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MAY 10, 2007

## Anatomy Of A Crooked Petition

# Dissecting TABOR

By Pat Thompson

In May 2006, I received an e-mail from the Oklahoma Public Employees Association. They needed a few people with spare time and computer skills to help on a project to fight the Taxpayer Bill of Rights [TABOR] petition.

The e-mail indicated there was a great need for persons with computer skills for inputting data and checking voter registry rolls.

Since I am retired, I took steps to "rearrange" my busy schedule so I would have the time to assist in this project. With computer experience dating from 1980, I felt I had the required skills to be of assistance.

On the first day, we completed all necessary paperwork and forms as independent contractors on this job. There were some 40 of us there the first day.

The supervisors then gave us instructions on the work, the petition process and present standing, and the confidential nature of the work.

Accuracy was stressed at all times. They told us we should be checking individual names on the petition pages with the State Voter Registry.

One of the first instructions given was to ignore any petition pages notarized by one certain person. We must ignore these pages because the "notary" was not even a duly certified notary at the time the pages were notarized. I was not informed of the total number of pages that had to be thrown out because of this discrepancy.

As is true on any petition I have ever seen, a great majority of the signatures were nearly illegible. The required printing of the name following the signature was usually not much better. A great many of the pages I examined did not even have the printed name.

After checking out a petition page, I typed in the name [as nearly accurate as possible] and then pulled up the voter registration page for that name. Often this required checking several pages with similar spelling and sounding names to be sure to get the correct one - if at all possible.

The requirements were that the signature had to match the voter registry

*Editor's Note: At the behest of Attorney General Drew Edmondson, a multi-county grand jury is investigating last year's signature-gathering drive aimed at forcing a statewide vote on the so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights. The state Supreme Court rejected the ballot initiative, citing the use of out-of-state circulators - a violation of Oklahoma law. The leader of a Michigan-based group that managed the petition drive has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Oklahoma City, challenging the constitutionality of Oklahoma's signature-gathering requirements.*

exactly, including the address, county and state. This was fairly time-consuming in order to attain accuracy.

Because of the impending date for presentation of our findings to a referee of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, we were under severe time pressures.

From the very first page I examined, I was amazed, and even appalled, at the gross and obvious discrepancies, and even fraudulent entries. With some 45 years experience as a court-qualified and certified Questioned Documents Examiner [handwriting expert], it is now second nature to me to quickly observe discrepancies between signatures and in analyzing and identifying handwriting.

Because of the time pressures on us, I had little time to analyze or examine each signature in great detail. However, what I had before me really did not require detailed examination.

Even some of the other workers, who had absolutely no training or experience in handwriting comparison, repeatedly commented on the forgeries they observed. I did make as many notes on my findings as I could in the time I had.

During my tenure checking these petition pages, I personally examined several thousand pages. Each page had a maximum of 20 signatures. Two relatives later began working on checking these pages. As it grew near-

er the target date, more people were hired.

The two relatives checked several hundred pages each. They called to my attention hundreds of other discrepancies on the pages they examined. In this work of checking and auditing, I found many of the following discrepancies:

1. Hundreds of signatures were found with no addresses. The address was entered by a different hand than that which created the signature. Petition law requires the entire entry must be made by one and the same hand. Exceptions have been allowed, but only if the second party so indicates and initials their entry. Such would be permissible if assisting a disabled or elderly person. Of the hundreds of improper entries, I never found a single one so indicated, or initialed.

2. A vast number of these signatures had addresses that were outside the state of Oklahoma. Some of them had even entered their address as, "out of state" or "outside Oklahoma."

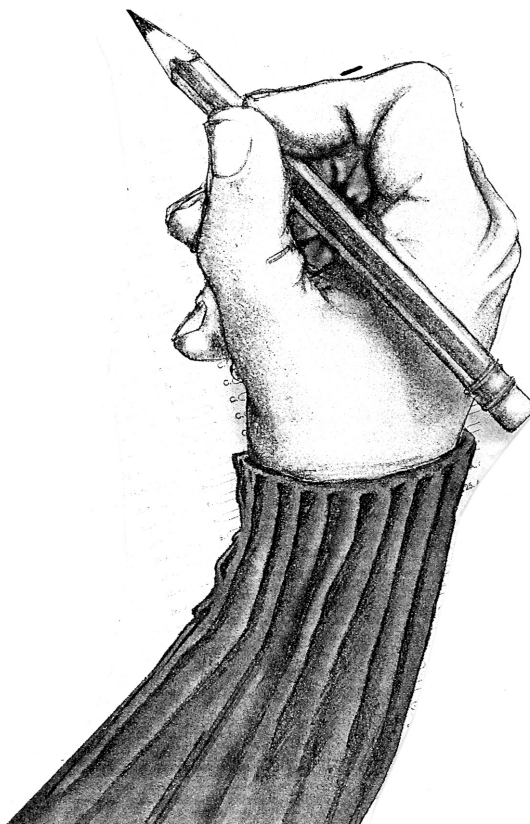
3. A vast number of the signatures I saw were signed by one and the same hand. For example, "John Jones" would have his name signed by the same hand that wrote "Mary J. Jones" right below on the next line, or right above. [This is prohibited under the law.]

4. On more than one page a single hand could be seen to have signed several of the other names on that same page. I did not have time to crosscheck other pages for duplications of handwriting. I specifically recall one page where a single hand had signed numerous names with nearby addresses.

It was most obvious to me that someone [the petition handler?] had gone down a phone book and entered names and addresses. Since these petition handlers were paid by the page and/or number of signatures, it certainly was in their interest to get as many signatures as possible.

5. I recall three consecutive pages where a "Mary A. Jones" signed one page with one address. The next page she signed "M. Agnes Jones" with the

See TABOR Page 18



# Observations

## The Beginning

You can bet HB 1804 won't be the final word on "immigration reform" in the Oklahoma Legislature.

Pandering politicians know the xenophobes' incessant tub-thumping on the issue has driven it near the top of statewide concerns. One in 10 Oklahomans in a new Tulsa World poll call it the No. 1 issue – more important than education.

We can't say it often enough: This is a federal issue. It only can be resolved at the federal level. The best solution is a guest worker program.

State lawmakers, though, aren't about to pass up the chance to preen for the TV cameras. Expect them to produce a new "reform" package next year aimed at fooling constituents into believing they're actually doing something about the issue.

Legislators promised penalties in HB 1804 for employers that knowingly hire improperly documented workers. But business interests persuaded lawmakers to enact huge loopholes that protect companies from punishment.

The most frightening prospect of state-sponsored "reform?" It would turn local law enforcement into immigration agents. Imagine the potential problems: A redneck Barney Fife could take racial profiling to a new level. A business could tie a competitor in legal – and financial – knots with false claims of undocumented workers.

On the day the measure finally passed the House, this is the television image beamed to the rest of the world: The bill's author, state Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, and House Speaker Lance Cargill, R-Harrah, at a packed Capitol news conference, flanked by nearly two-dozen jubilant, grass-roots supporters.

Not one was a person of color.

## Tax Status

How many times have we preached it – Oklahoma is a LOW tax state, despite what the venal State Chamber and their Republican puppets in the Legislature maintain.

Now comes the conservative Tax Foundation with its annual report. Guess what? Oklahoma is 50th in federal, state and local taxes combined!

The Foundation said Oklahomans pay a combined total of 27.8% of their income in taxes – five percentage points below the national average of 32.7%.

In state and local taxes alone, Oklahoma ranks 45th. In per capita state and local taxes, the state is 46th.

How can this be explained to the pandering yahoos in the Legislature [and the governor, too]? The incessant cry is that Oklahoma's "high" tax base in an obstacle to industrial development.

House Speaker Lance Cargill said he would like to see the income tax eliminated. If that happens, the tax burden will fall to working Oklahomans – sales tax and the ad valorem tax.

The income tax is the fairest known to man – it's based strictly on ability to pay, which is why the State Chamber and their rich buddies would like to see it go away.

Whatever you do, please don't confuse our Legislative leadership with the truth.

## Wasted Billions

Think what that \$500 billion wasted on the war in Iraq could have meant to the starving and HIV-ravaged children of the world.

Hundreds of thousands of children are dying of AIDS in developing countries because they do not have access to treatment readily available elsewhere.

Only 11% of HIV-positive pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries are given drugs to prevent passing the immunity-destroying disease to their children during childbirth.

Many infants born with HIV are undiagnosed and therefore untreated, the report found.

The UN estimates that 380,000 children died of AIDS-related causes last



year, mainly infections that could have been prevented.

Sick children continue to be the missing faces of the AIDS pandemic, according to Ann Veneman, the head of UNICEF.

The number of people getting HIV therapy in poorer countries rose 54% last year to 2 million, though another 5 million still lack access to the life-saving drugs.

Just 15% percent of the 780,000 children in need of HIV treatment had access to the new therapy by the end of 2006, and only 4% were given the antibiotic co-trimoxazole.

Treatment access problems were found to be most acute in sub-Saharan Africa, home to 25 million AIDS sufferers and 85% of all HIV-infected pregnant women.

Little wonder that America's image in the world is increasingly negative.

## Closed Shop

If Oklahoma remains a gerrymandered state you can thank the Oklahoma House Republican leadership.

A proposed constitutional amendment that would have eliminated partisanship from legislative redistricting was rejected by the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

We applaud the author, state Rep. Ryan McMullen, D-Burns Flat, who vows to continue the fight to reform the process.

"Voters should have the opportunity to choose their elected officials, but in Oklahoma legislators get to choose their voters," said McMullen on the House floor.

As a result of GOP opposition, there are dozens of legislative districts so gerrymandered that the incumbent never has to worry about re-election.

McMullen's plan would allow Oklahoma voters to amend the state constitution to establish a seven-member Independent Redistricting Commission that would redraw legislative and judicial district lines every 10 years. Currently, state lawmakers redraw their own district lines.

McMullen offered his plan as an amendment to Senate Bill 990 but it was defeated on a procedural vote that broke largely along party lines, with the exception of a single Tulsa area Republican who voted to support the reform.

## Slander

On the way to passing legislation to allow cities and colleges to start charter schools, Rep. Jabar Shumate said this:

"If the public schools were doing their jobs, charter schools wouldn't be needed."

How dumb is that? As an African-American, this Tulsa Democrat should be aware of the unspoken truth. The failure in public education in largely black communities is a direct result of poor or no parenting.

A student spends 20% of his or her waking hours in school. What about the other 80%?

Last year the Census Bureau noted that more than 70% of black babies were born out of wedlock. These fatherless children show up in the public schools with little or no preparation. [Check Bill Cosby's article in this issue.]

In league with Shumate is Rep. Dan Sullivan, R-Tulsa, who said there are "too many professional educators standing in the way of progress in education." Blowhard that he is, he didn't name one.

We are sick of the Monday morning quarterbacks determined to micromanage public schools. This year is no exception, with new unfunded mandates flying out of both houses of the Legislature.

Shumate's and Sullivan's slander of Tulsa public schools makes our case. If public education is a failure, they are exhibit A.

## Slow But Sure

It has taken a long time, but women are getting their just due in state government jobs. The state has also increased minority employment.

The Oklahoma Office of Personnel Management has published its annual Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Status Report.

It covers the period July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006. It shows the state now has 35,167 employees in 114 reporting agencies, boards and commissions. That is 816 more workers than the year before, a 2.4% increase.

Nine executive and two judicial branch agencies are not required to report.

The state has 19,810 women employees, 3.5% higher than the year before. Women are now 56.3% of all state government workers. Women are now 46.2% of the civilian labor force.

The state has 7,440 minority employees, 5% higher than the year before. Minorities constitute 21.2% of all state-government workers. By comparison, minorities make up 22.9 percent of the civilian labor force.

Oklahoma has come a long way toward equity and still has a long way to go.

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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

At press time, State Treasurer Scott Meacham announced new tax estimates of revenue. This session will have \$175 million in new money, and education's 1017 will reap more than \$60 million!

Although he has been charged with nothing, Rep. David Dank, R-OKC, filed a resolution asking Democratic State Auditor Jeff McMahan to step aside. How come Dank didn't do likewise for accused drunk driver Rep. John Trebilcock, R-Broken Arrow?

The governor will make the final decision on a bill allowing relatives to wear small pictures of victims in the courtroom. It naturally passed overwhelmingly in our redneck Legislature.

Dart: To the sorry U.S. Chamber of Commerce for giving Oklahoma public education an "F" based on the findings of a rightwing think tank. Those who quote it need an education.

We're taking up a collection to send Norman columnist Judith Miller to the Arctic to swim with a polar bear in search of an ice flow. That's the issue Judith, not Al Gore.

Laurel: To the governor's press secretary, Paul Sund, for nailing Senate Co-Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, for breaking the agreement to keep budget talks confidential until there was something to announce.

Beware of Tom Ward Connerly and his California rightwing crowd, planning to circulate an initiative petition to force an Oklahoma vote to eliminate affirmative action.

Dart: To ex-Gov. Frank Keating [now a Washington insurance industry lobbyist] for finally flying his true colors - he is speaking out for vouchers to fund his church's Catholic schools.

Freshman state Sen. Andrew Rice, D-OKC, is asking supporters whether he should run against Republican U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe in 2008.

Laurel: To Mother Jones magazine for exposing Oklahoma U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe for the dunce he is. Inhofe has referred to those who believe in global warming as "the Third Reich ... the Big Lie."

Condi Rice may never be able to wash the blood off her hands after her warm greeting for Teodoro Obiang, murderous dictator of Equatorial Guinea, an oil rich country.

Dart: To those who praise the Duke students. Don't forget, they were at an underage drinking party and they hired the stripper.

OU Professor Keith Gaddie had an analysis in the Gazette concerning the mess at the state Capitol. He mentioned the disastrous Henry-Hiett budget agreement but failed to point out it was crafted by his boss, OU President David Boren.

Laurel: To GOP Corporation Commissioner Denise Bode, an oil industry shill, for resigning. She will lobby in Washington. Hopefully, the governor will appoint a Democrat.

A third of U.S. workers don't take vacations thanks to a decline in personal family income and loss of high paying jobs to China. The buck stops at George W. Bush, who vacations weeks at a time.

Dart: To Rep. Ken Miller, R-Edmond, joining the chorus criticizing Gov. Brad Henry for his veto of the sorry GOP budget. House Republicans have no shame.

A number of readers want the names of Democrats who voted for the GOP so-called abortion bill. They are Corn, Gumm, Laster, Paddock, Burrage, Garrison and Ivester.

Laurel: To Oklahoma's Indian tribes, praised for providing far better care for children than the state of Oklahoma does.



Sen. Tom Coburn, keeper of the congressional conscience, has been fined \$33,179 for "numerous errors" in campaign finance reports. Physician, heal thyself.

Dart: To Oklahoma media outlets for ignoring or burying the AP story that nationally 200 inmates, many on death row, have been cleared by DNA evidence.

Quit comparing apples to oranges. Yes, OKC's KIPP Academy has greatly increased test scores compared to other schools in the district. They go to school from 7:30 to 5:30, plus all day every other Saturday.

