjust artillery fire; winner of the "American Spirit Honor Medal For High Example To My Comrades In Arms;" ranking first in my Basic Training battalion at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, March, 1966; and winner of the "Outstanding Trainee Award" in Company of that battalion at the same time.

Rated in the 98th percentile for all my ERs as a gunnery instructor and, as 1st Lt., was made OIC of my teaching group by my CO during my last year, wherein I had captains in my charge. These distinctions are not mentioned to brag, but to point out that I performed exceptionally well as a soldier.

My orders out of CCS designated me for Vietnam, NLT Oct. 1, 1967, which would have placed me there during the "Tet Offensive" that killed Osborne and Stancil. My new orders were never cut so I remained at Sill for the duration of my service and I survived intact.

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

"temporary bridge?" Two to three years. But then, that's about as long as most ODOT structures seem to last.

The "New Crosstown" project is a hyper-expensive boondoggle of epic proportions. But the truth is being hidden from the taxpayers – with the help of "Doctor-Senator Coburn."

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

Tulsa Conference To Hear Kennedy

A coalition of diverse local and national political, social, and faith-based organizations and individuals will gather in Tulsa in May to create a vision for political and social action in the United States.

Sacred Activism and The Power of Inclusion convenes May 10-12 at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center. Presented by Wisdom University, the conference seeks to focus on the demands of the future and the possibilities for our country at a time when multiple crises undermine security and the world looks to the U.S. for leadership.

A host of distinguished national and local leaders in the spiritual and political fields will address the critical moral challenges facing the United States

They include Robert Kennedy, Jr., Caroline Myss, Lauren Actress, Andrew Harvey, Bishop Carlton Pearson, Rev. Michael Beckwith, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Yvette Flunder, Warith Deen Mohammed, William Sinkford, and Benjamin Zander.

Other Oklahoma leaders include Rabbi Charles Sherman, Laura Belmonte, Marlin Lavanhar, Robin Meyers, Sheryl Siddiqui, and Sebastian Llantos.

Exploring the deepening unease many feel about the direction in which our nation is headed, the conference will focus attention on the values and actions that can restore a sense of community and higher purpose.

The goal of the gathering is to identify shared moral and political positions from community activists in Tulsa and around the country, to craft a positive vision for the country and the world, and to identify action plans that will establish those shared values in our world today.

Social research has identified a growing plurality of 50 million people in this country whose values are not adequately reflected in platforms or policy.

Cost for the full three-day conference is \$225, with reduced fees for full time students and seniors over 62. Reduced-price tickets are available for those wishing to attend portions of the conference. Call 918.378.6404.

America Needs To Invest In Children

By Pat Piety

In America, most professions require some education, training and testing, but a glaring exception is parenting. To be entrusted with the most important job in the world, all one needs to do is have children.

Of course everybody's an expert on parenting – in the beginning. Some are committed to doing everything exactly the way their parents did. Others are convinced that only by the grace of God have they survived to become reasonably sane and well-balanced adults, and they're determined not to make the same mistakes their parents made.

In either case, time and experience tend to have a humbling effect.

As a new parent, I believed children were blank slates; if I just wrote the right stuff on them, my children would turn out to be models of perfection.

In time I began to notice some glitches in my theory. To do everything right, I realized, I would have to be perfect myself, and since my parents obviously had made some mistakes with me, I was having trouble meeting the qualifications for Perfect Parent.

AN UNSETTLING PHENOMENA

Then I started noticing some unsettling phenomena that seemed to contradict my theory of nurture over nature: My youngest daughter's dry sense of humor was eerily like my brother's, even though the two weren't especially close.

My middle daughter's manual dexterity and confidence in attacking any project were just like my mother's. And my eldest daughter's tendency to live a fantasy life in books reminded me of my own childhood self.

The more I observed my children, the more I seemed to detect invisible genetic strings connecting them to other members of the family, including great aunts and second cousins.

My nagging suspicions received support from recent research findings that 80% to 85% of a child's personality is genetically determined.

ON DEFINING PERSONALITY

But personality is only raw material. Although it influences reactions to stimuli, many of the stimuli in a child's life are controlled by others, including teach-



ers, peers, the Internet and other media.

By monitoring children's activities, parents can limit their exposure to some negative influences, but there's no way to shield them completely.

So it literally does take a village to raise a child – and the village reaps the consequences. While I don't advocate government control of parenting, it seems to me that offering parents free courses in nutrition, child development, child safety, money management and anger management would be beneficial to all concerned.

This could be a nationwide voluntary effort in which obstetricians, pediatricians, hospitals and schools would encourage prospective parents to attend parenting courses, insurance companies could give them discounts and the IRS would offer a tax credit to those who had completed the training.

The investment in society might well payoff – not only in healthier children, but also in reduced crime rates and lower costs for criminal justice and social programs.

Parental rights are sacred, but so are our children, and their future is too important to be left to amateurs.

– The author is a Stillwater resident whose column appears in the Stillwater News-Press

Electoral College Fix: The Loaded Gun

By Danny Adkison

You thought New Hampshire and Iowa were first when it came to presidential elections. Not any more. Maryland is now first. It became the first state to adopt a proposal that would put a resounding halt to the Loaded Gun.

The what? Critics of the Electoral College often use the metaphor of Russian roulette to refer to the instance of the popular vote winner of the presidential election actually losing due to the electoral college.

The idea is that every four years the nation collectively points a gun at its head and pulls the trigger. Supposedly [more about this in a moment] the gun has gone off four times. The most recent instance being the presidential election of 2000.

One would have thought that if this were a reaction to the election of 2000 it would have surfaced prior to the 2004 presidential election. Unless the so-called reform is not so much a reaction to what happened in 2000 as it is to what has happened since 2004, namely the presidency of George W. Bush.

IT'S THE BUSH DISASTER

The latter seems more likely. In 2004 America didn't seek to correct the error that occurred in 2000. Just the opposite. It endorsed it and re-elected Bush.

Then, it became quite apparent to most Americans that Iraq has become a major disaster. How did this happen? Who knows. But one thing is certain, the buck stops not with Congress or Colin Powell, or John McCain. It stops at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Realizing this, America has finally decided that what happened in 2000 is when this mess started and if the electoral college truly reflected the votes of ordinary Americans George W. Bush would never have been president.

Maryland is leading the way to reform. It has passed a law stating that its 10 electors will not go to the presidential candidate winning the state of Maryland. No, its 10 electors will go to the presidential candidate winning the most votes nationwide [why it is called the National Popular Vote Plan].

Sort of. Actually, they won't. Probably ever.

THIRTY-EIGHT STATES OR 270 ELECTORAL VOTES

The reason is Maryland's law does not become operational until "enough" states pass exactly the same provision. Enough means the number of states it takes to equal the electoral vote needed to elect the president [presently, 270].

What is all this? This is an attempt to modify the Electoral College [so that it always reflects the nationwide popular vote] without having to amend the Constitution. The Constitution does not say how electors will be chosen [that is left to states to decide].

All but two states allow all of a state's electoral votes to be decided by those supporting the presidential candidate getting a plurality of the statewide popular vote.

This, not anything specified by the Framers, is what is mostly responsible for the Loaded Gun phenomenon.

The Loaded Gun has only gone off once. That was the presidential election of 1888. Yet it was the House of Representatives, a special commission, and the Supreme Court that decided the outcome of those other elections respectively [not the Electoral College].

BIGGEST 12 STATES ARE MOST COMPETITIVE

Here's what is most interesting about this proposal. It could go into effect if passed by the 12 most populous states. Those states [with California at the top of the list] would give a candidate the necessary 270 electoral votes.

The problem is, those states tend to be the most competitive states. They are, in other words, the least predictable. The fact that they are competitive [along with their size] is why the candidates pay so much attention to them. These states like this situation and would not want to change it.

That is why just a few months ago California refused to enact this provision.

The states that would find this more appealing are the other 38 states. But if the other 38 states approve it, they might as well do the right thing and pass an amendment [it takes 38 states to ratify a proposed amendment] rather than rely on this convoluted proposal.

In either case, it is more probable that you will be hit by a meteor than that either of these proposals will become the law.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

Go Git Cha Momma

A redneck family from the hills was visiting the city and found they were in a mall for the first time in their lives. The father and son were strolling around while the wife shopped.

They were amazed by almost everything they saw, but especially by two shiny, silver walls that could move apart and then slide back together again. The boy asked, "Paw, what's that?"

The father [never having seen an elevator] responded, "Son, I dunno. I ain't never seen anything like that in my whole life. I ain't no idear what it is."

While the boy and his father were watching with amazement, an overweight old lady in a wheelchair rolled up to the moving walls and pressed a button. The walls opened and the lady rolled between them into a small room. The walls closed and the boy and his father watched the small circular number above the walls light up sequentially.

They continued to watch until it reached the last number and then the numbers began to light in the reverse order. Then the walls opened up again and a gorgeous, voluptuous 24-year-old blonde woman stepped out.

The father, not taking his eyes off the young woman, said quietly to his son, "Boy ... go git cha Momma!"

BOOKS

In Celebration Of National Poetry Month

By Mike Nobles

April is the 11th anniversary of National Poetry Month. It's time to celebrate what W. Somerset Maugham called the Crown of Literature.

The following eclectic selections are offered as a "sampler" of what I consider some of the best practitioners of the art working today. Perhaps one will illuminate your life.

THE OTHER SIDE OF SORROW

Poets Speak Out About Conflict, War, and Peace

Edited by Patricia Frisella and Cicely Buckley

Oyster River Press

220 pages, \$16

This timely anthology is about war viewed through the eyes of 127 poets. The poems cover wars from the Peloponnesian War to 9/11 and the current events in Iraq. It is not, as I originally thought, a polemic against war but rather "... a view of the world in conflict through the eyes of poets."

Contributors include Pulitzer Prize winner Maxine Kumin; numerous state poet laureates; war veterans including World War II, Vietnam and Iraq; a 16-year-old girl killed by a suicide bomber; Palestinians; and a host of other writers including a newly translated poem by Chaucer.

This is a thoughtful, bittersweet effort by writers of all stripes trying to make sense out of actions that often defy logic or sense. A fine example of the quality available through small presses.

ASYLUM IN THE GRASSLANDS

By Diane Glancy

The University of Arizona Press

97 pages, \$15.95

All Oklahoma readers will be especially interested in this book.

Glancy, of Cherokee heritage, was awarded the Cherokee Medal of Honor from the Cherokee Honor Society in Tahlequah; the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry from the Nimrod Journal, University of Tulsa, in 2001; and a list of grants, prizes, and fellowships that fill two pages.

She is the author of some 30 volumes of poetry, short stories, plays, and essays.

In this outstanding effort she explores the history of loss that has haunted the Cherokees for centuries. In an open, perceptive, honest manner Glancy uses the present to understand and explain the past and the loss of cultural heritage, family, and traditions of the Cherokee people.

These poems are Glancy's effort to find an asylum, a place of rest, for her and her people. I suspect this book will become a classic of Native American poetry.

A TRICK OF SUNLIGHT POEMS

By Dick Davis

Swallow Press

64 pages, \$14.95

It seems every year I include an offering from Swallow Press/Ohio University Press. The reason is simple: They somehow always manage to publish some wonderful, must read poets.

This volume is a perfect example of their ability to find and publish the best of the genre.

Davis has an uncanny knack of making amazingly accurate observations of seemingly everyday events with themes such as travel, the experience of being a stranger, the vagaries of love, and new for this volume, the idea of happiness, and doing so with immediacy, a cutting vision, wit, intelligence, and grace.

His poem "Chagrin," dealing with middle age, is so perceptive and yet gently humorous that I marvel at the author's marvelous talent. Highly recommended.

LEOPOLD'S MANEUVERS

By Cortney Davis

University of Nebraska Press

80 pages, \$14.95

Recommending this volume was very difficult. I received four excellent volumes of poetry from UN Press, including one by Ted Kooser.

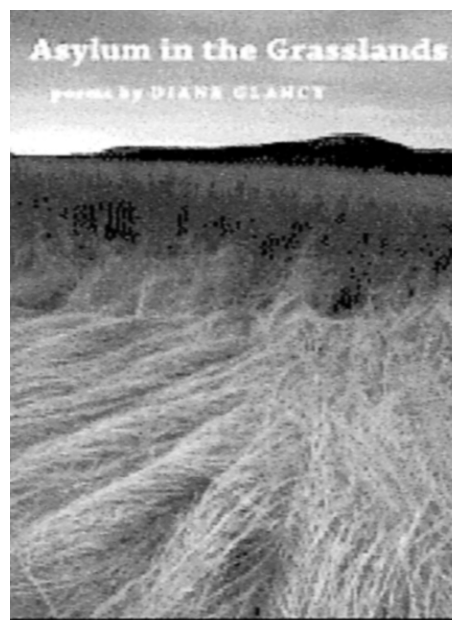
Being a big fan of Kooser, I originally intended to include his but after reading this volume I decided it was so good that readers needed to know of its existence.

Davis writes from the nurse practitioner viewpoint of the experiences she has encountered while dealing with death, healing, futility, hope, and a myriad of other frailties and passions in the human existence.

This is not the typical touchy-feely verse you might expect but rather a direct, non-flinching description of suffering and horrors we all, deep down, fear.

The poem describing a nurse realizing she is as vulnerable as her patients will remain with you long after you finish the book.

And yet, there is often hope of healing and recovery that is as much a part of



"The poem ... is a little myth of man's capacity of making life meaningful. And in the end, the poem is not a thing we see – it is, rather, a light by which we may see – and what we see is life."

– Robert Penn Warren

the medical experience as is pain and futility.

This book won the Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry, and for good reason.

A PRIMER ON PARALLEL LIVES

By Dan Gerber

Copper Canyon Press

96 pages, \$15.00

Copper Canyon Press has finally released a new volume of poetry by Dan Gerber and not a minute too soon. Gerber is considered a "writer's writer" and thought to be one of the most readable poets practicing today.

This, his seventh book of poetry, focuses on his childhood fears, the geography of the California central coast, and his special relationship with nature.

These are not new topics for poets.

What is special about this work is Gerber's ability to view everyday images and impressions and, using his acute powers of observation, turn ordinary experiences into passion, intimacy, and a vision that will surprise, even startle, the reader.

A must have for poetry aficionados.

PLEASURE

By Gary Young

Heyday Books

96 pages, \$12.95

The title says it all. This book of prose poems is simply a pleasure to read.

Award winner Gary Young has a wonderful talent for writing poems about everyday life that will cause the reader to nod and smile and perhaps remember fondly events in their daily lives that are, after all, to be treasured.

A touching example of his daily miracles is found in the poem titled *Who Would Volunteer to Live*:

"Who would volunteer to live any moment more than once? I might. This morning I smelled freesias in the garden and closed my eyes. Suddenly I was young again, and you were still alive."

This book is for readers that claim they don't like poetry.

EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD

By Stephen Dunn

W.W. Norton & Co.

112 pages, \$23.95

No sampler would be complete without some Stephen Dunn poetry.

In this, his 14th collection, this Pulitzer Prize winning poet again displays his signature elegant and graceful lines to introduce themes of isolation and emptiness on love, the ravages of time, and as I grow older, my old friend the stubbornness of memory.

With a deft use of satire, insight, and reflective musing the reader is treated to an eclectic range of topics from love, sports, politics, and friendship.

Dunn sees life as a curious work in progress and his views will entertain and inform readers of all ages. Really wonderful poetry.

MEANWHILE TAKE MY HAND

By Kirmen Uribe

Translated from the Basque by Elizabeth Macklin

Graywolf Press

200 pages, \$14.00

This is a wonderful, award-winning translation of poetry written in the oldest European language, Euskara or Basque, yet largely unknown to the reading public. These Basque poems are written in both the original and in the English translation and are a telling insight into a culture not readily understood by most peoples.

If the reader is looking for a refreshing, heartfelt volume of lyrics that are at times both sad and humorous, always timeless and contemporary, this is the one. Uribe has invited us into a world of paradoxes that will bring a smile to your face and a tug at your heart.

It's funny how poetry tends to sometimes speak to us in an ancient language of contemporary matters. Graywolf Press is known for their quality offerings and this is no exception.

– The author, co-founder of A Gathering of Writers, lives in Tulsa

More Bush Corruption

Medicare Providers Owe Billion In Taxes

By Kathleen Day

The federal government has failed to collect more than \$1 billion in back taxes owed by Medicare doctors and suppliers, nearly half of it payroll taxes deducted by health-care providers who spent the money on luxury cars and other personal expenses rather than sending it to the IRS, a congressional report says.

The money has not been collected because the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees Medicare, has failed to connect its computers to the Internal Revenue Service and other Treasury Department divisions, the Government Accountability Office report says.

Such a connection would allow the agencies to quickly identify who owes taxes and begin deducting that money from checks the federal contractors receive from Medicare.