Laurel: To Rep. Mike Shelton, D-OKC, for breaking with the Black Caucus to vote against a bill to allow cities and colleges to start charter schools. It is disastrous legislation.

Juanita Vasquez Sykes was fighting the immigration bill. She is a member of the Governor's Advisory Committee and leads an Hispanic citizens group. Her son, state Sen. Anthony Sykes, R-Moore, favors the bill.

Dart: To Rep. Sue Tibbs, R-Tulsa, for the stupidest bill of the session thus far - permitting families of murder victims to wear photo buttons at the trial of the accused. Why not wear buttons that say "Guilty"!

House leaders look silly trying to pass every bill under a GOP author. Latest example is the proposed umbilical cord bill by two Democrats. The GOP bill was substituted. Ditto the bio fuels bill. How childish.

Dart: To Sen. Susan Paddock and Rep. Lucky Lamons, only two Democrats to vote for that sorry Republican so-called tort reform bill. Thanks to the governor for his veto.

When it comes to guns, the NRA holds a first mortgage on a majority in the Legislature. Rep. Dan Sullivan R-Tulsa, stuck an item in the tort bill that says gun manufacturers can't be sued.

Laurel: To Forbes magazine, only media outlet to report that on average, Americans will work 120 days to pay for government at all levels - up 23 days in 25 years.

Rep. Wallace Collins, D-Norman, said he was jesting with the GOP when he said on the House floor, "I'm only a public school graduate, so I am not very literate."

Dart: To KWTU Channel 9 in OKC, partnering with Clear Channel Communications [including KTOK radio] - the outfit taking payola. The payola resulted in a \$12 million FCC fine.

Time magazine reports on a poll of readers on the Bible in the classroom - 23% yes, 24% yes if taught with other religions, and 53% a flat no.

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for his request that a web page be set up so the public can access all facts about state government. It's now the law. When operable it will become www.okopenbook.gov.

Oklahoma has its priorities straight - the football coach at OU, Bob Stoops, is the highest paid coach in America - \$3.45 million in 2006. The president of OU makes \$311,000.

Dart: To a lack of legislative leadership in the fight against tobacco - now accounting for 6,000 dead Oklahomans a year. A bill to stiffen tobacco legislation was tossed in the ash can.

The Daily Disappointment continues to be Oklahoma's top shill for Bush's war in Iraq. Do you get the feeling that they would endorse Adolph Hitler if he ran as a Republican?

Laurel: To OSU economist Dr. Kent Olson for his op-ed warning the foolish Legislature that continuing to cut taxes will be a chicken that comes home to roost, leading to cuts in vital programs.

Don't you wish the media would be as concerned about the low pay and turnover of social workers as they are in a case of child neglect? The Health Department is asking for \$4 million for two parenting programs.

Dart: To the Air Force for horrific waste of billions in buying unneeded or wrong parts at Tinker Air Force Base. We told you the Pentagon is No. 1 in squandering your tax dollar. [GAO]

Surprise! A Census Bureau report says whites, blacks and Hispanics are equally likely to be pulled over, but blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely to be searched and arrested.

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# Letters

MIKE LUKOICH RELEASE JOURNAL INSTITUTION © 2007 APR 19 7



Editor, The Observer:

I'm concerned about the takeover of my country by the Alice-in-Wonderland anti-Democratic nature of the religious far right.

It's my contention that fundie religious observance and stridency are a brake on natural human progress and diversity.

As we've seen with the latest Supreme Court decision on privacy and women's bodies, the opinions of six lower courts, logic, precedence, and rule of law are put aside when the observance of these important elements in human civilization would run counter to the biblical barbarism many people would prefer to humanist progress.

In that same light, our gay equality – despite some advancement in the area of civil unions and civil equality for same gendered couples – can be canceled by a Supreme Court decision should it decide that unanimity of a legislature is never to be had, and therefore, the law must bow to the least common denominator of human reason: bigotry.

This is the logic that was used by the Supreme Court in denying any allowance for the health or life of the mother in the case of an abortion after consultation with the patient and her medical professional. The Court said that because the legislatures have a "right" to pass laws, and even should those laws be passed in contradiction to scientific fact, the ignorance shown by the law must be upheld.

This reasoning is driven by religious fear and not sound jurisprudence.

Let's remember the slogan from a prior presidential election, "It's the Supreme Court, Stupid!," and vote accordingly in November 2008 for the enforcement of the Constitution and not the Bible.

James Nimmo  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Well, the poet laureate of Tahlequah, OK, is in mourning for several reasons. First, Kurt Vonnegut died and, second, nobody here at the Northeastern State University Library, including the librarians, knows who Kurt Vonnegut was. I guess that is what happens when you get old. Not only do you die, but nobody remembers your existence.

D.L. Mosher  
Tahlequah

Editor, The Observer:

AARP urged our representatives in the U.S. Congress to vote "yes" on

H.R. 4. This resolution passed the House and a similar version [S.3] is now in the Senate.

Both give Medicare the power to bargain with drug manufacturers for lower prescription drug prices. These measures aim to benefit 43 million Medicare members plus taxpayers who help pay the difference between the cost to seniors and actual drug prices. The cost of many brand-name drugs has been rising at twice the rate of overall inflation, according to AARP.

Oklahoma's Republican delegation in Congress – Sullivan, Lucas, Cole, and Fallin – voted "no." Our lone Democrat – Boren – voted "yes." I asked Congresswoman Mary Fallin, during a community meeting, about her "no" vote on H.R. 4. She said that Medicare could not be successful in lowering prices. She explained that the list of Medicare-eligible drugs is too long and could not be negotiated effectively.

If Medicare negotiations would not be effective, why have giant drug companies spent trillions on recent television ads which say, in essence, that "the Medicare prescription drug program is working."

Suppose that Fallin is correct in saying Medicare would not be effective. Each of the private insurance-type companies which now negotiate for lower prices can continue to do so under H.R. 4, which Fallin opposed. If their negotiated prices are lower than Medicare's, they can use their lower prices.

What's to lose other than excessive drug profits through price gouging? It's time for the people to prevail in Washington. Maybe they will if Medicare is, at least, given the chance to negotiate.

Wanda Jo Stapleton  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I applaud state Rep. Al McAffrey for his legislative effort to require fathers to begin paying child support beginning at conception. As he correctly pointed out, fathers are not required to help women they impregnate with the costs of the pregnancy.

Although I am pro-choice, I realize that there are many people who oppose abortion due to sincere pro-life beliefs. There are also those who seek to control women, using the threat of unwanted children to enforce their view of morality.

This proposed legislation would have benefited pregnant women and their unborn children, as well

as helped fathers learn responsibility. Those who opposed this measure have shown their true colors and where they stand.

Victor Gorin  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

With all of the problems in the world and at home – the illegal Iraqi war, the threat of war with Iran, the Darfur genocide, the millions without healthcare, the deteriorating school buildings – it is a sad commentary that people concentrate and are critical of millionaire John Edwards spending his own money on a \$400 haircut instead of paying attention to his solutions for the problems.

Frank Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

As a Vietnam volunteer veteran, I see a GOP con job to relate disgust for the Iraqi war as non-support for our troops. We all support the troops – bring 'em home.

Jim Stodola  
Corinth, TX

Editor, The Observer:

In order to overcome "the biggest challenge to the nation's economic health," President G.W. Bush wants Congress to cut spending on Social Security and Medicare.

He claims "unsustainable growth" in entitlement program spending. In reality, his tax cuts for mostly the wealthiest 5% of Americans are a major reason behind the mounting fiscal crisis that Congress must resolve.

Bush is pushing a 2008 budget package he says will balance the budget in just five years – with \$252 billion in Medicare spending cuts over 10 years, and \$637.4 billion over 10 years set aside for private Social Security accounts.

The fact is, since 2001, the Social Security Trust Fund surpluses – the contributions that WE have paid in to pay future benefits – have been systematically "borrowed" to cover up the true size of the federal deficit.

The surplus is also hiding in the tax cuts for the wealthy, which Bush wants to make permanent – at a cost of \$2 trillion over the next 10 years alone.

We've known this was coming since the White House began making its case for entitlement spending cuts. These ideas have already been rejected by most Americans, but he continues to push it through. We're now in

the real battle.

It's time to contact your senators, as well as your congressional representative.

We're tired of sitting by while Bush gives tax breaks to the wealthy. If his budget passes, we'll be shouldering more and more of the costs that will lead to the dismantling of Social Security and Medicare.

D.R Sparks  
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

You caution about donations to the American Cancer Society and Easter Seals. Actually, the publication, "American Institute of Philanthropy Charity Rating Guide & Watchdog Report," grades the American Cancer Society "C-plus" with 60% to 66% of funds going for services and Easter Seals "B" with 83% to 85% going for program services. Contrast this with Feed The Children/Larry Jones Ministries which, with 19% going for services, earns an "F."

Robert Nilson  
El Reno

Editor, The Observer:

The conservatives of this administration, and George Bush, are always telling us that they will follow us home. Well, here is how they will do it!

The have a bright yellow Piper Cub with this painted on the wing: "Stealth Fighter – do not shoot."

This small plane is outfitted with extra fuel tanks so it can reach America. So far they have been unable to fly the plane. It has a bomb carriage that is full of high-explosive hand devices. It is too risky to use but they are working on it!

They have no navy, army or air force but they do have 1,000 men in rubber wet suits with small troll motors strapped to their backs.

Each man has a quart of gas they carry on their chest area. Each man has a CB radio to communicate with each other. For weapons they each have a sling shot with heat seeking devices that are supposed to be attracted to buildings.

Of course none of these have been actually used in combat but "they are working on it!" And, after all, that is exactly what this Bush administration used as an excuse for attacking Iraq. They did "not" have WMD, but they were working on it!

Greg Scroggins  
Tulsa

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## Frosty's Notebook

# Impeachment

Democratic Congressional leaders have wisely chosen not to follow the impeachment path to oust Bush from an office he continues to disgrace. Few want the country to go through yet another traumatic process.

That hasn't stopped the California Democratic Party, which has adopted a resolution calling for Bush's impeachment.

The Democrats called on the Congress to use its subpoena power to investigate misdeeds of President Bush and Vice President Cheney and to hold the Administration accountable "with appropriate remedies and punishment, including impeachment."

While Speaker Pelosi had declared impeachment "off the table," many in the Democratic Party rank-and-file have demonstrated a commitment to ousting Bush and Cheney. Even many Republicans have soured on this President.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich has introduced Articles of Impeachment against Cheney. The California resolution refers to Bush and Cheney as having acted in a manner "subversive of the Constitution" by the following:

1. Using false information to justify the invasion of Iraq.
2. Authorizing the torture of prisoners of war.
3. Authorizing wiretaps on U.S. citizens without obtaining a warrant.
4. Disclosing the name of an undercover CIA operative.
5. Suspending the historic Writ of Habeas Corpus by ordering the indefinite detention of so-called enemy combatants.
6. Signing statements used to ignore or circumvent portions of over 750 Congressional statutes. [A signing statement is when a president signs a bill into law but notes that he does not intend to follow it.]

## Drop The Anti-Muslim Drivel

Bigots should think twice before writing off Muslim-Americans. They are an important part of America. If you doubt it, consider the first extensive study of Muslim-Americans showing they are an important part of mainstream America.

JWT [J. Walter Thompson], the largest advertising agency in the U.S. and the fourth-largest in the world, has conducted a wide-ranging study on America's estimated six to eight million Muslims.

Traditional American values are thriving among Muslims in the U.S. They love this country and are just as much hyphenated Americans as the Irish or Italians.

Many American Muslims feel simultaneously overexposed in the media and invisible as part of the American mainstream. They generally perceive themselves to be under constant suspicion.

Much of Muslim angst is driven by widespread perceptions of anti-Muslim bias in the media. Well over half of Muslims [57%] feel that media coverage is always or mostly biased, and another third [34%] feel it is occasionally biased.

The general public senses an anti-Muslim slant as well, with 25% agreeing

## Anti-Bullying

Oklahoma was the first state in the nation to adopt an anti-bullying law - one that hopefully will keep a Columbine from happening here.

School violence is happening across the nation. It is time politicians, teachers, parents, and anybody else who has uttered the inane phrase - "It can happen anywhere" - after a senseless tragedy, should find another way to express their grief.

Those who live in cities and send their kids to urban schools should wake up. The Virginia Tech shooter said he was bullied endlessly.

Read between the not-so-subtle lines of "It can happen anywhere." What they are saying is, "I guess the poor city schools with the black kids aren't the only places where violence can happen."

Many parents believe that other kids commit these crimes, not ours.

Parents refuse to imagine their teens having unsafe sex and pregnant, arrogantly assuming only poor urban kids could be so dumb. However, if you look at the worst of the school shootings over the last decade, they were typically not in urban districts such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, or Boston.

They have occurred mostly in places like West Paducah, KY, Springfield, OR, Santee, CA, and Red Lake, MN.

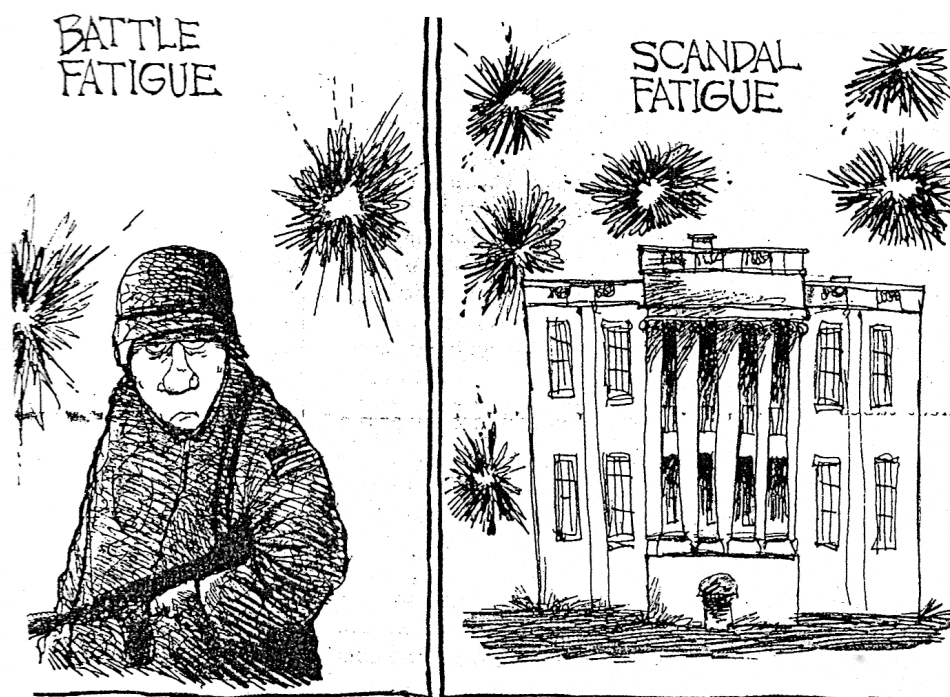
This is not to say urban schools don't have their problems. Boston Public School officials are confiscating weapons in record numbers - 577 [mostly knives] in the 2005-06 school year, compared with 407 five years ago.