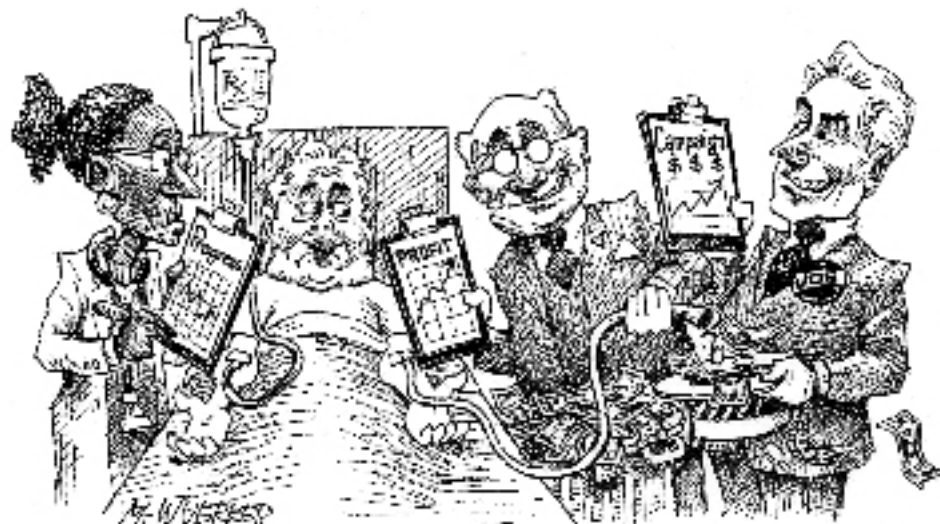
The collection gap persists despite the GAO's recommendation in 2001 that HHS and Treasury coordinate to ensure no federal contractor abuses the federal tax system by failing to pay taxes. Many of those who owe tax continue to work for Medicare, and their tax liability has grown, GAO researchers have told members of Congress.

21,000 DOCTORS ARE DEADBEATS

The report by the GAO, the research arm of Congress, found that 21,000, or about 5%, of the doctors and other health care suppliers providing outpatient services billed to Medicare in the first nine months of 2005 owed more than \$1 billion in taxes going back nearly a decade.

Medicare is the federal health-insurance program for people 65 and older and also for people on disability.

About \$430 million of the money owed came from payroll taxes collected from workers but was never passed on to the Internal Revenue Service, a felony. Instead, the medical providers bought "million-dollar homes and luxury vehicles"



such as Jaguars, private jets and yachts, the report says.

The report was to the permanent subcommittee on investigations of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which is holding hearings on the findings.

The subcommittee has held four hearings since 2004 into why billions of dollars in unpaid taxes by government contractors remains uncollected.

TRYING TO CLOSE BUDGET GAP OF \$350 BILLION

The revelations of unpaid taxes by government contractors come as Congress grapples with how to close the \$350 billion federal tax gap, the difference between taxes owed and taxes collected.

The subcommittee's previous hearings have documented that contractors owing \$7.7 billion in back taxes continued to win contracts from the Department of Defense and many civilian federal agencies, including the General Services Administration.

Officials said the hearings have caused the government to greatly increase automatic garnishing of payments to contractors where 15% is taken out and sent to the IRS. Money collected totaled \$136 million in 2004. In 2006 it had reached \$339 million.

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Librarians Protest EPA Library Closings

A national controversy is brewing over cutbacks and outright closings of Environmental Protection Agency libraries.

Librarians from around the country have protested to EPA officials that the agency is undercutting its own workers, its scientists and the public.

Across vast stretches of the heartland, EPA scientists, university researchers and others have scrambled to locate documents once easily found by librarians in the agency's regional headquarters, said officials of the American Library Association.

Agency officials beholden to the Bush Administration responded that they are merely trying to move the EPA libraries' contents onto the Internet, where people worldwide can use them more readily.

Critics, including current and former EPA workers, say that's not how it's working out. Nearly all the documents not actually written by the EPA will not be put online.

ACADEMIC SCIENTISTS VERY UNHAPPY

"Academic scientists are very unhappy with this," said Michelle McKnelly, a librarian at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Complaints come mostly from librarians who work in a 15-state swath of the country stretching from Ohio and Minnesota to New Mexico and Louisiana. The three EPA regional libraries serving those states were shut down.

"When the Chicago [EPA library] closed we suddenly got an increase in inquiries from EPA employees," Aimee Quinn, who worked until recently at the Uni-

versity of Illinois-Chicago, told EPA officials.

The EPA libraries were well used. Internal EPA documents from Seattle show that more than 20,000 requests for quick reference and another 20,000-plus requests for extended research were filled by EPA librarians in fiscal year 2005, the latest statistics available.

EPA LIBRARIES WERE WIDELY USED

The figure for database and literature searches exceeded 85,000. Of those, the three now-closed EPA libraries in Chicago, Kansas City and Dallas handled more than 32,000 requests, records show.

Even more harmful, critics said, is that librarians who had become experts on those collections were given their walking papers.

Also closed were EPA's headquarters library and an EPA library in Washington, DC, specializing in the effects and properties of various chemicals.

Hours were reduced in Boston, New York and San Francisco, as well as Seattle.

The Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, launched an investigation, and congressional hearings are planned.

An EPA cost-benefit analysis said the libraries provided "substantial value" to the agency, with every dollar spent there saving from \$2 to \$5.70 in costs – not including "unquantifiable benefits such as the higher quality of information typically found with the assistance of a librarian," the Congressional Research Service concluded.

ExxonMobil Strikes With Bribery Offers

The world's second worst corporation [behind Halliburton] has struck again. Scientists and economists were offered \$10,000 each by a lobby group funded by one of the world's largest oil companies to undermine a major climate change report.

Letters sent by the American Enterprise Institute [AEI], an ExxonMobil-funded think tank with close links to the Bush Administration, offered the payments for articles that emphasize the shortcomings of a report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC].

Travel expenses and additional payments were also offered.

The U.N. report was written by international experts and was widely regarded as the most comprehensive review yet of climate change science.

It will underpin international negotiations on new emissions targets to succeed the Kyoto agreement, the first phase of which expires in 2012. World governments were given a draft last year and invited to comment.

The AEI has received more than \$1.6 million from ExxonMobil and more than 20 of its staff have worked as consultants to the Bush Administration. Lee Raymond, a former head of ExxonMobil, is the vice-chairman of AEI's board of trustees.

The letters, sent to scientists in Britain, the U.S. and elsewhere, attack the U.N.'s panel as "resistant to reasonable criticism and dissent and prone to summary conclusions that are poorly supported by the analytical work" and ask for essays that "thoughtfully explore the limitations of climate model outputs."

There is overwhelming scientific evidence on global warming.

Greedheads at ExxonMobil are desperately attempting to distort science for their own political aims.

The IPCC process is probably the most thorough and open review undertaken in any discipline.

The contents of the IPCC report have been an open secret since the Bush Administration posted its draft copy on the Internet in April.

It says there is a 90% chance that human activity is warming the planet, and that global average temperatures will rise.

Subject: Milk Bath

A Republican lady heard that milk baths would make her more beautiful, so she left a note for her milkman to leave 15 gallons of milk.

When the milkman read the note, he felt there must be a mistake. He thought she probably meant 1.5 gallons, so he knocked on the door to clarify the point.

The Republican lady came to the door and the milkman said, "I found your note to leave 15 gallons of milk. Didn't you mean 1.5 gallons?"

The blonde said, "I want 15 gallons of milk. I'm going to fill my bathtub up with milk and take a milk bath."

The milkman asked, "Do you want it pasteurized?"

"No, just up to my boobs."

The Perils Of Bad Math Education

By Donal O'Shea

No person would confess at a dinner party to having never heard of Shakespeare. No one boasts of being unable to write a paragraph. When the subject is mathematics, however, discretion flies out the window.

I have listened to public intellectuals and university faculty members unapologetically announce that they cannot manage elementary arithmetic computations and are happily ignorant of algebra and geometry.

Yet fascination with numbers and geometric objects is as natural to children as language and music. Mathematical investigation is one of the oldest human activities, as old as the trades of carpentry, cookery and metalworking.

Now our culture and our economy depend on mathematical discoveries.

Just one example: The recent solution of the Poincare conjecture, one of the greatest problems of the last century, depends crucially on the manipulation of equations describing how space bends.

OUR CULTURE DEPENDS ON MATH DISCOVERIES

The conjecture lies at the heart of topology, and this field supplies the conceptual tools for envisioning data that drive the algorithms that search engines use to navigate the Internet.

More mathematics has been discovered since 1900 than in all of human history before. That this might strike anyone as surprising reflects mathematics' dubious distinction as the one discipline about which so many educated persons so freely and so proudly admit to knowing nothing.

In the second half of the 20th Century the curricula vitae of most first-rate mathematicians included graduate or postgraduate years in the U.S. This is changing.

The increasing quality of other countries' universities, coupled with the tightening of immigration and visiting regulations since Sept. 11, has made the U.S. less attractive to foreign-born mathematicians.

HOMEGROWN TALENT IS TAPERING OFF

What of our homegrown talent? In the 1985-86 academic year a little under a million students received bachelor degrees in the U.S., of which 16,100 majored in mathematics or statistics.

Two decades later things have changed drastically. By 2004, the most recent year for which data have been tabulated, the bachelor degree total grew 42% to 1.4 million, but the number majoring in mathematics or statistics shrank 17% to 13,300.

One cannot blame the decrease on the rise in computer science: Over the same period the information science majors just kept pace with the bachelor degrees [increasing 41% from 42,300 to 59,500].

Unhappily, the number of degrees in the more theoretical areas of computer science closest to mathematics fell slightly. This is not good.

Cellphones Hurt Student Studies

By Jessica Scaccia

You're a teacher in the New York City public school system, and you're lecturing the class on the structure of an essay. Your students need to know this information to pass your class and the Regents exam. And you, of course, hope that one day your talented students will dazzle and amaze English professors all over the country.

You turn your back to write the definition of "thesis" on the chalkboard.

It takes about 15 seconds. You turn around to the class expecting to see 25 students scribbling the concept in their notebook. Instead, you see a group of students who have sprung appendages of technology.

Jose has grown an earphone. Maria's thumbs have sprouted a two-way. Man Keung, recently arrived from China, is texting away on a cellphone connected to his wrist. And Christina appears to be playing Mine Sweeper on a Pocket PC on her lap.

Come the end of the term, a handful will fail the class. A number will never pass the Regents. As we all know, far too many will drop out of school.

I can tell you with no hint of pride that it isn't the teacher's fault. As much as any other problem plaguing our schools, the onus for failure should be placed on distractions in the classroom, specifically the cellphone.

METAL DETECTORS CATCH 800 CELLPHONES

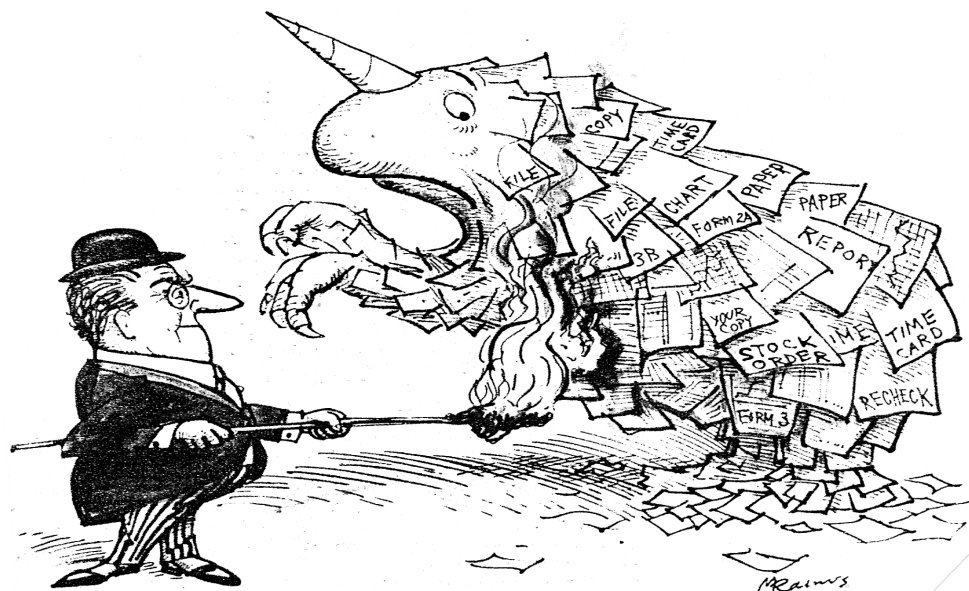
Though electronic devices have been banned in public schools for years, the issue came to the forefront when Chancellor Joel Klein announced the random placement of metal detectors in schools. The result: more than 800 cellphones have been confiscated.

Students and their parents, who say they rely on cellphones for safety reasons, are outraged. There's even talk of a lawsuit arguing that the rule should be struck down.

I can tell you that cellphones don't belong in the classroom. A student with a cellphone is an uninterested student, one with a short attention span who cares more about his social life than education.

Parents think of cellphones as a connection to their children in an emergency. I have a few questions for those parents:

First, when was the last situation that genuinely called for immediate interaction with your child? In most cases, the hospital or the police would seem more



By way of contrast, the number of communications and journalism majors increased 70% [from 41,700 to 71,000] and the number of parks, recreation and leisure studies majors climbed almost fivefold [from 4,600 to 22,100].

Most of us have had the experience of being humiliated or baffled by inept mathematical instruction.

Many otherwise gifted elementary teachers fear mathematics and telegraph that fear to their pupils.

High school mathematics teachers look down on middle school teachers who look down on elementary school teachers. College-level mathematics teachers blame schools for unprepared students. Mathematicians mistrust researchers in mathematical education.

Frustrated administrators substitute high-stakes testing for good teaching, ensuring that ever more classroom time goes to test preparation rather than to enabling students to genuinely understand.

EACH TURN OF A VICIOUS CYCLE

Students, accustomed to non-comprehension, cling to the rote instruction, and each turn of the vicious cycle further exacerbates the climate of fear and misunderstanding attached to mathematics.

Shoring up our nation's primacy in mathematics and statistics will require attention, flexibility and multiple strategies.

On a national level we need to remove barriers that prevent foreign mathematicians and students from entering the country.

We need to enhance mathematical research and rethink mathematics instruction in schools and universities.

We must focus on teaching and learning and eschew ideological warfare over the curriculum.

Individually, each one of us needs to challenge public celebrations of mathematical ignorance. Let's not applaud the loss of human capital.

- The author a professor of mathematics at Mount Holyoke College

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urgent.

Second, is phoning the main office and having it patch you through to your child not quick enough? And third, do you know why your children really want to take cellphones to school?

CELLPHONES ARE STATUS SYMBOLS

Because just like the new Jordans and Rocawear they desire, cellphones are status symbols. Because when their cellphone rings while the teacher is talking, everyone laughs. Because playing video games on their cell makes them look cool.

Because text messaging their friend in the next room is more fun than learning about the topic sentence. So is listening to the new Three 6 Mafia song they just downloaded onto their cell.

And saying students can store their phones in the locker is a joke. If they have cellphones, they're going to bring them into class.

There are legitimate causes that parents should be taking on: Rally against crowding in the classroom. Fight against the oppressive and culturally biased Regents tests. But you're wrong on this cellphone issue. In this case, you are part of the problem, not the solution.

- The author, a film producer, taught at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Brooklyn



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What Will History Say? Bush Worst Ever American President

By Eric Foner

Since 1948, when Harvard professor Arthur Schlesinger Sr. asked 55 historians to rank U.S. presidents on a scale from "great" to "failure," such polls have been a favorite pastime for those who study the American past.

Changes in presidential rankings reflect shifts in how we view history.

When the first poll was taken, the Reconstruction era that followed the Civil War was regarded as a time of corruption and misgovernment caused by granting black men the right to vote.

As a result, President Andrew Johnson, a fervent white supremacist who opposed efforts to extend basic rights to former slaves, was rated "near great."

Today, by contrast, scholars consider Reconstruction a flawed but noble attempt to build an interracial democracy from the ashes of slavery – and Johnson a flat failure.

SOME PRESIDENTS ALWAYS RANK HIGH

More often, however, the rankings display a remarkable year-to-year uniformity. Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and Franklin D. Roosevelt always figure in the "great" category.

Most presidents are ranked "average" or, to put it less charitably, mediocre. Johnson, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Richard M. Nixon occupy the bottom rung, and now President Bush is a leading contender to join them.

A look at history, as well as Bush's policies, explains why.

At a time of national crisis, Pierce and Buchanan, who served in the eight years preceding the Civil War, and Johnson, who followed it, were simply not up to the job.

Stubborn, narrow-minded, unwilling to listen to criticism or to consider alternatives to disastrous mistakes, they surrounded themselves with sycophants and shaped their policies to appeal to retrogressive political forces [in that era, proslavery and racist ideologues].

THEY CLUNG TO FLAWED POLICIES

Even after being repudiated in the midterm elections of 1854, 1858 and 1866, respectively, they ignored major currents of public opinion and clung to flawed policies. Bush's presidency certainly brings theirs to mind.

Harding and Coolidge are best remembered for the corruption of their years in office [1921-23 and 1923-29, respectively] and for channeling money and favors to big business.

They slashed income and corporate taxes and supported employers' campaigns to eliminate unions. Members of their administrations received kickbacks and bribes from lobbyists and businessmen.

An Open Letter To President George W. Bush

Dear George:

Many benchmarks of greatness pepper your administration like zits on a teenager's face. Your minions bring to public service a deep wisdom tempered in the cauldron of ideological delusion.

It's all delusion, George! Our choice is not between the true and the false.

It is simply a question of whose superstition rules. Destiny belongs to the man with the biggest shovel.

Your administration is the first one in over 100 years to realize that America's greatness rests on a foundation of insecurity and anxiety.

Our forefathers prospered in the face of Indians, starvation and economic ruin. The dynamic energy attributed to Americans is simply a manifestation of running scared.