And a recent study found that eight out of every 1,000 youths in Boston were shooting victims last year. Nearly half of Boston public high schools today have metal detectors.

More frightening than these facts is that naive suburban parents cling to their idyllic belief that the urban minority teenager remains the biggest threat to society.

Maybe the mug shots of the offenders from Columbine, Paducah, and Sudbury will scare these parents straight, because the real threat is any teenager, living anywhere, and of any color or class who's been taunted and shunned at school or who's grown estranged at home while bonding with 400 friends on MySpace and texting from under the covers at night.

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gressional statutes. [A signing statement is when a president signs a bill into law but notes that he does not intend to follow it.]

Anyone of these charges makes Bush unfit for public office. His running dog Veep keeps repeating the same lies and has lost all credibility with the American people and finally the media.

His approvability rate is between 29% and 31%.

that coverage is always or mostly biased and 48% saying it's occasionally biased. More than three-quarters [78%] of Muslims say they are increasingly angry about the way the media characterizes and portrays Muslims.

The estimated six to eight million Muslims are above-average in educational levels and have a combined buying power estimated at up to \$170 billion. The disposable income of each is at the national average of \$27,243.

Muslim-Americans make up at least 2% of the U.S. population.

Research shows Muslims are generally well-educated professionals. Muslims are, on average, better educated than other Americans.

Nearly 62% have earned a bachelor's degree, which is double the national figure for registered voters, and 27% hold a masters or doctorate degree, nearly three times the comparable national average.

The report also found that at least 43% of Muslim households earn above \$50,000 annually.

We pass this information along to you because Islam is not our enemy any more than the KKK represents Christianity.

## All About Teachers

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, conducted by Harris Interactive each year since 1984, explores teachers' opinions and brings them to the attention of the American public and policymakers.

The 2006 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher examines what teachers, principals and deans of schools of education each consider most critical to prepare teachers to meet classroom demands, as well as the expectations and experiences of prospective and former teachers.

Major findings include:

1. Teacher career satisfaction is at a 20-year high;
2. Principals and education leaders disagree on what new teachers should expect on the job;
3. Teachers are driven to leave by unmet expectations, lack of preparation and lack of support by colleagues and principals;
4. Many teachers say they lack the basics to get the job done;
5. Many teachers feel shut out of decision-making at school, but having a say in school policies is a key determinant of teacher satisfaction;
6. Professional prestige is on the rise, but teachers still lack parental support;
7. Teacher shortages are expected to be greatest in secondary schools and in schools with predominantly low-income and minority students;
8. Veteran teachers are more likely than newcomers to opt out, and teachers who plan to leave are twice as likely to be African-American as are those who intend to stay in the profession; and
9. Teachers and principals share common views on recruitment and retention strategies.

Three of the four top strategies for teacher recruitment and retention recommended by teachers are similar to those of principals, including providing a decent salary, providing increased financial support for the school system, and providing more respect for teachers in today's society.

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# State Prisons Reach The Breaking Point

By Arnold Hamilton

The day of reckoning approaches for Oklahoma's prisons.

State lawmakers' refusal to pay for their lock-'em-up, throw-away-the-key approach to corrections is creating a crowding crisis that threatens another federal court takeover of the under-funded system.

"The Legislature's going to have to take control of this issue that they've created," said Sen. Richard Lerblance, D-Hartshorne, who also serves as chairman of the Oklahoma Sentencing Commission.

"I don't understand why the Legislature doesn't want to address this."

Some state officials privately worry that long-term overcrowding could create a powder keg, leading to inmate violence that costs lives, damages facilities and opens the state to even more litigation.

In early May, Lerblance told the sentencing commission that the state Department of Corrections had reached its capacity.

He also said the department was notifying sheriffs that it could not accept any more convicts from county jails.

## IN LIMBO: 1,200 STUCK IN COUNTY JAILS

About 1,200 convicts await transfer from county jails to the state prison system – the equivalent of an entire prison's worth of inmates.

Moreover, the Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center expects the prison population to increase by 900 next year – at a cost of about \$16 million.

That number doesn't include the possibility of even more growth if dozens of proposed bills become law, increasing penalties for some crimes and mandating more minimum time served for others.

Oklahoma's exploding prison population can be traced to two sources: The Legislature and the governor.

When it comes to lawmakers, the only thing more popular than tax cuts is getting tough on crime. Think: Three strikes and you're out. Mandatory minimum sentences. Longer prison terms even for non-violent offenses.

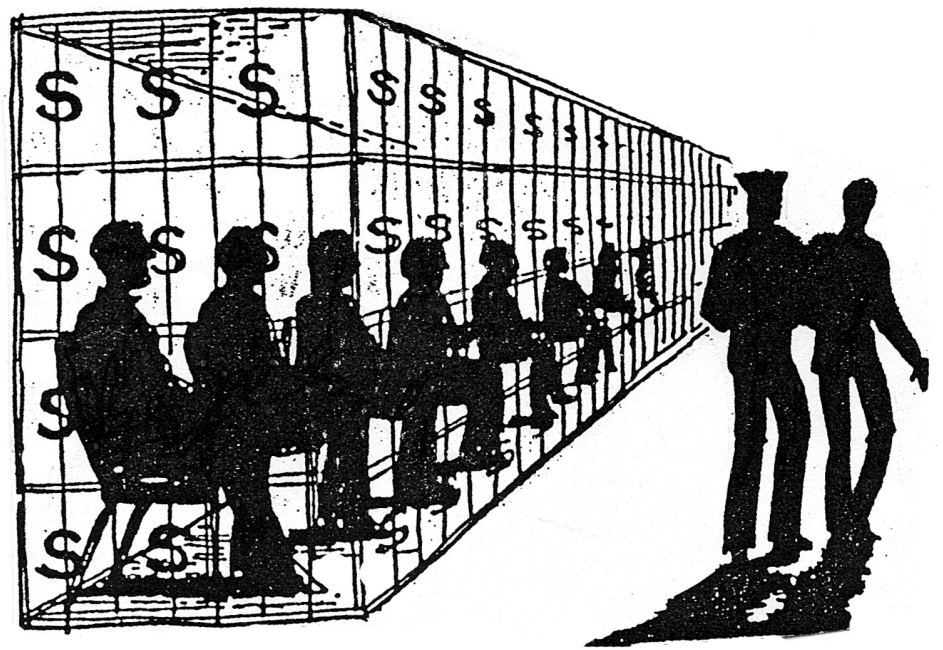
## THE PROBLEM: FEWER INMATES RELEASED

K.C. Moon, director of the Criminal Justice Resource Center, said prison population growth isn't the result of more inmates entering the system, but rather fewer getting released.

In fact, he told the sentencing commission the average length of prison sentence is down 14% since 2001 [7.3 to 6.3 years], but the number of inmates required to serve 85% of their sentences has grown from 53 in 2000 to 3,600 in 2007.

Further, Democratic Gov. Brad Henry is paroling – or commuting sentences for – even fewer inmates than his predecessor, former Republican Gov. Frank Keating.

According to figures supplied to the sentencing commission, prison releases to parole/commutation have dropped three consecutive years – from 2,428 in



2003 to 846 in 2006.

Think election year politics had anything to do with last year's parole numbers?

## TAKING GOVERNOR OUT OF PAROLE PROCESS

Lerblance said he has pushed – unsuccessfully – for a constitutional amendment that would remove the governor from the parole process for non-violent crimes.

Oklahoma, he said, is the only state in which the governor has any involvement in the parole process for non-violent offenders.

The Legislature's fealty to a "tough on crime" persona is only part of the equation, however.

Another key to the crowding crisis: State lawmakers want longer sentences and more time served – but don't want to pay to build new facilities to handle the burgeoning inmate population.

Even worse, they keep cutting taxes, leaving less money available to finance major capital projects, such as prisons.

## GOP LEADERS WON'T CONSIDER BONDS

Plus, legislative leaders – especially House Speaker Lance Cargill, R-Harrah, and Co-Senate President Pro Tempore Glenn Coffee, R-OKC – balk at any talk of a bond issue, dismissing it as deficit spending.

What about private prison space? Earlier this spring, Oklahoma lost 800 beds in the private prison at Hinton when the state could not agree on a new contract. Oklahoma balked at paying \$47 per day to house inmates there – but Arizona apparently has agreed to pay the Great Plains Correctional Facility nearly \$57 per day. Eventually, 2,000 medium-security Arizona inmates could be serving time in Oklahoma.

An exasperated Lerblance said one of the "biggest, over-played phrases we have out here" is "tough on crime."

"We need," he said, "to be smart on crime."

# Charter School Bill Damages Public Ed

Is a bill that would strengthen exclusive private charter schools the first step toward the Republican drive to destroy public education via charter schools and vouchers?

Senate Bill 661 to allow municipalities and colleges to open charter schools made it through the House despite strong bipartisan opposition. It barely passed on a 51-42 vote.

"Over half of our state budget goes to education," said Rep. Jeannie McDaniel, D-Tulsa. "Public schools are often thought to be the backbone of middle class America."

"The public school system is the underpinning of our society. It is intended to serve the neediest children of a society to those blessed with resources. In an ever-changing world, this bill begins a shift in public education policy in Oklahoma."

"The ground just shifted under the State Board of Education," said McDaniel. "Taxpayers are paying for Oklahoma children to receive the education that will serve them in the world of tomorrow."

"Let's make certain, in our haste to hold public schools to task for failures, that we don't relegate this responsibility to others without accountability."

The bill would allow municipalities, colleges and universities to establish charter school districts with little or no accountability.

Although it currently only pertains to Oklahoma City and Tulsa, many say that the bill will eventually lead to the closing of rural schools across the state, she said.

"Those voting for this bill voted for tightening state mandated rules on public schools and loosening rules on charter schools," said Rep. Jerry McPeak, D-Warner.

"This bill gradually squeezes out public schools. What couldn't be done by school consolidation legislation is being done by charter schools legislation. This bill aims to kill rural schools."

"Today we saw the heavy-handed political games that the Republican leadership plays," said McPeak.

When the voting for final passage of Senate Bill 661 was opened, it initially looked like that the bill was going to fail. However, the Republican Leadership

held the vote open and blatantly harassed their members to vote for the bill on the House Floor.

Several Republicans who originally voted "no" on the bill and others who said they were voting "no" earlier switched their votes at the last minute.

"The Republicans talk as if they are bipartisan," said McPeak. "But if your caucus makes you change your vote, who are you representing and what is your worth at the state Capitol?"

## Republicans Kill Bill To Protect Unborn

An opportunity to help mothers and their unborn children was stifled by Republicans on the House Floor.

Rep. Al McAffrey, D-OKC, attempted to amend SB 469 to require that fathers pay child support from the time of conception in the womb. Currently, fathers must only pay child support from the time that a baby is born.

"It takes two to tango," said McAffrey. "I am tired of seeing single mothers having to fight through pregnancy while deadbeat dads have to pay no consequences for leaving the mother of their child."

"My amendment would have held these fathers accountable and protected women and their unborn children."

Rep. David Derby, R-Owasso, moved to table the amendment. It was tabled along a party line vote, with the House Republicans voting to kill the amendment.

"If life truly does begin at conception, then we must do everything we can to protect children from the time they are conceived," said Rep. Scott Inman, D-Del City.

"The Legislature had the chance to affirm that they believe that life begins at conception and the House Republicans denied us that opportunity."

# GOP Breaks Pledge To Be Fair, Open

By Wallace Collins

Did Woody Guthrie ever meet Oklahoma's legislative leadership?

"... as through this world I wondered,

I've seen a lot of funny men,

Some will rob you with a six gun,

And some with a fountain pen!"

- From the *Ballad of Pretty Boy Floyd* by Woody Guthrie.

This line from Woody Guthrie's song keeps reverberating through my head, as I ponder the recent General Appropriations Bill, HB 1234, that was passed by both houses and vetoed by Gov. Henry.

I keep hearing that it was "bipartisan" and that we all had "input" on the bill.

I filed 13 bills for this session, none of which were heard by a full committee in the House. I thought they were all good bills or I would not have presented them for a hearing.

I ask if it was true that the Norman Veterans Center was shorted by \$5 million in its budget appropriations. I was told it was, but that the budget was mostly a standstill budget, with no one receiving much of an increase over last year.

## ONLY MENTAL HOSPITAL TAKES ANOTHER HIT

I then asked about Griffin Memorial Hospital, the last remaining mental health hospital in the state. Griffin was shorted about \$1 million in funding for 2006, with a standstill budget - was it going to be shorted again by \$1 million or more for this budget year?

Again, the answer was "yes." I then attempted to ask why in a standstill budget was Central Services given a 23% increase in funding, but my microphone was cut off. I was out of questions!

I felt that this budget was very hypocritical, as just the days before, we had declared it "Veterans Day" at the Capitol. The place was overrun with veterans, we talked to them, told them how much we appreciated their service to our country, how proud of them we were, and that we would always take care of them [the national fiasco at Walter Reed Hospital, notwithstanding!]

## NORMAN VETERAN FACILITY IS RUN DOWN

Then, the next day, we voted on a budget that left these same veterans short by millions of dollars. No matter that the bottom floor of the Norman Veterans Center has been plagued with water problems, floor tiles coming loose, bubbles forming under the floor covering that can cause a person to trip, and mold and mildew growing because of the unwanted moisture.

No matter that the x-ray room uses 1950's technology, no matter that the starting wage for a nurse assistant is a little above \$8 an hour, causing a high turnover rate.

No matter that it costs the state about \$4,000 to train an employee who soon leaves to make more money at a fast food joint, or at the nearby Wal-Mart.

No matter that this situation leaves the veterans with a constant stream of inexperienced workers to care for them.

No matter that these employees, like the other state employees at Griffin, other mental health facilities, and prison guards, have to work 16-hour days, or work seven days a week. We can't hire more of them, or give them a pay raise.

## MOST OF HIS BILLS HAD NO FISCAL IMPACT

Several of the bills had no fiscal impact on the state but a few of them did. One bill that had no fiscal impact, but could have a large impact on Oklahomans, would have outlawed "Bump Keys."

A bump key is a key that has been modified to fit locks of a given brand, and when given a 'bump' or a whack with a small object, it causes the tumblers of the lock to recede, allowing the key to turn and the lock to open.

A bump key is simply a burglar tool. Most apartments or houses in a development have a single brand of lock; therefore, a bump key of the same brand could open most every door.

The idea to make these keys illegal is supported by many in the law enforcement community. My bill would have outlawed bump keys, but it did not receive a full committee hearing.

## MINIMUM WAGE BILL KILLED BY GOP

I filed a bill to raise the minimum wage in Oklahoma by \$2 an hour in incremental steps, and to index future raises to congressional pay raises.

The last increase in the minimum wage occurred nearly 10 years ago!

Most everything has increased in price during that period of time, especially oil, diesel fuel, and gasoline.

But my bill did not receive a hearing.

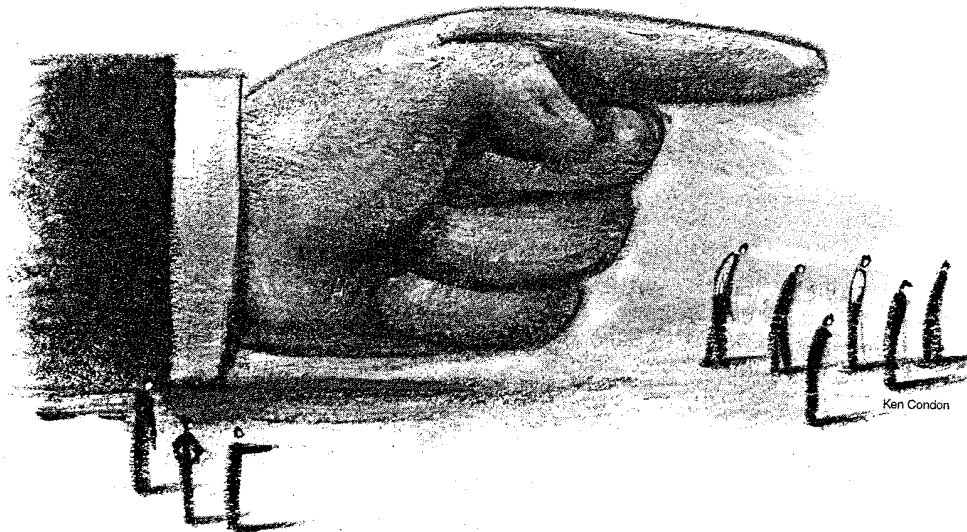
I wanted to give a much needed pay raise to state employees. I filed a bill to increase their pay by \$200 a month. These are the employees who keep Oklahoma operating, taking care of our veterans and guarding the prisoners we want to keep locked up and off our streets.

They staff the toll booths on the turnpikes, they do the record-keeping, handle the paperwork, take care of the mentally ill, serve the abused children, repair the roads and bridges, and all the other jobs necessary to keep the state operating.

The last pay raise these workers received was mostly eaten up by increases in their insurance costs. That bill did not receive a hearing.

## THIS BILL WOULD HAVE BEEN A MONEY SAVER

I wanted to introduce a program that I believe would save the state money. It is the Cognitive Adaptive Training Program. When used in Bexar County, TX, it proved to be very effective in reducing the recidivism among mentally ill prisoners, saving the state of Texas money.



The Cognitive Adaptive Training [CAT] Program trains these prisoners in how to adapt or reintegrate into society. It deals with social, work skills, and everyday living issues that many of these people need to function in society.

Without these skills, many return to their old habits that landed them in prison in the first place. I thought it a great idea, but the bill was not heard.

I filed another bill that I really thought was a "no-brainer," one that everyone would support. I wanted to place Automatic External Defibrillators [AED's] in every public school in the state.

I know I am not the only one that is dismayed each time I learn of someone, usually an athlete, dying after a game or practice. Sometimes, though, it is a staff person, a visitor, teacher or coach.

## LIVES COULD BE SAVED BY AEDS

If every public school across the state had AED's on site, I feel sure lives could be saved. We at the state Capitol certainly have them, so why not our next generation? Who could oppose such a life-saving measure? HB 1847 was not heard!

When the General Appropriations bill, HB 1234, was brought to the House floor for a vote, it contained \$6.95 billion for appropriation.

During the time I was supposed to "have input on the bill" I was allowed to ask only two questions before having to decide whether or not to spend nearly \$7 billion for our state.

It was recently pointed out that several of the state jobs being advertised to be filled paid only \$14,000 a year. Government figures show that the poverty level for a family of three is about \$17,700 dollars a year.

That means a person filling these vacancies for Oklahoma, working full time, is receiving a below poverty level wage. Some of us in the Oklahoma House, as well as Gov. Henry, proposed to raise the wage rate to at least the poverty level for these full-time state employees, but there was no money for it in the GA bill.

## TEACHERS RETIREMENT IS HURTING

Likewise, there was no money for the Teacher's Retirement fund, rated as one of the worst funded in the nation. The Capitol had also recently celebrated "Domestic Abuse Day" purporting to want to end such violence, but the GA bill had no money for domestic abuse, or the Rape Crisis Centers, and many other social services.

We at the Capitol honored and celebrated the "45th Division Day," paying tribute to the now 45th Brigade, about to go off to war again.

Rep. Terry Harrison, D-McAlester, authored a bill to spend \$1 million to buy body armor for these troops to train with so that when they arrived in Iraq, they would have trained with the heavy body armor and be able to function with it

Guess what? His bill was not heard.

Each time I see the smiling faces on television, making the claim that the general appropriations bill was bipartisan, that everyone had the opportunity to give input. I keep hearing 'ol Woody Guthrie singing, "... some will rob you with a six gun, and some with a fountain pen!"

Did Woody ever meet our legislative leaders?

- Rep. Collins is a Democrat who lives in Norman

## Keith Smith To Be Honored With Mary Lou Lemon Award

The Oklahoma Stonewall Democrats' 2007 Mary Lou Lemon Humanitarian Award will be presented posthumously to Keith B. Smith, the well-known, much-beloved and effective lobbyist and activist who died suddenly last November.

Smith's tireless advocacy for gay equality and other progressive issues was legendary. His ideas and techniques live on in the many grassroots activists who continue to push back the stultifying limits of the ignorant and bigoted.

No Oklahoma legislator, however recalcitrant in thinking, was immune to Smith's wit, charm, and stunning strategies at passing progressive legislation.

The award is named for the late Mary Lou Lemon, matriarch of a prominent Oklahoma Democratic family, who believed fervently in an American society freed from discrimination directed at minorities, especially gay and lesbian citizens.

It will be presented formally at the Activist Hall of Fame Dinner on May 19, during the Democratic Party state convention in Oklahoma City.

Previous award recipients have been Oklahoma County Commissioner Jim Roth, and Governor David and Rhonda Walters.

Smith's life was celebrated Dec. 1 during a memorial service in the state Capitol rotunda.

For more information, go to [www.okstonewall.org](http://www.okstonewall.org).

## Government Growth Slow Speaker's Claims Simply Don't Add Up

By David R. Morgan and Kenneth P. Kickham

A few weeks ago, the Republican Speaker of the House, Lance Cargill, asserted that state government in Oklahoma has become too large. His exact words were: "Over the past few decades, the size of Oklahoma's government has grown dramatically." Sure, the state's public sector has expanded over the past some years, if for no other reason than the effect of inflation.

But has state government grown disproportionately? Has its size increased more than we would expect given the external pressures for growth, such as inflation and an improving state economy?

The following analysis will address this basic question using two measures of state government size – total state taxes and total full-time equivalent state employment [FTE; includes higher education]. We'll compare these two numbers over time with a measure of the changes in Oklahoma's economy-gross state product. [GSP is the equivalent of gross domestic product at the national level, an indicator of the total economic activity within the borders of the state.] The analysis will cover the years from 1992 to 2005, with data taken from federal government sources.

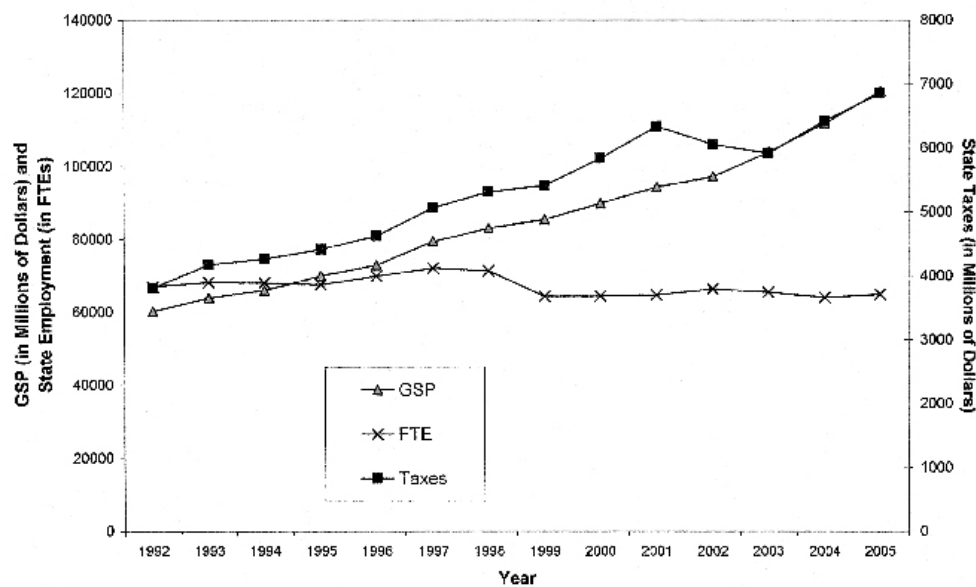
The results are conclusive: Oklahoma state government has not grown excessively given the corresponding expansion of the state's economy.

### UNDERSTANDING THE GROWTH OF OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENT

Even though the Legislature has lowered tax rates several times in the past few years, overall taxes have surely gone up if only from the effects of inflation and economic prosperity. The question of state employment is less clear-cut. Still, with more tax revenue, one would expect the state to have hired more people as well. The accompanying graph captures our analysis. It depicts the change over time for our three measures – total state taxes, total FTE employment, and gross state product.

If we look at taxes first [the top line of the chart], as expected, they've grown significantly over the past 14 years, from a little over \$4 billion in 1992 to just under \$7 billion in 2005 [the last year data are available]. This represents an increase of about 80% over this period.

However, the rise in taxes has generally not exceeded the growth in Oklahoma's economy [the middle line]. During the decade of the 1990s, taxes did go up slightly faster than the state's economy. Then, taxes in 2002 [\$6.1 billion] and 2003 [\$5.9 billion] fell below the figure for 2001 [\$6.3 billion.] For 2004 and 2005, taxes and the economy went up at about the same rate. The chart clearly shows that, overall, during the past 14 years, the growth in state taxes closely paralleled



the expansion of the state's economy.

Now what happened with our second measure of state government size? Surprisingly, state full-time equivalent employment actually declined slightly between 1992 and 2005. FTE employment was 67,071 for the initial period and 64,997 for the final year. The graph does reflect some slight year-to-year fluctuations, but the overall trend is unmistakable. As overall tax collections went up and Oklahoma's economy grew at a respectable pace, state employment failed to keep up and was essentially flat during this period of 14 years.

### EVALUATING TRENDS IN OKLAHOMA STATE GOVERNMENT GROWTH

Based on the obviously limited information presented here, we can reach only one conclusion. Measured by the growth in taxes and FTE employment, government in Oklahoma has not unduly expanded.

Finally, we might examine briefly certain national figures for the indicators we're using.

Between 1990 and 2006, state government employment in all states increased about 11% [compared to a flat rate of change for Oklahoma]. Private sector employment in the U.S. expanded at a rate of 31% during this same period. Total state taxes for the average state from 1990-2006 rose about 105% compared to the 80% growth for the Sooner State.

During the past few decades, it appears that state government in Oklahoma has expanded more slowly than in most other states in the country. Conservatives might still think state government here and elsewhere is too big. But any reasonable assessment of Oklahoma's situation leads inescapably to the conclusion that government in the Sooner State has not "grown dramatically."

– David R Morgan is retired from the political science department at the University of Oklahoma. Kenneth P. Kickham is a member of the political science faculty at the University of Central Oklahoma.

## Sooner Poor Kids Need Health Care

A sad fact from the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy: There are 146,000 uninsured children in Oklahoma, with 84% [122,200] living in families whose income falls below 300% of federal poverty guidelines.

Currently, SoonerCare covers children at or below 185% of federal poverty level.

Adoption of Tulsa Sen. Tom Adelson's The Oklahoma All Kids Act – SB 424 – would go a long way in addressing this major Oklahoma problem. It would do the following:

- Extends coverage through SoonerCare to children 18 and younger whose family incomes are between 185% and 300% of FPL.
- Allows families to access private insurance or employer-sponsored insurance for dependent children through a subsidy program.
- Establishes a program for partial coverage for children and families in high deductible or limited benefit health insurance plans.
- Also provides for cost sharing requirements on a sliding scale.

Children who have health insurance are more likely to be immunized, receive regular check-ups and get treatment for common childhood ailments such as ear infections or asthma.

Children who have health insurance are less likely to use costly emergency

room services.

Children who have health insurance have better school attendance as they are more likely to avoid preventable childhood illnesses.

Extending coverage to all Oklahoma children would significantly reduce confusion regarding eligibility and income requirements. If all children were eligible for health insurance, the state would capture some currently eligible but un-enrolled children.

A national report indicates that by 2010, family premiums will increase by \$2,011 due to cost-shifting from the uninsured.

There are approximately 45,500 uninsured children between 185% and 300% FPL, and approximately 90%, or 40,931, children would likely gain insurance coverage.

The projected annual state cost for the All Kids Act is \$8,576,048. The projected federal share will be \$29,881,566.

For every dollar spent for this program the federal government will pay almost 78 cents and the state will only pay a little more than 22 cents.

Bottom line: Providing health insurance coverage for Oklahoma's children makes sense – for the health of children, for the pocket books of Oklahoma's families, and for the health care industry.

## Hunger Task Force To Study Problem

The Oklahoma House of Representatives has unanimously approved legislation to set up a task force to study the issue of hunger in the state.

Senate Bill 499, sponsored in the House by state Rep. Kris Steele, was crafted in direct cooperation with the major food banks in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

"With one out of five Oklahoma children in danger of going to bed hungry every night, it is very important for us to do all we can to achieve the goal of providing food to those in need," said Steele, R-Shawnee.

In Oklahoma, 14.6% or 517,991 people are food-insecure – not always having money to put food on the table. Of those, 170,298 are considered hungry, according to the Oklahoma Food Banks.

### OKLAHOMA AMONG 10 WORST STATES

The USDA's latest statistics reveal that Oklahoma is one of the 10 worst states for hunger and food insecurity.

The task force would be composed of a diverse set of representatives from gov-

ernment agencies, faith-based charities and other nonprofit organizations.

Steele cited a lack of good coordination between all the groups working at reducing hunger in Oklahoma as a main reason the task force is needed.

"The hunger task force will be designed to bring these groups together and combine their efforts," Steele said. "By doing so, we can make sure Oklahomans in need do not go hungry."

The task force would work to make recommendations concerning strategies for coordinating services among federal, state, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, strategies to connect eligible hungry people with existing programs, recommendations for provider accountability, and many other aspects of the hunger issue.

SB 499 is endorsed by the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, located in Tulsa, and the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, located in Oklahoma City.

# No Justice Found In Indian Courts

By Ralph Blumenthal

As a Cherokee woman charging rape by a non-Indian, Jami Rozell could not go to the tribal court, which handles only crimes by Indians against Indians in Indian country. After five months of agonizing, she went to the district attorney in Tahlequah, and testified at a preliminary hearing.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever done, get up there in front of my family with all these men I've grown up with all my life," said Ms. Rozell, now 25 and a first grade teacher in another town.

But that was not the worst of it. The police, she said she was told, had cleaned up the evidence room and thrown out her rape kit, and with it all chances of prosecution.

However, Chief Stephen Farmer of the Tahlequah police says the department had received permission to destroy the evidence after Ms. Rozell initially declined to press charges.