Under your tutelage, the corporatist state is encouraging the spread of the Josef Stalin Theory of Maximal Management. Stalin knew that the best leadership was one grounded in terror. Popularity is a variable that ebbs and flows; terror is a constant.

PRAISING JOB INSECURITY

So it was that my cockles snapped to attention when your Deputy Treasury Secretary Robert Kimmitt sang the praises of job insecurity, which he effectively repositioned as job growth. Kimmitt pointed out that all mobility is upward, even when it is downward.

All one needs is a slight change in one's perspective, as in standing on one's head, for down to become up and up, down.

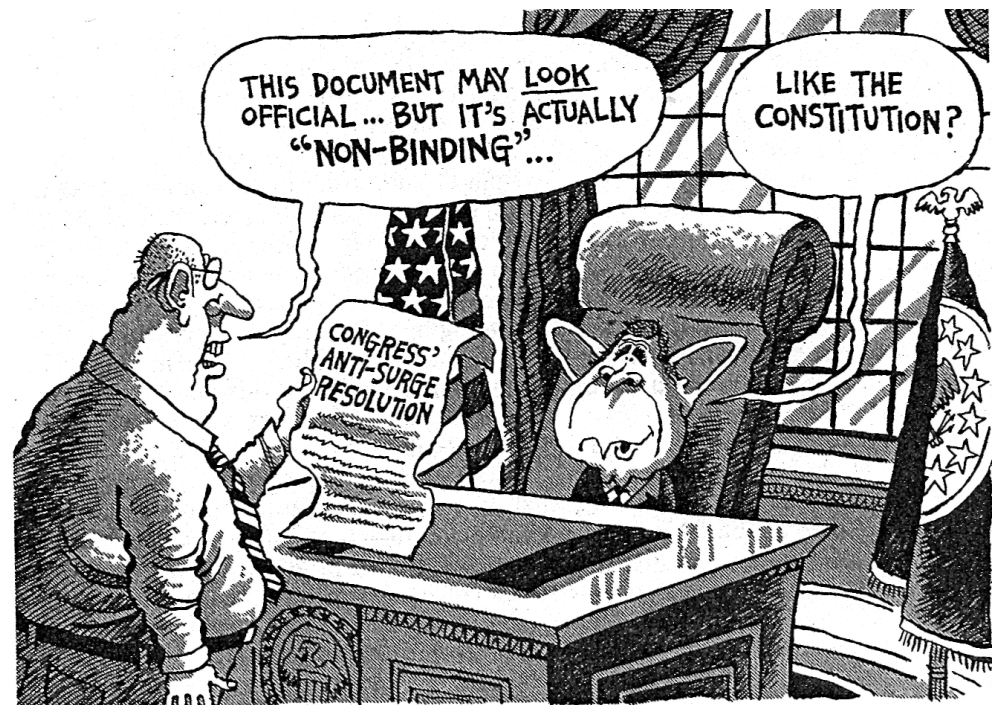
He reminds us, "This is what we want is an economy in which people looking to move up have as many opportunities as possible from which to choose. [Ironic emphasis mine]"

Just look at how energetic we are: job tenure in America averages 6.6 years compared to 8.2 years for the Brits, 10.6 years for the Germans, 11.2 years for the French [too much wine], and a shocking 12.2 years for the Japanese.

With turnover like that, we never have to worry about America's workers acquiring any complex skills. The greater a man's level of competence, the harder it is to treat him like an interchangeable part of a machine.

VERY LITTLE JOB TENURE

The average worker in America will hold 10 different jobs between the ages of 18 and 38. Ain't gonna be no moss on that rolling stone!



Bush has taken this disdain for law even further. He has sought to strip people accused of crimes of rights that date as far back as the Magna Carta in Anglo-American jurisprudence: trial by impartial jury, access to lawyers and knowledge of evidence against them.

BUSH CLAIMS HE IS ABOVE THE LAW

In dozens of statements when signing legislation, he has asserted the right to ignore the parts of laws with which he disagrees. His administration has adopted policies regarding the treatment of prisoners of war that have disgraced the nation and alienated virtually the entire world. Usually, during wartime, the Supreme Court has refrained from passing judgment on presidential actions related to national defense.

The court's unprecedented rebukes of Bush's policies on detainees indicate how far the administration has strayed from the rule of law.

One other president bears comparison to Bush: James K. Polk. Some historians admire him, in part because he made their job easier by keeping a detailed diary during his administration, which spanned the years of the Mexican-American War.

But Polk should be remembered primarily for launching that unprovoked attack on Mexico and seizing one-third of its territory for the United States.

Historians are loath to predict the future. It is impossible to say with certainty how Bush will be ranked in, say, 2050. But somehow, in his first six years in office he has managed to combine the lapses of leadership, misguided policies and abuse of power of his failed predecessors.

I think there is no alternative but to rank him as the worst president in U.S. history.

– The author is DeWitt Clinton professor of history at Columbia University.

This is the instability that fuels our prosperity because nobody stays in one place long enough to qualify for either benefits or pensions. Is it any wonder profits are up?

The weenie-whiners complain that job insecurity creates all sorts of health problems and can lead to a person's immature death. George, George, George, would someone explain to these fools that premature death will be the salvation of our beleaguered Social Security.

Longevity drains the economy. If we could just get our life expectancy to dip below 62 years, the economy would take off like a skyrocket. Money doesn't create an elite; a frightened underclass does.

With men like Bobby Kimmitt on your team, America is moving towards her destiny as a bastion of Feudal Freedom for the few and a life of service for the many.

Your admirer, Belacqua Jones

U.S. 'Satisfied' With Religion's Public Role

For the third consecutive year, the number of Americans calling for less religious influence in public life exceeded the number of Americans who want more, according to a new Gallup Poll.

Most Americans, however, remain "generally satisfied" with organized religion's role in the U.S., the survey found.

Nearly 40% of Americans say religion's level of influence in the nation should not change, 32% would like it to have less influence and 27% would like it to have more, according to the survey.

Opinions also tended to shift depending on political affiliation. Some 41% of Democrats believed religion should have less impact, while 43% of Republicans felt it should have more.

During President Bush's first term, 2001 to 2004, more Americans believed the role of religion should increase than wanted its influence to fade. But by 2003, the numbers began to shift, and by 2005 a greater number of Americans believed religion should have less influence on public life.

The Gallup Poll of 1,018 adults has a margin of error of plus or minus of three percentage points.

Bushies Tried To Fix Tobacco Case

By Carol D. Leonnig

The leader of the Justice Department team that prosecuted a landmark lawsuit against tobacco companies says that Bush administration political appointees repeatedly ordered her to take steps that weakened the government's racketeering case.

Sharon Y. Eubanks said Bush loyalists in Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales's office began micromanaging the team's strategy in the final weeks of the 2005 trial, to the detriment of the government's claim that the industry had conspired to lie to U.S. smokers.

She said a supervisor demanded that she and her trial team drop recommendations that tobacco executives be removed from their corporate positions as a possible penalty.

He and two others instructed her to tell key witnesses to change their testimony. They ordered Eubanks to read verbatim a closing argument they had rewritten for her, she said.

"The political people were pushing the buttons and ordering us to say what we said," Eubanks said. "And because of that, we failed to zealously represent the interests of the American public."

THREE POLITICAL APPOINTEES DID IT

Eubanks, who served for 22 years as a lawyer at Justice, said three political appointees were responsible for the last-minute shifts in the government's tobacco case in June 2005: then-Associate Attorney General Robert D. McCallum, then-Assistant Attorney General Peter Keisler and Keisler's deputy at the time, Dan Meron.

News reports on the strategy changes at the time caused an uproar in Congress and sparked an inquiry by the Justice Department. Government witnesses said they had been asked to change testimony, and one expert withdrew from the case.

Government lawyers also announced that they were scaling back a proposed penalty against the industry from \$130 billion to \$10 billion.

Eubanks, who retired from Justice in December 2005, said she is coming forward now because she is concerned about what she called the "overwhelming politicization" of the department demonstrated by the controversy over the firing of eight U.S. attorneys.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE CONSTANT

"Political interference is happening at Justice across the department," she said. "When decisions are made now in the Bush attorney general's office, politics is the primary consideration ... The rule of law goes out the window."

U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler ruled last August that tobacco companies violated civil racketeering laws by conspiring for decades to deceive the public about the dangers of their product.

She ordered the companies to make major changes in the way cigarettes are marketed. But she said she could not order the monetary penalty proposed by the government.

The Clinton Justice Department brought the unprecedented civil suit against the country's five largest tobacco companies in 1999. President Bush disparaged the tobacco case while campaigning in 2000.

Slapping Back At Heimlich's Maneuver

By Lenore Skenazy

Heimlich. The word is at once terrifying and utterly reassuring. It conjures up fear, flailing and the face turning blue as an olive takes a wrong turn. Help!