## TROUBLED INDIAN CASES ARE COMMON

Human rights advocates say such troubled cases involving Indian victims are common. And American Indian women are voicing increasing anger at what they call their disproportionate victimization in crimes of sexual assault, most often committed by non-Indians, and attitudes and laws that they say deter many from even reporting an attack.

"Indian women suffer 2½ times more domestic violence, 3½ times more sexual assaults, and 17% will be stalked – and I'm a victim of all three," said Pauline Musgrove, executive director of the Spirits of Hope Coalition, an advocacy group in Oklahoma.

Now Amnesty International has taken up the issue, calling on Congress to extend tribal authority to all offenders on Indian land, not just Indians, and to expand federal spending on Indian law enforcement and health clinics.

In a report just released, the American arm of Amnesty said sexual violence against American Indians had grown out of a long history of "systematic and pervasive abuse and persecution."

## VICTIMS MORE LIKELY TO BE INDIANS

Chris Chaney, deputy director of the office of justice services at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and a member of the Seneca-Cayuga tribe of Oklahoma, said that Indians fell victim to crime at a higher rate than members of any other ethnic group and that domestic violence was on the rise because of methamphetamine abuse.

But Chaney said that the bureau recognized the problem and that the new federal budget proposed an increase of \$16 million to aid Indian law enforcement agencies.

With just over four million American Indian and Alaska Native people in 550 federally recognized tribes scattered over Indian and non-Indian lands throughout the United States, jurisdictional questions often throw cases into limbo, Amnesty International found.

In cases where tribal courts have jurisdiction, they can only impose punishments of up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

## TWICE AS MANY INDIAN WOMEN RAPED

The report cited Justice Department figures suggesting that more than one in three American Indian and Alaska Native women would be raped in their lifetime, almost double the national average of 18%.

In 86% of the cases, the report said, the perpetrators were non-Indian men, while in the population at large, the attacker and victim are usually from the same ethnic group.

Larry Cox, executive director of Amnesty International USA, said the organization had been studying violence against women worldwide "and then somebody said why not look at what's happening here."

The 73-page report focused on Indian communities in Alaska, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Alaska has the highest incidence of forcible rapes of all women, the report said. Native Alaskans in Anchorage were nearly 10 times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than non-natives.

## OKLAHOMA HOME TO 39 TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Oklahoma's 401,000 American Indians [according to 2005 Census estimates that include people listing mixed racial heritages] share 39 tribal governments and a patchwork of Indian and non-Indian lands. There are no reservations in Oklahoma, which is second only to California in its Indian population.

At Help in Crisis, a shelter for Indian women and their children in Tahlequah in northeastern Oklahoma, many told of suffering assaults, often by husbands, without filing complaints.

Among them was Kendra Hunter, 25, who said she had been raped by three white men who held her captive for three days in 2001. Ms. Hunter said that she did report it, but that police officers turned away the complaint.

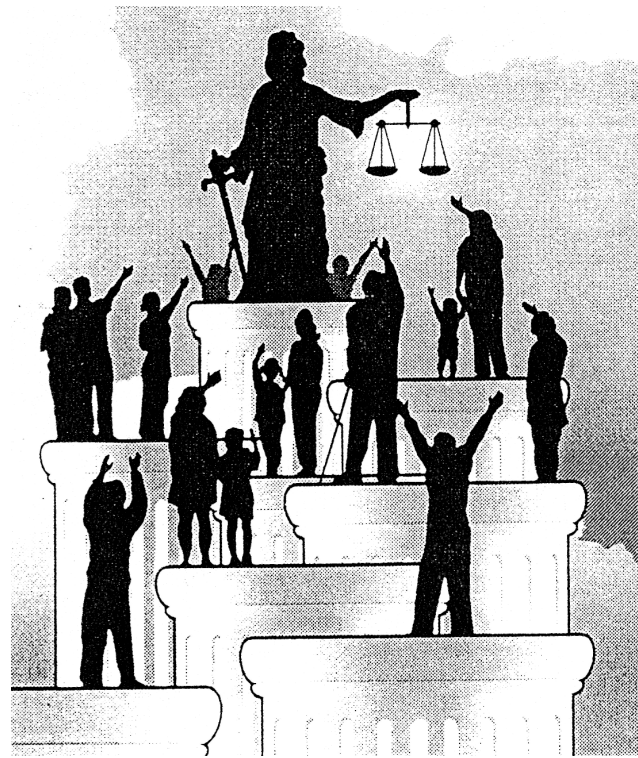
They said the sex was consensual and that with three witnesses against her, there was no chance of a case.

## COPS IGNORED THE CIGARETTE BURNS

"I had cigarette burns on me, and they called it consensual," she said.

Deana Franke, director of the shelter, showed off an exercise room she had built for the women, but added, "I should be building a shooting range."

Nearby in Tahlequah, at the offices of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, the director, Sonya K. Cochran, and two advocates, Lois Fuller and Sue Gaytan, displayed the legal records of a local Indian woman who complained of having been raped and sodomized by a brother-and-sister team of



attackers in Fort Smith, AR, in 2004 – only to have the charges dropped after a prosecutor said the woman had repeatedly missed court dates. The woman contends she was in court.

Culturally, some advocates said, Indians, fearing humiliation, are often reluctant to press a complaint, seeing it as a test of faith or preferring to "let the Creator take care of it," as one said.

## JURISDICTIONAL COMPLEXITIES EVIDENT

The jurisdictional complexities were evident outside the offices of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Shawnee. A nearby fast-food drive-in stands on state land, the north lane of the road is on city land and the south lane is Potawatomi land. Jason O'Neal, chief of the Lighthouse Police of the Chickasaw Nation, has jurisdiction.

Chief O'Neal said that increasingly, Indian and non-Indian police departments are recognizing each other with cross-designations of authority.

But even on Indian land, if a crime is committed by, or suffered by, a non-Indian, federal law applies – except in states [not including Oklahoma] where such jurisdiction has been ceded to the state.

Yet tribal courts enjoy concurrent jurisdiction when the crime is committed by an Indian – regardless of the victim – on Indian land. And the federal government retains jurisdiction over 14 major crimes, including rape, committed by Indians in Indian country.

## TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO IS INDIAN

Another problem is figuring out just who is an Indian – an enrolled member of a tribe, for sure, and less certainly, anyone a tribe considers Indian, but beyond that definitions blur.

"I can't get a U.S. attorney to take a domestic violence case unless there's severe physical harm or use of a deadly weapon," said Kelly Stoner, director of the Native American Legal Resource Center at the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

"If you just knock a tooth out it's not enough."

Renee Brewer, a child welfare and family violence counselor at the Potawatomi Nation and a member of the Creek Muskogee tribe, said she recently had four agencies arguing over jurisdiction after a woman from the Absentee Shawnee Nation called 911 to say she had been raped.

"The D.A. was so confused," Brewer said. The woman eventually left the state. And the accused rapist? "Oh, he walked," Brewer said.

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## Presidential Hopefuls To Visit U.S. Indians

*Prez On The Rez*, a historic forum that will assemble Democratic presidential candidates together on Indian land for the first time in American Indian history, is gaining momentum.

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Richardson has committed to participate and INDN's List founder Kalyn Free of Tulsa confirmed she is in "active discussions" with the rest of the Democratic candidates and is confident all of the candidates will participate in the event.

INDN's List Education Fund announced earlier the Morongo Band of Mission Indians in Cabazon, CA will host the Aug. 23 presidential candidates' forum.

The forum is an unprecedented event that will gather the Democratic presidential candidates to discuss with tribal leaders across the United States the challenges and opportunities facing Indian Country today.

"No major presidential campaign event has ever come to Indian Country," said Morongo Tribal Chairman Robert Martin. "This represents a historic opportunity for this country's First Americans to take a direct role in the future of America by holding a national level forum for presidential candidates.

"We couldn't be more proud to make history for Indian Country by hosting this extraordinary event."

Free, the founder and president of INDN's List, said Indian nations around the country sought to host the historic forum. She said that the Morongo Band was chosen because of the caliber of the facilities and resources that the tribe can offer; for its accessible location in southern California for both participants and national media; and California's decision to hold its primary in February 2008.

## CareerTech Success

# Josh Shipp Never Gave Up His Dream

By Lauren Merryman

After being abandoned at birth by his 17-year-old mother at an Oklahoma City hospital, Josh Shipp went through years of abuse.

For 14 years Shipp was in and out of 10 foster and group homes where he was neglected, mistreated and felt worthless because no one wanted him.

In just a few short years Shipp went from not being wanted to being high in demand by taking his own advice, "Don't be average."

Today Shipp is 26, living in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife. He tours the world performing as a motivational speaker and has shared his inspirational story with more than 1 million people.

As a child, Shipp's life was on a downward spiral. To compensate, he started overeating, gained weight and became depressed. At age 8, he tried to commit suicide several times.

### HE WAS THE CLASS CLOWN

By the age of 14, he was known in school as a troublemaker, describing himself as the class clown who spent 80% of high school in the hallways.

When Shipp was 17, he enrolled in CareerTech's marketing education program at Yukon High School and joined its student organization, DECA.

"I joined DECA because I heard it was easy, there were girls, free cookies and you got to get out of school an hour early," Shipp said.

He ran for chapter reporter as a joke and won. He had no idea the impact DECA would make on his life.

When Shipp was 18 he was arrested and jailed for having \$10,000 worth of hot checks. When his foster parents of four years picked him up, their reaction surprised him.

### FOSTER PARENTS CHANGED HIS LIFE

"They sat me down at home and said, 'Josh, we don't see you as a problem, we see you as an opportunity.'"

"I laughed, thinking that we looked like a scene from the TV show Full House," Shipp said.

Shipp's foster parents changed his perspective with that phrase, helping him turn his life around. He realized that before this he saw his past as a problem - not an opportunity.

"Sometimes in life the thing that has hurt you the most is the thing that you can use to help other people," Shipp said.

Shipp has shared that message with teenagers across the United States.

After Shipp's discussion with his parents and his continued involvement in DECA, Shipp began to appreciate DECA for the right reasons.

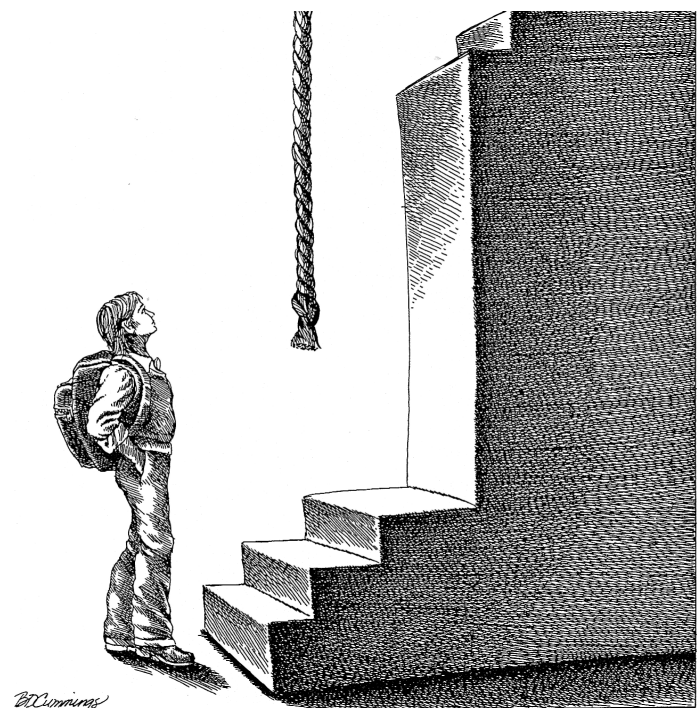
"I went to our state conference and was amazed," Shipp said. "I looked up and saw the officers and knew I had to run the next year."

### AT DECA HE WAS OFF AND RUNNING

The following year Shipp was elected Oklahoma's DECA state president.

While president, Shipp shared the stage with comedian Bill Cosby, opening for him at a nonviolence rally. DECA's enriching program allowed Shipp to see his potential.

After high school graduation Shipp enrolled in college. There, he found his niche in public speaking.



From pep rallies to workshops to local conferences, his reputation for combining entertainment with motivation aided Shipp in receiving invitations to speak to young people about current issues.

Shipp credits DECA for helping him discover his true passion and turning his life around.

### RECOGNIZED AS A CAREERTECH CHAMPION

That is why he is being recognized as a CareerTech champion, according to Phil Berkenbile, CareerTech state director.

"CareerTech Champions are alumni of the system's programs or student organizations who attribute much of success to their CareerTech experience," Berkenbile said.

Each year Shipp speaks with an average of 100,000 teens. Along with personal appearances, he uses modern-day communication vehicles such as MySpace, podcasts, e-books, web sites and blogs.

One of Shipp's newer projects is a web site called Heyjosh.tv where he gives teens advice, and responds to questions. DirecTV has purchased 10 of these episodes to air nationally in 15 million homes.

Shipp attributes his personal growth and success to the support of a great foster family, dynamic teachers and DECA.

### FINDING YOUR PATH IN LIFE

"Success is finding something in life you love so much that you would do it for free, but you do it so well that you get paid to do it," Shipp said.

He has now written a book, *Don't Be Average*, and helped co-author three other books: *The Best of Success for Teens*, *The Making of an Unshakable Character* and *Forty Voices*.

Shipp has also hosted a reality show called *Prom Date* and is in the process of working on a pilot for MTV.

In the future he plans to continue speaking to teenagers and working on more media-related projects that inspire and entertain at the same time.

"It doesn't matter why you get involved, what does matter is taking the step to get involved," Shipp said.

"CareerTech programs, such as DECA, can change your life. It changed mine."

- For more information on CareerTech student organizations go to <http://okcareertech.org/main/students.htm>

## Women Inmates In A Reentry Program

In case you were ready to give up on any kind of rehabilitation for Oklahoma's non-violent offenders, there is good news.

Women participating in the Partnership for Reentry of Offenders Through Education and Community Treatment [PROTECT] are receiving individualized, holistic assistance through a federally-funded grant initiative sponsored by a collaboration of the federal Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Justice.

PROTECT seeks to fill gaps in services for eligible offenders releasing to Oklahoma County. To be eligible, an offender must have served at least one year in prison, be between 18 and 35 years of age, been assessed as "high risk" for re-offending and volunteer for the project.

### COMMUNITY AGENCIES FUNDED

Transition workers from community agencies in Oklahoma County are funded through the grant to begin working with offenders prior to release and assist with their transitions to the community.

The transition workers continue to assist their clients until they are self-sufficient. The primary goal is that the participants do not return to prison within three years.

The Department of Corrections refers eligible offenders to the transition workers who help the offender find employment and housing, pursue education and training.

They also assist with bus passes to travel to appointments and make contact with other participating state and local agencies to receive services. Both men and women may volunteer for PROTECT.

### PROBLEMS SPECIFIC TO GENDER

The female PROTECT participants re-enter society with problems specific to their gender. Women are more often limited to low-level jobs without even the opportunities of men to obtain instant employment as a day laborer.