At the same time, it speaks of competence, a plan, a scientifically proven punch that will send that olive sailing right back into its gin. A toast – to Heimlich!

Or maybe not.

Unbeknownst to most of the public, both the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross have quietly demoted Dr. Henry Heimlich's famous maneuver. They no longer recommend it as the first treatment for choking victims.

It's not that the maneuver is considered dangerous, or even ineffective. It's just that those organizations want you to try five old-fashioned back slaps first. Only if those whacks don't work are you supposed to try five "abdominal thrusts."

Yes, that's what they're called now. Even the name "Heimlich" has been ejected from this maneuver, like a chunk of half-chewed brisket.

FOR 20 YEARS, THE WRONG MANEUVER?

This "Five-and-Five" protocol was adopted a little more than a year ago, after the Red Cross reviewed the scientific literature on choking. Does that mean we just spent 20 years doing exactly the wrong thing?

That seems impossible. Everyone knows someone who was saved by the Heimlich maneuver, from Ronald Reagan to Nicole Kidman. There was even that great story about a woman who attended a kiddie baseball game up near Buffalo, NY, in 1999 and saw an 11-year-old hit in the chest by a bat. He went into cardiac arrest and she saved him with CPR. Then, last year, she started choking at a restaurant. The dishwasher ran out and performed the Heimlich maneuver – saved her life.

Just as she had saved his, seven years earlier. It was that early brush with death that had convinced the young man to learn First Aid.

What the Red Cross has learned about First Aid is that, despite all those Heimlich successes, back slaps are every bit as effective – and possibly easier to remember. The last thing the agency wants is for would-be rescuers to waste time



McCallum, Keisler and Meron told Eubanks to approach other witnesses about softening their testimony, Eubanks said.

ASKED TO CHANGE HIS TESTIMONY

Matthew Myers of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids was one of the witnesses whom Eubanks asked to change his testimony. He said he found her account to be "the only reasonable explanation" for what transpired.

Two weeks before closing arguments in June, McCallum called for a meeting with Eubanks and her deputy, Stephen Brody, to discuss what McCallum described as "getting the number down" for the \$130 billion penalty to create smoking-cessation programs.

Brody declined to comment on the legal team's deliberations, saying that they were private.

The most stressful moment, Eubanks said, came when the three appointees ordered her to read word for word a closing argument they had rewritten. The statement explained the validity of seeking a \$10 billion penalty.

"I couldn't even look at the judge," she said.

© Washington Post Writers Group

wondering which method to try first, so it pretty much arbitrarily ordered the techniques one, two and three [number three is chest compressions].

THREE ACCEPTABLE TECHNIQUES

What's weird is that suddenly there are three perfectly acceptable techniques. I grew up with the belief that back slaps were verboten – the First Aid equivalent of hitting a drowning man on the head with a cement life preserver. Nope, said American Red Cross spokeswoman Pamela King: Back slaps were always part of the protocol – in Europe.

Choke me with a foie gras sandwich. They were? Then how'd they get such a bad rap over here?

Their infamy seems to have been promoted by the guy whose name was *not* back slap. The guy whose name was [and still is – he's 87] Heimlich.

Back blows are "death blows," Heimlich declared as he lobbied for his own maneuver's acceptance 30 years ago. In 1985, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop endorsed this view, dubbing back slaps "hazardous." After that, only the Heimlich maneuver was considered kosher.

HEIMLICH FLIES THE 'KOOP'

What most people don't realize, said Heimlich's son, Peter Heimlich, is that Koop "was an old friend of my father's and he did it as a buddy favor."

Now, truth be told, son Peter spends a lot of his time debunking his dad. But it is also true that back slaps have come back from First Aid purgatory.

For his part, Dr. Heimlich still believes back slaps are "bad therapy," said his spokesman, Bob Kraft.

I'm pretty sure most people will keep using Heimlich for a while, because that's what we're all familiar with. But whether that means the doctor himself deserves a pat on the back – or a slap – is up the air.

And with any luck, so is the olive.

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Black Critics Should Look Into The Mirror

By Jason Whitlock

Thank you, Don Imus. You've given us [black people] an excuse to avoid our real problem.

You've given Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson another opportunity to pretend that the old fight, which is now the safe and lucrative fight, is still the most important fight in our push for true economic and social equality.

You've given Vivian Stringer and Rutgers the chance to hold a nationally televised recruiting celebration expertly disguised as a news conference to respond to your poor attempt at humor.

Thank you, Don Imus. You extended Black History Month to April, and we can once again wallow in victimhood, protest like it's 1965 and delude ourselves into believing that fixing your hatred is more necessary than eradicating our self-hatred.

The bigots win again.

CHECK OUT THE RAP MUSIC LYRICS

While we're fixated on a bad joke cracked by an irrelevant, bad shock jock, I'm sure at least one of the marvelous young women on the Rutgers basketball team is somewhere snapping her fingers to the beat of 50 Cent's or Snoop Dogg's or Young Jeezy's latest ode glorifying nappy-headed pimps and hos.

I ain't saying Jesse, Al and Vivian are gold-diggas, but they don't have the heart to mount a legitimate campaign against the real black-folk killas.

It is us. At this time, we are our own worst enemies. We have allowed our youths to buy into a culture [hip hop] that has been perverted, corrupted and overtaken by prison culture.

The music, attitude and behavior expressed in this culture is anti-black, anti-education, demeaning, self-destructive, pro-drug dealing and violent.

Rather than confront this heinous enemy from within, we sit back and wait for someone like Imus to have a slip of the tongue and make the mistake of repeating the things we say about ourselves.

RACE BAITING DAVE CHAPPELLE

It's embarrassing. Dave Chappelle was offered \$50 million to make racially insensitive jokes about black and white people on TV. He was hailed as a genius.

Black comedians routinely crack jokes about white and black people, and we all laugh out loud.

I'm no Don Imus apologist. He and his tiny companion Mike Lupica blasted me after I fell out with ESPN. Imus is a hack.

But, in my view, he didn't do anything outside the norm for shock jocks and comedians. He also offered an apology.

That should've been the end of this whole affair. Instead, it's only the beginning. It's an opportunity for Stringer, Jackson and Sharpton to step on victim platforms and elevate themselves and their agenda.

I watched the Rutgers news conference and was ashamed.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke for eight minutes in 1963 at the March on Washington. At the time, black people could be lynched and denied fundamental rights with little thought.



With the comments of a talk-show host most of her players had never heard of before serving as her excuse, Vivian Stringer rambled on for 30 minutes about the amazing season her team had.

Somehow, we're supposed to believe that the comments of a man with virtually no connection to the sports world ruined Rutgers' wonderful season.

Had a broadcaster with credibility and a platform in the sports world uttered the words Imus did, I could understand a level of outrage.

But an hour-long press conference over a man who has already apologized, already been suspended and is already insignificant is just plain intellectually dishonest. This is opportunism. This is a distraction.

In the grand scheme, Don Imus is no threat to us in general and no threat to black women in particular. If his words are so powerful and so destructive and must be rebuked so forcefully, then what should we do about the idiot rappers on BET, MTV and every black-owned radio station in the country who use words much more powerful and much more destructive?

AT LEAST HE DIDN'T PRAISE CRACK COCAINE

I don't listen or watch Imus' show regularly. Has he at any point glorified selling crack cocaine to black women?

Has he celebrated black men shooting each other randomly?

Has he suggested in any way that it's cool to be baby-daddy rather than a husband and a parent?

Does he tell his listeners that they're suckers for pursuing education and that they're selling out their race if they do?

When Imus does any of that, call me and I'll get upset. Until then, he is what he is - a washed-up shock jock who is very easy to ignore when you're not looking to be made a victim.

No. We all know where the real battleground is. We know that the gangsta rappers and their followers in the athletic world have far bigger platforms to negatively define us than some old white man with a bad radio show.

There's no money and lots of danger in that battle, so Jesse and Al are going to sit it out.

- The author is an African-American columnist for the Kansas City Star

Black Women Seek More Protection

By Marie Tessier

Activists in the growing movement to support battered African-American women say they agree on what's needed to stem domestic violence: more services that are culturally informed and integrated into victims' communities to help them overcome barriers to seeking help.

"Color-blindness is not what you need if you're trying to serve diverse communities," says Oliver Williams, executive director of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

"The trend is toward an increase in community-based, faith-based and grassroots services."

Homicide is the second leading cause of death for black women between the ages of 15 and 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Only young black men have a higher homicide rate, and only black men have a higher rate of intimate partner homicide than black women, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

NEED TO REACH DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

While the battered women's movement has long tried to serve all women, few projects can identify specific programs designed to reach out to diverse communities, Williams and others say.

That can be a barrier to safety for black women, who tend to reach out for help through informal networks in their communities, such as a church, rather than consulting a shelter or hotline, Williams and other scholars and activists say.