Women are also more often single parents trying to regain custody of their children. Their backgrounds often reveal that they have run away from home at an early age to escape sexual and physical abuse.

Almost all of the women are victims of abusive and exploitive relationships, and their abuse is likely to have a correlation with drugs and alcohol. Most also have minor children.

### SOME PROBLEMS UNIQUE TO WOMEN

Women offenders are more likely than men to experience co-occurring mental health problems and chemical dependency. Addressing these issues together usually has better results. Often it is impossible to separate whether the abuse resulted in the chemical abuse or if the chemical abuse resulted in abuse.

The women's lives are more centered on relationships than are men's lives, and a woman's pathway to criminal behavior is usually through relationships. Women are more likely to commit a crime with a male partner.

It may be that the best pathway to recovery and self-reliance is also through relationships, such as the positive professional relationship that a woman offender has with a transition worker.

More so than the men, most of the women involved in PROTECT have adjusted well in the project, and have not returned to prison.



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## PUBLIC FORUM

# America's Sad State Of Affairs

By Bob Ward

Please advise me if I have suddenly become mentally ill. I listen to our corporate-controlled media on all levels and I see their propaganda machines working; their outrageous lying, and the total inability of Congress to change anything now or ever.

This particular president has been ruling by executive order his entire tenure. Bills have been passed but he has marked out those parts of any bill he doesn't want to enforce or adhere to.

The war goes on and nothing can be done by Congress no matter what they say BECAUSE gerrymandering has destroyed any opportunity to change Congress enough to get anything passed. We need 20 more representatives and at least 10 more senators.

I told my then-wife 45 years ago that if I could control television for three weeks I could have America Goose-stepping. The last presidential election proved it with the media showing acknowledged heroes of the Vietnam conflict, John Kerry and Max Cleland, as cowards, and slackers and acknowledged slackers, our president and vice-president, as heroes.

### U.S. MILITARY IS BUT A TOOL OF MULTATIONALS

People need to realize that our multinational corporations have always hated the United States but loved what our military could do to further their aims. Most of America does not realize that since 1898 we have been constantly at war someplace.

The Marine Corps was all over Central and South America during the years 1900 through the world wars. Corporations are owned by stockholders but mostly by other corporations.

Big Oil also is big coal and big nuclear and their subtle advertising with little children extolling coal and a beautiful girl with a chunk of coal singing, "I am just a big lump of coal but I will be a diamond someday" and little children telling the world that nuclear power plants are clean and natural, skipping the waste problem.

We need to face up to the fact that we are totally controlled by huge corporations because they are where our candidates get all their money.

When every candidate running for president has to come up with \$100 million for the primary, what chance does any populist have?

### OUTLOOK IS SADLY BLEAK

No matter who is elected to Congress or to the presidency, NOTHING WILL CHANGE.

Forget about taxpayers as they are not paying for the war anyway. Loans from



M. WUERKER

China and Saudi Arabia are paying, and we may or may not be paying the interest.

It must be clearly understood by all that our present circumstances are not the total fault of the present administration, but the fault of all administrations – constant interference with foreign countries to obtain economic advantage and creating special groups such as the Central Intelligence Agency to do it. There is enough blame to go around.

Right now, Republicans are blaming Jimmy Carter, Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton and they are not completely full of it.

### GOP + FUNDIES = VICTORY IN 2008

I really think that with their almost total control of the media, if they can settle on a candidate that can roll out the nut vote – as in religious – the Republicans can still win.

No matter what any Oklahomans say, this state has a long way to go before it will support either a woman or a black person.

I voted for Jesse Jackson twice but I have watched racism and anti-feminism for 34 years in our courts and on our juries as well as the attitude of the general population.

I am afraid the government will figure out some way of saying "we won" and then everyone will forget about it and worry about gay marriage instead.

– The author lives in Guthrie

## The Changing Role Of George W. Bush

By Kenny Belford

Remember back when we were children and part of playing involved dressing up, or donning some costume? "Who are you supposed to be?" was an often asked question.

It was playtime and we all knew it was make believe. Then, as we grew older, we put away the costumes and the self-assigned labels.

At least most of us did.

There isn't much known in the public knowledge about the early childhood of George W. Bush, but it seems somewhat likely he was never allowed to engage in that form of play.

It took him late in his adult life to be able to do what most of us did between the ages of 5-8. It's forever established in our memory, the sight of George W. Bush prancing across the deck of an aircraft carrier in his GI Joe costume.

The irony there is the fact that he was a former pilot, but he had his military pilot's license revoked when he refused to take a physical that would have tested for cocaine and other illegal drugs.

### MENACING POM-PON BOY

Even before that, George W. Bush, while at Yale, enjoyed donning his cheerleader costume and menacingly shaking his pom-poms at opposing football players.

He also frequently likes to inform America of a newly created self-assigned label. It's like he's answering the "Who are you supposed to be?" question. Several years ago, with his best smirk, he told a television interviewer, "See, I'm a war president."

I know that impressed us all. It's too bad the "war president" is actually losing two of them at the same time.

Then we came to his rebuke from the White House rose garden. He snarled, "I'm the decider." That was his response to questions about why so many of his decisions were bone-headed and stubborn. That brings us to today.

### THE 'DECIDER' BECAME A RUNNING JOKE

Today, when we ask "Who are you supposed to be?" the GI Joe costume has been retired. He won't reply, "I'm the war president." Nope, he's moved on from that one. He won't answer, "I'm the decider." That became too much of a running joke on late night television shows.

Today there's a new answer to the question, "Who are you supposed to be?" Without his customary, trademark smirk, today George W. Bush assigned himself a new label. Today, he's not GI Joe, he's not "the war president," he's not "the

decider," without the benefit of a drum roll, George W. Bush informed us all today he's now "The Decision-Maker."

I wonder if it involves wearing a cape?

– The author lives in Tulsa

## CNN ... Most Twisted Name In The News

By Sheila Samples

Thanks to the complete nervous breakdown of the U.S. media, it's been a long, hard six years for those of us who believe that journalism exists for one reason only – to hold those in power to account, and to speak truth to that power.

Paul Wolfowitz is embroiled in a really slimy, immoral sex scandal at the World Bank.

Rove/Bush/Cheney "ordered" the Republican National Committee not to release to the House Judiciary Committee emails related to the U.S. attorney firings that have not been cleared by the White House.

Little Alberto Gonzales has painted himself into a corner and "can't recall" how he got there.

And the White House has admitted our flag-wavin', foot-stompin' commander-in-chief was "unaware of defense plans to immediately extend Army combat tours when he criticized Democrats' budget plans as potentially forcing troops to spend more time in Iraq."

### FEW IMPEACHMENT STORIES

Perhaps the most explosive news not covered is the announcement of Ohio Democratic Rep. Dennis Kucinich that he would file articles of impeachment against Dick Cheney.

Here is a copy of his letter to members of Congress that was leaked to the Washington Post's "Sleuth," Mary Ann Akers ...

See TWISTED Page 13

## BOOKS

# Iacocca Hits Bush In Hot New Book

By Gordon Trowbridge

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### WHERE HAVE ALL THE LEADERS GONE?

By Lee Iacocca with Catherine Whitney  
Simon & Schuster  
275 pages, \$25.00

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Lee Iacocca, author of the original business management best-seller, is giving President Bush an "F" in leadership.

In a just-released book, the former Chrysler CEO – who supported Bush's first campaign in 2000 but backed Sen. John Kerry four years later – accused Bush of leading the nation to war "on a pack of lies" and lacking the basic components of good leadership.

"I think our current President should visit the real world once in a while," Iacocca writes.

The book, co-written by New York journalist Catherine Whitney, comes 23 years after Iacocca's best-selling autobiography *Iacocca*, which reshaped the way the publishing industry viewed business books. USA Today recently ranked the book among the 25 most influential among publishers and readers over the past 25 years.

### FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN AUTO INDUSTRY

In addition to politics, Iacocca weighs in on his experiences at Chrysler and the future of the U.S. auto industry in typically blunt fashion.

His latest broadside is in character, said Matthew Seeger, chairman of the communication department of Wayne State University and author of a book on Iacocca's speeches.

Iacocca has described himself as a political independent, and his new book is the latest twist in political history that includes a brief flirtation with his own run for president.

He had a close relationship with Democrat Gov. James Blanchard and President Reagan during his time at Chrysler. He made ads for President Bush in 2000 but made campaign appearances with Kerry four years later. He made more ads, this time for GOP gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos last year.

### 'WHERE THE HELL IS OUR OUTRAGE?'

"Am I the only guy in this country who's fed up with what's happening?"

Iacocca writes. "Where the hell is our outrage? We should be screaming bloody murder. We've got a gang of clueless bozos steering our ship of state right over



a cliff.

"We've got corporate gangsters stealing us blind, and we can't even clean up after a hurricane much less build a hybrid car. But instead of getting mad, everyone sits around and nods their heads when the politicians say, 'Stay the course.'"

Iacocca has tough things to say about Congress, corporate America, the press and even the voters who put the nation's current leadership in power. But his harshest criticism is saved for Bush.

He savages Bush's famous determination: "George Bush prides himself on never changing, even as the world around him is spinning out of control. God forbid someone should accuse him of flip-flopping," Iacocca writes. "There's a disturbingly messianic fervor to his certainty."

### SUBSTITUTING MACHO FOR COURAGE

He accuses Bush of substituting macho for courage: "Swagger isn't courage. Tough talk isn't courage. Courage in the 21st Century doesn't mean posturing and bravado. Courage is a commitment to sit down at the negotiating table and talk."

He scoffs at Bush's business-degree background: "Thanks to our first MBA President, we've got the largest deficit in history, Social Security is on life support, and we've run up a half-a-trillion price tag so far in Iraq. And that's just for starters."

"Name me an industry leader who is thinking creatively about how we can restore our competitive edge in manufacturing," he writes. "Who would have believed that there could ever be a time when 'The Big Three' referred to Japanese car companies?"

© Detroit News

# Thomas' Memoir, A Half Century Later

By Norm Rourke

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### FORTY YEARS A LEGISLATOR

By Elmer Thomas  
University of Oklahoma Press  
188 pages, \$24.95

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Elmer Thomas [1876-1965] represented the people of Oklahoma as a state legislator, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and four terms as U.S. senator.

This is his own account of service to Oklahoma and the nation through depression and war. It was written shortly after he left office in 1951 but was never published.

It chronicles his long career and offers a wealth of information on people and events that helped shape the development of the state and the course of American history.

Thomas became one of Oklahoma's first state senators in 1907 and was involved with financing the construction of public works.

Commenting on the efforts to build the capitol in Oklahoma City, he wrote:

"While Oklahoma City had promised free office rent, a free site for the Capitol, and \$1 million with which to construct the building, we could not locate any person who seemed anxious to make good such promises."

As a member of the Congress, he made it his business to understand the Federal Reserve System .

And as the farm crisis of the 1920s worsened during the Great Depression, he consistently argued for inflating the currency to stimulate the economy—a struggle that became central to his career and that he eventually won.

Thomas's panoramic look at the issues of his time include a behind-the-scenes view of the Nürnberg War Crimes Trial and also tells how he helped push funding for the atomic bomb project through Congress without disclosing its true nature.

This is the story of an Oklahoma public servant who dedicated his career to improving the lot of rural residents, Native Americans and working people.

It is a significant story of the early years of Oklahoma statehood and fits well with the celebration of Oklahoma's Centennial.

— The author lives in Beggs

## Exercising Your Aging Brain

If you're worried that your mental powers will decline as you age, a new study offers hope that a relatively brief flurry of brain exercises can slow the mind's deterioration.

The study, whose findings were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, involved 2,800 men and women in six American cities. All were healthy, 65 and older, and living independently.

Most participants were given 10 sessions of training to improve a particular mental skill. A memory group learned strategies for remembering word lists and textual material.

A reasoning group learned how to find the pattern in a letter or word series. And a third group was trained to identify an object on a computer screen at increasingly brief exposures.

When tested five years later, these participants had less of a decline in the skill they were trained in than did a control group that received no cognitive training.

The payoff from the mental exercise seemed far greater than we are accus-

tomed to getting for physical exercise – as if 10 workouts at the gym were enough to keep you fit five years later.

Researchers have yet to find compelling evidence that the retention of mental skills significantly improved the ability to tackle everyday tasks, such as handling money or following instructions on a medicine bottle.

But there are encouraging hints in the data that brain exercises may well help, a critical factor in determining whether elderly Americans can live independently.

If further studies show that mental exercises can improve everyday functioning, doctors may need to prescribe such training, senior centers may want to set up "brain gyms," and aging Americans would be wise to do brain-stretching activities.

For this purpose, even the Medicare prescription drug program, which critics deem too confusing for many older people to navigate, could prove an unexpected blessing. Spend 10 hours mastering its intricacies today and you could be a lot sharper than your compatriots five years from now.

© The New York Times

# Blacks Can't Blame White People Forever

By Bill Cosby

They're standing on the corner and they can't speak English. I can't even talk the way these people talk.

Why you ain't, Where you is, What he drive, Where he stay, Where he work, Who you be ... I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk. And then I heard the father talk.

Everybody knows it's important to speak English ... except these knuckleheads. Mushroom is what they speak.

You can't be a doctor with that kind of stuff coming out of your mouth. In fact you will never get any kind of job making a decent living.

People marched and were hit in the face with rocks to get an education, and now we've got these knuckleheads throwing that all away.

The lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal.

These people are not parenting.

## HOW ABOUT HOOKED ON PHONICS?

They are buying things for kids. \$500 sneakers for what? But they won't spend \$200 for Hooked on Phonics.

I am talking about these people who cry when their son is standing there ... orange suit. Where were you when he was two? Where were you when he was 12? Where were you when he was 18?

And, how come you didn't know that he had a pistol? Or who is his father? People putting their clothes on backward: Isn't that a sign of something gone wrong? People with their hats on backward, pants down around the crack, isn't that a sign of something?

They're walking around with their nasty underwear showing, and holding onto their pants to keep them from falling to the ground! Or are you waiting for Jesus to pull his pants on.

## IT'S A TIME FOR SOMETHING

Isn't it a sign of something when she has her dress all the way up to her panty line, and got all types of needle piercings going through her body?

What part of Africa did this come from? We are not Africans. Those people are not Africans; they don't know a thing about Africa.

With names like Shaniqua, Taliqua and Mohammed and all of that crap, and all of them are in jail.

# Let's End The War Against Our Kids

By Brent Budowsky

All across America, while we mourn together the tragic loss in Virginia, nuts are buying guns, candidates are bragging they kill bunnies with semiautomatic weapons, and politicians tremble with fear of gun lobbies.

And more young Americans die.

We don't need another debate about the talking points for and against gun control.

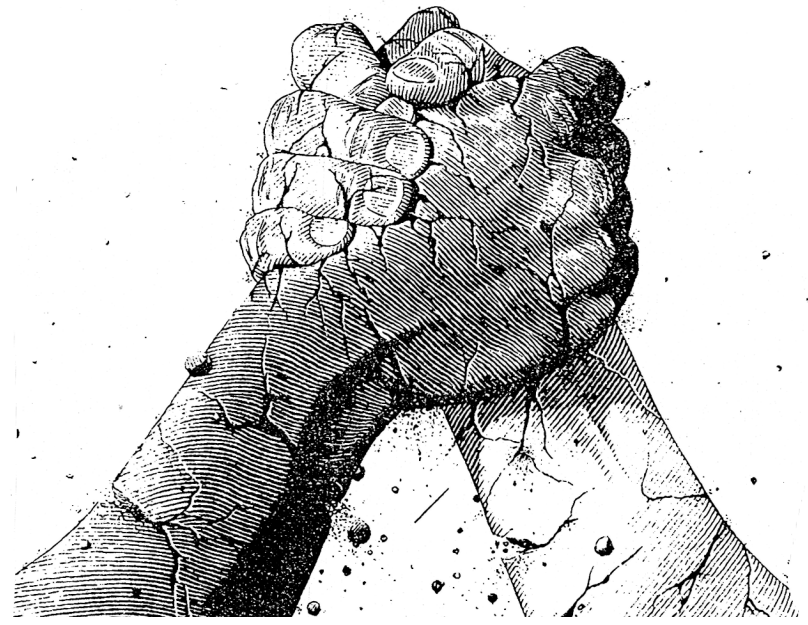
We need a serious national discussion to find a way to protect legitimate hunters while preventing any nut case, psychotic and sicko from getting a gun to kill more children.

Virtually every day in Iraq, there are tragedies and outrages equal to Virginia Tech.

Every day, pollutants are poured into our skies, because the old are addicted to their cars, the oil companies are addicted to their profits, the politicians are addicted to their campaign money.

## EVERY DAY IN WASHINGTON

Every day in Washington, the budget deficit and national debt are bloated some more, as the old generation steals from the young, as the grownups enjoy a quality of life paid for by the kids of the next generation who will bear the burden of the gluttony today.



Brown or black versus the Board of Education is no longer the white person's problem. We have got to take the neighborhood back. People used to be ashamed.

Today a woman has eight children with eight different "husbands" or men or whatever you call them now.

## ILLITERATE MILLIONAIRES

We have millionaire football players who cannot read. We have million-dollar basketball players who can't write two paragraphs.

We as black folks have to do a better job. Someone working at Wal-Mart with seven kids saying ... you are hurting us. We have to start holding each other to a higher standard.

We cannot blame the white people any longer. It is not for media or anyone of this time any more to say whether I'm right or wrong. It is time, ladies gentlemen, to look at the numbers.

Fifty percent of our children are dropping out of high school. Sixty percent of the incarcerated males happen to be illiterate. There's a correlation.

Tell the media to stop asking me what I think about people who don't believe what I'm saying or feel that I'm too harsh or feel that I'm just running my mouth because I'm old.

Seventy percent of unmarried pregnant teenagers happen to be African-American girls.

Don't ask me to soften my message.

Every hour in Darfur, teenage mothers are dying with tiny babies in their arms, as they give them their last drops of water and food.

Soon the babies will die as well, as the older generation that once promised that it will never happen again, lets it happen again, while we watch on a flat panel television, without the courage or commitment to stop it.

And the death of the young goes on.

## FILLING AIRWAVES WITH FILTH

Every minute on our televisions and radio, foul-mouthed hosts spout the media of hate, racism – or merely demean, make fun of, or hurt the weak, the vulnerable or the different.

Once upon a time in America there was a great generation. Today there is a great generational rip-off.

There is a song that says *teach the children*. Today, it is the grown ups who could learn from the kids.

Let's do our duty as elders, and end the war against our children, and the abuses against our kids, and the wrongs the old commit against the young.

– The author, a former aide to the late Sen. Lloyd Bensten and to then-House Chief Deputy Whip Bill Alexander, is a contributing editor to *Fighting Dems News Service*.

## TWISTED

From Page 11

Dear Colleague:

This week I intend to introduce Articles of Impeachment with respect to the conduct of Vice President Cheney. Please have your staff contact my office ... if you would like to receive a confidential copy of the document prior to its introduction in the House."

However, Kucinich's action appears to have been quickly shot down, as Akers reported that, "Sources tell the Sleuth that in light of the mass killings at Virginia Tech ... Kucinich's impeachment plans have been put on hold ..."

## SHOULDN'T HOLD HIS BREATH

Akers writes that Kucinich shouldn't hold his breath on getting anywhere with his impeachment plan because a Democratic aide quipped, "We'll see a Kucinich Administration before we'll see a Cheney impeachment."

Looks like Cheney has low friends in high places, doesn't it? Kucinich's office had no comment.

All media, print and electronic, were obscenely obsessed with the shooting at Virginia Tech – none more so than CNN, the most "twisted" name in news.

CNN anchors were on the scene in full investigation mode, mercilessly inter-

rogating university officials, police officials and friends of those murdered.

"How did it feel? ... How will this affect your life? ... Should someone have seen Cho Seung-Hui's 'break' coming? ... Who's responsible? ... Tell us, tell us how you feel ... What is it like to see your friends in the hospital? ... What are you going to do next? ... How are you going to move on?"

## HOW DOES IT FEEL TO LOSE A CHILD?

CNN then went on to go down a list of victims, giving their names and airing interviews with family members who were asked how it felt to lose their children.

Meanwhile, the 40 faceless, nameless, family-less American soldiers and marines killed were not important enough to get CNN's attention.

The 157 [reported briefly by the New York Times – or 127 reported just as briefly by the Washington Post] human beings killed in Baghdad as a result of four car bombings weren't even a blip on CNN's TV screen. There were also at least 150 injured in those blasts.

Maybe CNN should ask these survivors how they "feel."

– The author is an Oklahoma writer and a former civilian information officer

# How Web Became Sexists' Paradise

By Jessica Valenti

Everyone receives abuse online but the sheer hatred thrown at women bloggers has left some in fear for their lives.

Last week, Kathy Sierra, a well-known software programmer and Java expert, announced that she had canceled her speaking engagements and was "afraid to leave my yard" after being threatened with suffocation, rape and hanging.

The threats didn't come from a stalker or a jilted lover and they weren't responses to a controversial book or speech. Sierra's harassers were largely anonymous, and all the threats had been made online.

Sierra had been receiving increasingly abusive comments on her website, Creating Passionate Users, over the previous year, but had not expected them to turn so violent – her attackers not only verbally assaulting her ["f--- off you boring slut ... I hope someone slits your throat"] but also posting photo montages of her on other sites.

## A NOOSE NEXT TO HER FACE

One has a noose next to her head and another depicts her screaming with a thong covering her face.

Since she wrote about the abuse on her website, the harassment has increased.

"People are posting all my private data online everywhere – social security number, and home address – a retaliation for speaking out."

While no one could deny that men experience abuse online, the sheer vitriol directed at women has become impossible to ignore.

Extreme instances of stalking, death threats and hate speech are now prevalent, as well as all the everyday harassment that women have traditionally faced in the outside world.

Cat-calls, for instance, or being "rated" on our looks. It's all very far from the utopian ideals that greeted the dawn of the web – the idea of it as a new, egalitarian public space, where men and women from all races, and of all sexualities, could mix without prejudice.

On some online forums anonymity combined with misogyny can make for an almost gang rape like mentality.

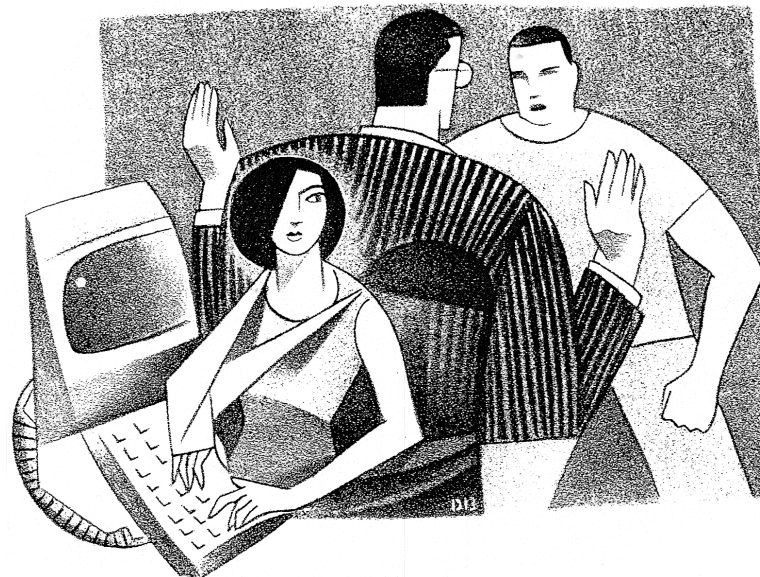
## THIS OUTRAGE IS BEING ACCEPTED

Most disturbing is how accepted this is. When women are harassed on the street, it is considered inappropriate. Online, though, sexual harassment is not only tolerated – it's often lauded.

Blog threads or forums where women are attacked attract hundreds of comments, and their traffic rates rocket.

Is this what people are really like? Sexist and violent? Misogynist and racist? Alice Marwick, a postgraduate student in New York studying culture and communication, says:

*Last year I had my own run-in with online sexism when I was invited to a*



*lunch meeting with Bill Clinton, along with a handful of other bloggers.*

*After the meeting, a group photo of the attendees with Clinton was posted on several websites, and it wasn't long before comments about my appearance ["Who's the intern?" and "I do like Gray Shirt's three-quarter pose."] started popping up.*

## HER MOST HUMILIATING EXPERIENCE

*I won't even get into the hundreds of other blogs and websites that linked to the "controversy." It was, without doubt, the most humiliating experience of my life – all because I dared be photographed with a political figure.*

Sierra thinks that online threats, even if they are coming from a small group of people, have tremendous potential to scare women from fully participating online.

Even women who don't put their pictures or real names online are subject to virtual harassment. A recent study showed that when the gender of an online user name appears female, they are 25 times more likely to experience harassment.

The study conducted by the University of Maryland found that female user names averaged 163 threatening and/or sexually explicit messages a day.

## WOMEN ARE FIGHTING BACK

Thankfully, women are fighting back. Sparked by the violent harassment of Sierra, one blogger started a "stop cyber bullying" campaign. It was picked up by hundreds of other bloggers and an international women's technology organization.

Take Back the Tech, a global network of women who encourage people to "take back online spaces" by writing, video blogging, or podcasting about online harassment.

It won't mean the end of misogyny on the web, but it is a start. Such campaigns show that women are ready to demand freedom from harassment and fear in our new public spaces.

In the same way that we should be able to walk down the street without fear of being raped, women shouldn't have to stay quiet online – or pretend to be men – to be free of threats and harassment. It is time to take back the sites.

© The Guardian UK

# Writer Confronts Gender Crisis, Hate

By Susan Estrich

It is the most e-mailed story in my local newspaper. My guess is you'll hear about it wherever you live, and not only by reading this column.

Mike is becoming Christine.

Mike Penner has been a sportswriter at the Los Angeles Times for 23 years. While a lot of us know about his affection for soccer, he's covered almost every sport as a reporter, columnist and essayist, and knows as much as anyone about football and baseball.

Which doesn't necessarily make him a man.

## A LONELY, 40-YEAR STRUGGLE

Mike recently came out to his readers, detailing his struggles for more than 40 years trying to live as a man while identifying as a woman, and his fear of telling people his secret.

"When you reach the point when one gender causes heartache and unbearable discomfort, and the other brings more joy and fulfillment than you ever imagined possible," he wrote, "it shouldn't take two tons of bricks to fall in order to know what to do."

But Penner, like most transsexuals, was more afraid of how people would respond than of anything else.

"For more years than I care to count, I was scared to death over the prospect of writing a story such as this one. It was the most frightening of all the towering mountains of fear I somehow had to confront and struggle to scale."

With reason. Penner's poignant column announcing that he would be going on vacation, that on this vacation he would undergo reassignment surgery, and that he would return to his job as a sportswriter as Christine Daniels generated many positive and supportive responses. And some very ugly ones.

## RESPONSES SUGGEST HE CHOSE THE BETTER SEX

How dare he use the sports pages to unburden himself, a number of people have argued, on the paper's own website and on others that focus on sports. Weird, others said, in comments that can't be repeated here. Many of them came from men. As one person noted, the women were so much kinder than the men that you couldn't help thinking that Penner had chosen the better sex.

But bias against transsexuals and transgender men and women is no laughing

matter.

In most states, there is simply no legal protection for those who don't fit neatly on one side of the Male/Female dichotomy. It's not a question of which bathroom they use, but whether they can be fired, evicted and denied medically necessary treatment because they make some of us feel uncomfortable. The answer, too often, is yes.

I've never understood why people who are secure in their own gender identity give a darn about anyone else's. I'm a woman. If you want to be one, that's your decision. If you don't, it has nothing to do with me. Is that so hard to see?

## HOW MANY ARE KEEPING THIS SECRET?

No one knows for sure how many transsexuals or transgender men and women there are in this country. These umbrella terms encompass a wide range of individuals, including cross dressers, those who choose to live as the opposite gender without any physical adjustments, as well as those like Mike Penner, who seek a surgical solution.

On the Internet, you can find estimates of the incidence of transsexuality that range from 1 in 100 to 1 in 20, which would mean a whole lot of people are keeping a whole lot of secrets.

So long as discrimination is rampant and transsexuals are stigmatized, it's impossible to get an accurate count. But so what? Discrimination doesn't become more acceptable because of the number of people being victimized.

Mike Penner took a big step, not only for himself, but also for others who may see him as a role model. His description of the supportive responses he received – from co-workers, friends, his barber – may convince others that bias is not as big a problem as they feared. I hope that's right. It certainly should be.

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## Churchill vs. Bush

"The power of the executive to cast a man into prison without formulating any charge known to the law, and particularly to deny him the judgment of his peers, is in the highest degree odious and is the foundation of all totalitarian government whether Nazi or Communist." – Sir Winston Churchill

# 'Yes, I Love You, Madame Librarian'

*Editor's Note: The late, great Kurt Vonnegut had one last tribute to make before he departed this life – an ode to librarians.*

**By Kurt Vonnegut**

I, like probably most of you, have seen Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11. Its title is a parody of the title of Ray Bradbury's great science fiction novel, Fahrenheit 451.

This temperature, 451 Fahrenheit, is the combustion point, incidentally, of paper, of which books are composed. The hero of Bradbury's novel is a municipal worker whose job is burning books.

And on the subject of burning books: I want to congratulate librarians, not famous for their physical strength or their powerful political connections or their great wealth, who, all over this country, have staunchly resisted anti-democratic bullies who have tried to remove certain books from their shelves, and have refused to reveal to thought police the names of persons who have checked out those titles.

So the America I love still exists, if not in the White House or the Supreme Court or the Senate or the House of Representatives or the media. The America I love still exists at the front desks of our public libraries.

## THE MEDIA TODAY IS CRAVEN

And still on the subject of books: Our daily sources of newspapers and TV, are now so craven, so unvigilant on behalf of the American people, so uninformative, that only in books can we find out what is really going on.

I will cite an example: House of Bush, House of Saud, by Craig Unger, published near the start of this humiliating, shameful blood-soaked year.