African-American women face a higher risk for experiencing domestic violence than other women, according to the most recent data from the Justice Department.

In fact, they are more than twice as likely to die at the hands of a spouse or a boyfriend. They are also at greater risk of more severe violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and the Bureau of Justice Statistics in Washington, DC.

WORST FAMILY VIOLENCE

"When you're talking about African-American women, you're talking about ev-

erything bad about family violence, and then some," says Tonya Lovelace, executive director of the Women of Color Network, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence based in Harrisburg, PA.

"The way that communities of color experience violence is affected by our history, and by other issues."

Research on domestic violence and African-Americans is sparse, scholars and activists say. While some trends are generally accepted, it remains an open question how much race factors into higher rates of violence, scholars say. Much of the difference may simply reflect African-Americans' disproportionate representation in lower-income groups.

Some behaviors can be grouped by race, but differences can be deceiving, Williams says. "Black women are more likely to leave than other women, but they are also more likely to return," he says. "A lot of the reasons may speak more to poverty and a lack of resources, because a woman may just not have a different place to go."

AGENCIES INCREASING EFFORTS

That's why many domestic violence agencies are increasing efforts to work with a wider variety of service providers in communities of color, advocates say.

While scholars and activists agree that higher rates of poverty among African-Americans probably shape some statistics about violence, they are uniformly quick to point out that higher incomes do not immunize against domestic violence.

An October 2006 article in Essence magazine, for example, details how Prince George's County, MD, the wealthiest predominantly black county in the nation, has a high rate of intimate partner homicide.

According to the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, 48 people, mostly women, died there between 2001 and 2006 as a result of domestic violence, second only to Baltimore County, which had 72 deaths.

The homicide rate for black men has dropped more than for black women in recent decades, according to federal statistics.

See PROTECTION Page 18

Torture Corrupting All The Rest Of Us

By Slavoj Zizek

Since the release of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's dramatic confessions, moral outrage at the extent of his crimes has been mixed with doubts. Can his claims be trusted?

What if he confessed to more than he really did, either because of a vain desire to be remembered as the big terrorist mastermind, or because he was ready to confess anything in order to stop the waterboarding and other "enhanced interrogation techniques?"

If there was one surprising aspect to this situation it has less to do with the confessions themselves than with the fact that for the first time in a great many years, torture was normalized – presented as something acceptable. The ethical consequences of it should worry us all.

While the scope of terrorist Mohammed's crimes is clear and horrifying, it is worth noting that the United States seems incapable of treating him even as it would the hardest criminal – in the civilized Western world even the most depraved child murderer gets judged and punished.

OUTSIDE THE WESTERN LEGAL SYSTEM

But any legal trial and punishment of Mohammed is now impossible – no court that operates within the frames of Western legal systems can deal with illegal detentions, confessions obtained by torture and the like. [And this conforms, perversely, to Mohammed's desire to be treated as an enemy rather than a criminal.]

It is as if not only the terrorists themselves, but also the fight against them, now has to proceed in a gray zone of legality. We thus have de facto "legal" and "illegal" criminals: those who are to be treated with legal procedures [using lawyers and the like], and those who are outside legality, subject to military tribunals or seemingly endless incarceration.

Some don't find this troubling. The realistic counter argument goes: The war on terrorism is dirty, one is put in situations where the lives of thousands may depend on information we can get from our prisoners, and one must take extreme steps.

ALAN HOROWITZ'S FOGGY REASONING

As Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School puts it: "I'm not in favor of torture, but if you're going to have it, it should damn well have court approval."

Well, if this is "honesty," I think I'll stick with hypocrisy.

Yes, most of us can imagine a singular situation in which we might resort to

Study Says HSAs Costly For Women

The high-deductible health insurance plans favored by many employers often wind up being an unfair burden to women, a new study says, largely because women need many routine medical exams that quickly add up.

The median expense for men under 45 in these plans was less than \$500, but for women it was more than \$1,200, according to a study by Harvard Medical School researchers.

They also found that only a third of insured men in that age group spent more than \$1,050 in annual medical costs, while 55% of women did.

"High-deductible plans punish women for having breasts and uteruses and having babies," said Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, the study's lead author.

"When an employer switches all his employees into a consumer-driven health plan, it's the same as giving all the women a \$1,000 pay cut, on average, because women on average have \$1,000 more in health costs than men."

The deductible for medical expenses is typically at least \$1,050, but often is as high as \$5,000 before insurance kicks in.

COMPARE THE DIFFERENCE

Findings from the Harvard study showed median health-care costs for these age groups: \$463 for men ages 18-44; \$1,266 for women that age; \$1,849 for men ages 45-64; and \$2,871 for women that age.

For men ages 45-64, about 63% exceeded the threshold. For women in that age group, about 74% did.

Women's costs are higher because women need mammograms, cervical cancer vaccine, Pap tests, birth control and pregnancy-related services that men do not, said Woolhandler, who also is a co-founder of a physicians' group that advocates for a single-payer national health insurance system.

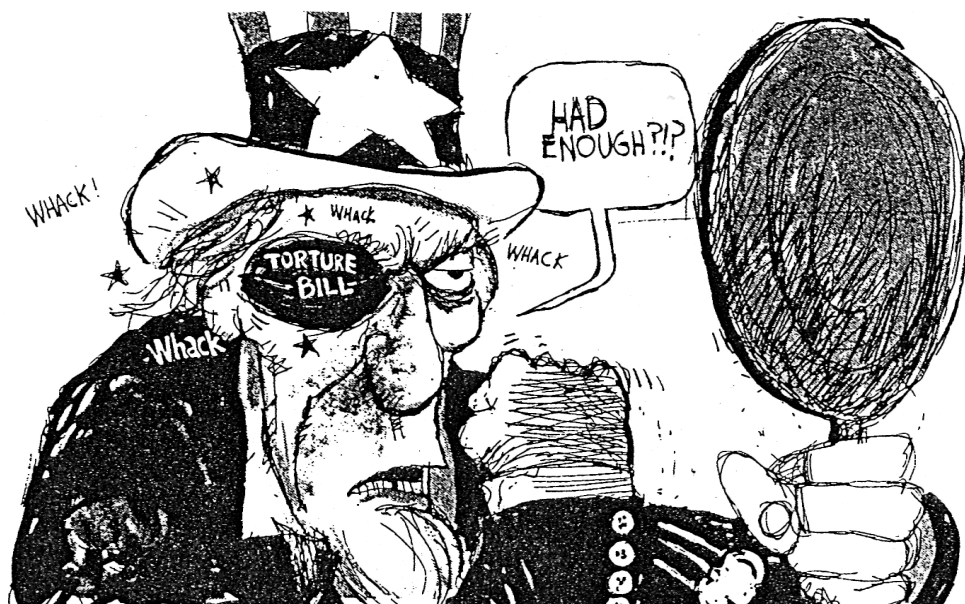
The Harvard team's findings are consistent with data from earlier studies, but this study framed the results differently by focusing on men and women, said Ken Thorpe, an Emory University health policy professor who has studied the topic.

He said that so far, fewer than 3% of Americans with private health insurance use the consumer-driven health plans studied by the Harvard researchers.

Such plans are offered by some insurers and are increasingly popular with employers. Various versions include health savings accounts and health reimbursement accounts in which patients pay low premiums but have high deductibles.

The Harvard study was based on the 2003 federal Medical Expenditure Panel Survey of nearly 33,000 people. The researchers inflated reported dollar figures to 2006 levels.

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torture – to save a loved one from immediate, unspeakable harm perhaps. I can. In such a case, however, it is crucial that I do not elevate this desperate choice into a universal principle.

When, in the fifth season of the TV show "24" it became clear that the mastermind behind the terrorist plot was none other than the president himself, many of us were eagerly waiting to see whether Jack Bauer would apply to the "leader of the free world" his standard technique in dealing with terrorists who do not want to divulge a secret that may save thousands. Will he torture the president?

NOW JACK BAUER IS BUSINESS AS USUAL

Reality has now surpassed TV. What "24" still had the decency to present as Jack Bauer's disturbing and desperate choice is now rendered business as usual.

In a way, those who refuse to advocate torture outright but still accept it as a legitimate topic of debate are more dangerous than those who explicitly endorse it.

Morality is never just a matter of individual conscience. It thrives only if it is sustained by what Hegel called "objective spirit," the set of unwritten rules that form the background of every individual's activity, telling us what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

For example, a clear sign of progress in Western society is that one does not need to argue against rape: it is "dogmatically" clear to everyone that rape is wrong.

THE SAME SHOULD HOLD FOR TORTURE

If someone were to advocate the legitimacy of rape, he would appear so ridiculous as to disqualify himself from any further consideration. And the same should hold for torture.

Are we aware what lies at the end of the road opened up by the normalization of torture? A significant detail of Mohammed's confession gives a hint.

It was reported that the interrogators submitted to waterboarding and were able to endure it for less than 15 seconds on average before being ready to confess anything and everything. Mohammed, however, gained their grudging admiration by enduring it for two and a half minutes.

Are we aware that the last time such things were part of public discourse was back in the late Middle Ages, when torture was still a public spectacle, an honorable way to test a captured enemy who might gain the admiration of the crowd if he bore the pain with dignity?

Do we really want to return to this kind of primitive warrior ethics?

This is why, in the end, the greatest victims of torture-as-usual are the rest of us, the informed public. A precious part of our collective identity has been irretrievably lost.

We are in the middle of a process of moral corruption: those in power are literally trying to break a part of our ethical backbone, to dampen and undo what is arguably our civilization's greatest achievement, the growth of our spontaneous moral sensitivity.

– Slavoj Zizek is the author of "The Parallax View"

PROTECTION

From Page 17

All the factors that contribute to greater violence probably explain the higher intimate partner homicide rate of black men, Lovelace says. "Black women get arrested more, we get convicted more, and we have had fewer places to go. The statistics don't account for self-defense."

TROUBLED HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

One of the biggest roadblocks to safety, says Tricia Bent-Goodley, a professor at Howard University in Washington, DC, is the troubled, violent history many black communities have with the police and social service agencies.

That provides one more cultural barrier to seeking police intervention, even though African-American women report intimate partner violence to the police more often – in 66.4% of incidents – than other women.

In addition, black women face a greater likelihood of being arrested along with a perpetrator, and their children are more likely to end up in foster care when authorities are involved, Bent-Goodley said in a training Webcast.

"If I'm being battered, the decision to pick up the phone to call for help is different for me," says Lovelace. "There are more black men incarcerated than there are in college, so that makes it a bigger burden, and I have to question whether he will be brutalized."

– Journalist Marie Tessier writes frequently about violence against women

Presidential Hopefuls In Spring Training

By Will Durst

The World Series of Presidential politics may be many months down the road, but the players are already lacing up their cleats and playing pepper with fungo bats on the sandlots of Iowa and New Hampshire.

Yes, my friends, it's spring training for the presidency. A spring training where fundraising takes the place of calisthenics. And batting clinics are supplanted by fundraising.

And the closet full of Ace bandages is now packed with envelopes earmarked for ... you got it, fundraising.

With no sitting president or vice president running for the first time in 80 years, the '08 field promises to be more crowded than a trainer's table after the first day of wind sprints for pitchers and Molinas.

Besides, this is America. Where any Dominican can become a shortstop, and any American can become president, although when they coined that phrase, I'm not sure they had George Bush in mind.

So here is our scouting report on some of the announced and presumed contenders for the upcoming political season in which everybody has faith that if just a few breaks fall their way, and a couple of opposing teams' managers get caught peddling steroids to preschoolers or bogus opposition research to the Washington Post, they got a shot. Except the Marlins and Dennis Kucinich, that is.

DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE: THE DONKEYS

7 to 2. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton. Like the Yankees she's become a "fan" of, acts miffed that the nomination isn't just handed to her; that instead she has to actually compete for it.

4 to 1. Illinois Sen. Barack Obama. Might not be ready for hardball practiced at this level. Already got into a pimp-slapping contest with Hillary and lost.

7 to 1. Former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards. Clinging to trademark "Two Americas" pitch. Extra four years of Bush might help public catch up to message.

15 to 1. Former VP Al Gore. Lurking on ready to bop someone on head with his Oscar until the Florida Supreme Court takes it away.

50 to 1. Delaware Sen. Joe Biden. Back on disabled list with persistent foot in mouth disease. A little too comfortable flossing with own shoelaces.

500 to 1. The Field. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson. In it for the vice presidency. Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd. In it for the parties. Former Alaska Gov.

McCain's Magic Carpet Ride

By Joe Conason

Both Iraqis and Americans were stunned by the audacity of Sen. John McCain's heavily publicized [and heavily armed] excursion through Baghdad's Shorja market.

There was the leading proponent of the war on Capitol Hill, setting out to confirm his recent claim that the escalation of U.S. forces is greatly improving conditions on the ground, accompanied by a handful of Congressional colleagues.

He seemed to think nobody would notice that their little shopping trip included a platoon of soldiers, three Black Hawk choppers and two Apache gunships.

Neither the Iraqi merchants used as props in this strange exercise nor the American voters who were its intended targets could have been deceived by such a charade. So the question that inevitably arises is whether McCain and company are still attempting to dupe us - or whether they have finally duped themselves.

Consider the happy talk from Rep. Mike Pence, an Indiana Republican who has visited Iraq on several occasions. At the press conference that inevitably followed the Shorja photo op, Pence said he had been inspired by the opportunity to "mix and mingle unfettered among ordinary Iraqis," drinking tea and haggling over carpets.

To him, the Baghdad shops were "like a normal outdoor market in Indiana in the summertime." Sen. Lindsey Graham, McCain sidekick and Republican of South Carolina, boasted of buying "five rugs for five bucks," marveling that "just a few weeks ago, hundreds of people, dozens of people were killed in the same place."

MCCAIN & CO. NEED NEW MATERIAL

Aside from the theatrics of the Shorja excursion, however, the message delivered by McCain, Graham and Pence was scarcely different from what each of them usually says after visiting Iraq.

In February 2005, for instance, when McCain made a famous trip with Sen. Hillary Clinton, he claimed that "the dynamic [of the war] has changed from Iraqi insurgents versus the U.S. and its - our troops to Iraqi insurgents versus the Iraqi government."

He declared himself "far more optimistic" than he had previously felt, adding: "I think we have an opportunity to succeed."

According to McCain, there is always an opportunity to succeed, provided that we are willing to sacrifice thousands more young Americans and hundreds of billions more dollars. But then again, he thinks we didn't expend enough lives and dollars in Vietnam, either.

As for Pence, the only conceivable purpose of his latest trip was to pick up those rugs. His comments were as predictable this time as when he visited Iraq in September 2005, when he told the Indianapolis Star that spending two days

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Mike Gravel. Who? Gravel? Alaska? Cool. In it for secretary of the Interior.

8,000,000 to 1. Former Ohio Sen. Dennis Kucinich. Could lose Iowa straw poll to the straw.

REPUBLICAN LEAGUE: THE ELEPHANTS

3 to 1. Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Highlighting commitment to traditional family values. Having had three wives just means he's extra traditional. Better chance to win series than to get there.

9 to 2. Arizona Sen. John McCain. Wily veteran. Lost a few MPH on his fastball. Doubts persist as to whether he is up for long, grueling season.

6 to 1. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. Wearing Al Gore's oversized flip-flops. Also has the Mormon thing to get past. Might be a positive. Public gets bored with first lady, can always move on to second lady, then third lady and so on.

15 to 1. Fred Thompson. Warming up in the bullpen, if needed to relieve. Of course America would never accept an actor as president. Oh.

200 to 1. Former governor of New York, George Pataki. Bad timing. Country not ready for another president named George. Severe Third Degree George fatigue.

400 to 1. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. Bad timing. Country not ready for another governor of Arkansas as president. Arkansas fatigue.

5000 to 1. The Field. California Congressman Duncan Hunter. In it for 2012. Texas Congressman Ron Paul. In it for Texas. Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback. In it for the babies. Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo. In it to get the illegals. Former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson. In it for the cheese.

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there had convinced him the United States was "winning the war." Gen. John Abizaid, then commander of U.S. forces, had assured him there was a viable plan and that the plan was working, all of which Pence dutifully repeated to the folks back home.

On this trip, as they climbed back into the armored Humvee that had safely carried them all to the marketplace, none of the jolly politicians mentioned the rise in killings across Iraq during the past month.

None of them even seemed aware that the temporary reduction of violence in Baghdad appears to have driven even greater carnage outside the capital - such as the bombing in Kirkuk that slaughtered a group of schoolgirls the same day that Graham and Pence got their bargain carpets.

THEY CAN'T REALLY BELIEVE IT, CAN THEY?

Even if the "surge" succeeds in suppressing violence in Baghdad for a few weeks or months by pouring in tens of thousands of American troops, what would that mean? Do McCain and his colleagues actually believe that we can somehow provide enough soldiers and Marines to achieve the pacification of every city and town in Iraq? If so, how long would our troops be expected to police the terrorist incidents and revenge attacks that now occur every day in this civil war?

Congressional hawks like McCain echo President Bush's complaint that the Democrats are undermining the war by seeking to set a date for an American withdrawal.

They insist that the war's critics should simply shut up and send more money and more soldiers, while we see whether this "plan" works better than the previously discarded plans.

But the truth is that the president and his echoes are merely playing for time with American lives. They have no plan, because there is no military solution to this war.

The war propaganda doesn't work any better than the war plan - which is why the Democrats have been emboldened, and why McCain's presidential prospects are rapidly declining.

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