In case you haven't noticed, and as a result of a shamelessly rigged election in Florida, in which thousands of African-Americans were arbitrarily disenfranchised, we now present ourselves to the rest of the world as proud, grinning, jut-jawed, pitiless war lovers, with appallingly powerful weaponry and unopposed.

In case you haven't noticed, we are now almost as feared and hated all over the world as the Nazis were. With good reason.

## WOUNDING. KILLING TORTURING

In case you haven't noticed, our un-elected leaders have dehumanized millions and millions of human beings simply because of their religion and race. We wound and kill 'em and torture 'em and imprison 'em all we want.

Piece of cake.

In case you haven't noticed, we also dehumanize our own soldiers, not because of their religion or race, but because of their low social class. Send 'em



anywhere. Make 'em do anything.

Piece of cake.

The O'Reilly Factor.

So I am a man without a country, except for the librarians and the Chicago-based magazine you are reading, In These Times.

Before we attacked Iraq, the majestic New York Times guaranteed that there were weapons of mass destruction there.

## EINSTEIN, TWAIN GAVE UPON HUMANITY

Albert Einstein and Mark Twain gave up on the human race at the end of their lives, even though Twain hadn't even seen World War I. War is now a form of TV entertainment.

What made World War I so particularly entertaining were two American inventions, barbed wire and the machine gun. Shrapnel was invented by an Englishman of the same name. Don't you wish you could have something named after you?

Like my distinct betters Einstein and Twain, I now am tempted to give up on people, too. And, as some of you may know, this is not the first time I have surrendered to a pitiless war machine.

My last words? "Life is no way to treat an animal, not even a mouse." Napalm came from Harvard. Veritas!

Our president is a Christian? So was Adolf Hitler.

What can be said to our young people, now that psychopathic personalities, persons without consciences, without a sense of pity or shame, have taken all the money in the treasuries of our government and corporations and made it all their own?

© In These Times

# The Witching Hour In America

**By Lenore Skenazy**

Praise the goddess and pass the magical candle – the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has finally recognized the Wicca religion.

You've heard of the Wiccans, right? They're the group perhaps 700,000 strong in this country who sometimes call themselves witches – but sometimes don't. They believe in the power of the seasons, the goddess of the earth, and the United States of America, which some of them even died for.

Until April 23, however, none of these vets were allowed to be officially buried under the Wiccan symbol, the pentacle – a five-pointed star inside a circle.

After a 10-year fight, the VA finally relented, agreeing to add the pentacle to its list of 38 other approved religious symbols, including an atom for atheists.

Leaving aside the question of why a country founded on religious freedom would even *make* a list of "approved religions" [what are we, China?], how did this breakthrough finally come to pass?

## VA APPROVAL WAS 'MAGIC'

Simple, said Wiccan High Priestess [and Bronx shopkeeper] Lady Rhea: magic.

"There have been thousands of spells done to make the VA come around," said the Lady R. "Everyone's been doing a lot of magical operations to get them to agree that we have our Constitutional rights."

The fruits of these spells could not have come at a more propitious moment, as the beginning of May marks Beltane, one of the two highest holidays in the Wiccan religion [the other being Samhain, aka Halloween].

This is the time of year when Wiccans all over American will dance 'round the Maypole in an age-old fertility rite [think: pole].

"Wicca has exploded in the last 10-15 years," said Margot Adler, an NPR correspondent and author of the goddess classic "Drawing Down the Moon." "There's even a military pagan network."

And yet Adler sounds a little wistful remembering the religion's earlier, struggling days.

## A WICCA GROUP FOR EVERYONE

"When I got involved about 35 years ago, you went to the library to find out about groups," she said. You were lucky if there was one in your state. "Now you can go on witchvox.com and if you're Irish you can find a Celtic group, or an Italian one with a strega background."

At big Wiccan shindigs there's often a "teen tent" [where the kids probably talk about how square their parents are]. Pagan Pride events are popping up all over.

And alcoholic Wiccans can join a Pagan AA.

Wicca is the next yoga.

For all that, the religion is still widely distrusted, in large part because many confuse it with devil worship – something Wiccans never, ever practiced, except in B movies. To fight such disinformation, Laurie Cabot formed the witchcraft equivalent of the Anti-Defamation League.

## THE WITCHES PUBLIC AWARENESS LEAGUE

"We have an organization here in Salem called the Witches Public Awareness League," Cabot said. As the "official witch" of Salem – thus proclaimed by former Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis – she campaigns for Wiccan rights.

In particular, she hopes to raise awareness of the prejudice that still meets many Wiccans in the courtroom, where judges have decided custody suits against them because of their religion.

Unfortunately, there is still no spell against prejudice that has proven 100% effective. But a Wiccan named Starr has concocted one potion that is almost as sought after [check out charmedbystarr.com].

"I have an incense to try to get rid of parking tickets," she said. "It worked a little bit."

Share that with the world and Wiccans will not only be tolerated – they will be worshipped.

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## A Talk With God

God addresses Al Gore: "Al, what do you believe?"

Gore replies: "Well, I believe I won that election, but that it was Your will that I not serve. And I've come to understand that now."

God thinks for a second and says, "I admire your humility. Come sit at my left."

God then addresses Bill Clinton: "Bill, what do you believe?"

Clinton replies: "I believe in forgiveness. I've sinned, but I've never held a grudge against my fellow man, and I hope no grudges are held against me."

God thinks for a second and says, "You are forgiven, my son. Come sit at my right"

God then calls on George W. Bush: "George, what do you believe?"

Bush says: "I believe you're in my chair."



# Ethanol Cars May Not Be Healthier

Ethanol vehicles may have worse effects on human health than conventional petrol, U.S. scientists have warned.

A computer model set up to simulate air quality in 2020 found that in some areas ozone levels would increase if all cars were run on bioethanol.

Deaths from respiratory problems and asthma attacks would increase with such levels, the researchers reported in *Environmental Science and Technology*.

The E.U. has agreed that biofuels should be used in 10% of transport by 2020.

Mark Jacobson, an atmospheric scientist at Stanford University in California, used a computer model which took into account factors such as temperatures, sunlight, clouds and rain to simulate air quality in 2020 for two different scenarios.

In one simulation all vehicles were fueled by petrol and in the other all vehicles were fueled by E85 – a mix of 85% ethanol and 15% petrol.

## OZONE WOULD INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY

If all cars were run on E85, he found that in some parts of the U.S. there were significant increases in ozone – a pollutant with harmful effects on the human respiratory system – compared with petrol cars.

In the study, the increase in smog translated to an extra 200 deaths per year in the whole of the U.S., with 120 occurring in Los Angeles alone.

Increases in ozone in some areas of the U.S. would be offset by decreases in other areas but overall there would be 770 additional visits to accident and emergency and 990 additional hospitalizations for asthma and other respiratory problems, the results showed.

Although ethanol was found to reduce levels of two atmospheric carcinogens, levels of others increased so associated cancers would be the same as with pollution caused by petrol fumes, the study showed.

“We found that using E85 will cause at least as much health damage as gasoline, which already causes about 10,000 premature deaths annually from ozone and particulate matter,” said Jacobson.

“The question is, if we’re not getting any health benefits, then why continue to promote ethanol and other biofuels.”

He added: “By comparison, converting all vehicles to battery-electric, where

# 101-Year-Old Man Gets New License

LANGLEY, WA – Alden Couch, who recently celebrated his 101st birthday, just passed his Washington state driver’s test and says he did so with flying colors.

“I haven’t parallel parked for 10 years,” he said, “and I sailed through it like nothing.”

A resident of the Whidbey Island town of Langley, Couch took a birthday drive down to the local senior center, where his friends threw a party for him. After two cakes and a round of dancing, he drove home, where the phone was ringing with birthday wishes.

Were there 101 candles on his cakes?

“No, no, not 101,” he said in a telephone interview. “They’d have had a bonfire if they had that many.”

## BAND HONORS HIS BIRTHDAY

The “old-fashioned band” that usually plays at the senior center on Fridays switched to Monday in honor of Couch’s birthday.

“I always have a good time,” he said. “I can’t have anything but that” but he allowed that with all the dancing “after a couple of hours you get pooped out.”

The state’s decision to give his father a driver’s test took a lot of pressure off his 64-year-old son, Bill Couch, of Clinton.

The son said he sometimes follows his father in his car to make sure his dad is driving safely.

“I feel a lot better about that,” Bill Couch said.

# Canoe Racing On The Missouri River

A Japanese company [Toyota] and an American company [Ford] decided to have a canoe race on the Missouri River. Both teams practiced long and hard to reach their peak performance before the race.

On the big day, the Japanese won by a mile.

The Americans, very discouraged and depressed, decided to investigate the reason for the crushing defeat. A team made up of senior management was formed to investigate and recommend appropriate action.

Their conclusion was the Japanese had eight people rowing and one person steering, while the American team had eight people steering and one person rowing.

Feeling a deeper study was in order, American management hired a consulting company and paid them a large amount of money for a second opinion.

## TOO MANY STEERING, NOT ENOUGH ROWERS

They advised, of course, that too many people were steering the boat, while not enough people were rowing.

Not sure of how to utilize that information, but wanting to prevent another loss to the Japanese, the rowing team’s management structure was totally reorganized to four steering supervisors, three area steering superintendents and one assistant superintendent steering manager.

They also implemented a new performance system that would give the person



the electricity is from wind energy, would eliminate 10,000 air pollution deaths per year and 98% of carbon emissions from vehicles.”

## REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

In principle, biofuels – ethanol and diesel, made from crops including corn, sugarcane and rapeseed – are a way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional transport fuels.

Although they produce carbon dioxide, growing the plants absorbs a comparable amount of the gas from the atmosphere.

A government report said that biofuels could reduce emissions by 50-60% compared to fossil fuels.

Stuart Shales, senior lecturer in environmental biotechnology at the University of the West England, said there were companies in the U.K. producing biofuel but that the U.K. was lagging behind other countries.

He added that it would not be feasible for all cars to run on ethanol because too much land would be needed to grow the crops.

“What people are looking at are second generation fuels which will be produced from whole biomass, like wood, which can be broken down to fermentable sugars.

“The question I would ask is: has there been any respiratory problems in Brazil where ethanol has been used since the early 1970s?”

BBC News U.K

Alden Couch’s new license expires in 2012.

During his recent driver’s test, he admitted he wasn’t bothering to turn on his turn-signal blinker because Whidbey Island is such a rural place. But then he noticed the omission was costing him points with the state examiner.

“Every time I didn’t do it, she would write it down,” Couch said. “So I got smart and started signaling.”

## HE HAS OWNED MANY, MANY CARS

During his lifetime, Couch has owned 10 to 15 cars.

A former employee of Puget Power [now Puget Sound Energy], Couch is 95 years older than the Impala he now owns, which happens to be his all-time favorite car.

“It isn’t the cheapest one in the whole deal, but it’s a good one,” he said.

Couch used to be partial to Oldsmobiles. The first car he drove was an oldie but goodie, Ford’s Model T. It was his parents’ car.

Couch conceded he makes some allowances for his age now by limiting his driving to south Whidbey Island, going only as far as Oak Harbor. He doesn’t like driving in too much traffic.

But he drives around Langley all the time, filling up at the gas station on the highway, heading to the grocery store or dropping by the senior center for lunch and a game of Dominos or bridge.

He figures he drives about 7,500 miles per year.

rowing the boat greater incentive to work harder.

It was called the “Rowing Team Quality First Program,” with meetings, dinners, and free pens for the rower.

There was discussion of getting new paddles, canoes and other equipment, extra vacation days for practices, and bonuses.

The next year the Japanese won by two miles.

## FORD MANAGEMENT WAS DISTRAUGHT

Humiliated, the American management laid off the rower for poor performance, halted development of a new canoe, sold the paddles, and canceled all capital investments for new equipment.

The money saved was distributed to the senior executives as bonuses and the next year’s racing team was out-sourced to India.

Sad, but oh so true! But consider this: Ford has spent the last 30 years moving all its factories out of the U.S., claiming they can’t make money paying American wages.

Toyota has spent the last 30 years building more than a dozen plants inside the U.S.

The last quarter’s results: Toyota makes \$4 billion in profits while Ford racks up \$9 billion in losses.

Why are the Ford folks still scratching their heads?

# 'Christian Lawyers' Bush Picking From The Far, Far Right

By Paul Krugman

In 1981, Gary North, a leader of the Christian Reconstructionist movement – the openly theocratic wing of the Christian right – suggested that the movement could achieve power by stealth.

"Christians must begin to organize politically within the present party structure," he wrote, "and they must begin to infiltrate the existing institutional order."

Today, Regent University, founded by televangelist Pat Robertson to provide "Christian leadership to change the world," boasts that it has 150 graduates working in the Bush administration.

Unfortunately for the image of the school, where Robertson is chancellor and president, the most famous of those graduates is Monica Goodling, a product of the university's law school.

## SHE VOWED TO TAKE THE FIFTH AMENDMENT

She's the former top aide to Alberto Gonzales who appears central to the scandal of the fired U.S. attorneys and has declared that she will take the Fifth rather than testify to Congress on the matter.

The infiltration of the federal government by large numbers of people seeking to impose a religious agenda – which is very different from simply being people of faith – is one of the most important stories of the last six years. It's also a story that tends to go underreported, perhaps because journalists are afraid of sounding like conspiracy theorists.

But this conspiracy is no theory. The official platform of the Texas Republican Party pledges to "dispel the myth of the separation of church and state." And the Texas Republicans now running the country are doing their best to fulfill that pledge.

## SHE GOES TO WORK FOR A CROOK

Kay Cole James, who had extensive connections to the religious right and was the dean of Regent's government school, was the federal government's chief personnel officer from 2001 to 2005.

[Curious fact: she then took a job with Mitchell Wade, the businessman who bribed Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham.]

It's clear that unqualified people were hired throughout the administration because of their religious connections.

For example, The Boston Globe reports on one Regent law school graduate who was interviewed by the Justice Department's civil rights division.

Asked what Supreme Court decision of the past 20 years he most disagreed with, he named the decision to strike down a Texas anti-sodomy law. When he was hired, it was his only job offer.

## CREATIONIST WORKING AT NASA

Or consider George Deutsch, the presidential appointee at NASA who told a Web site designer to add the word "theory" after every mention of the Big Bang,

# TABOR

From Page 1

same address. On still another page she signed "M. A. Jones" with still another address. [Names changed by this author.]

6. Quite a few of the pages contained signatures very obviously signed by the same hand that signed on the back of the page as petition circulator.

7. I did not examine one single page in the entire time that did not have at least one gross discrepancy or obvious forgery.

On the circulated petition, at the very top, printed in bold print is the warning:

*It is a felony for anyone to sign an initiative (sic) or referendum petition with any name other than his own, or knowingly to sign his name more than once for the measure, or to sign such petition when he is not a legal voter.*

This makes it quite clear, at least to me, that signing another person's name to this petition is a felony under Oklahoma law.

Within the thousands of pages I personally audited, not one single page was "clean" or free of any forgeries, duplications, or even fake signatures. Why then has there been no action

taken against the numerous "felonies" included within this petition?

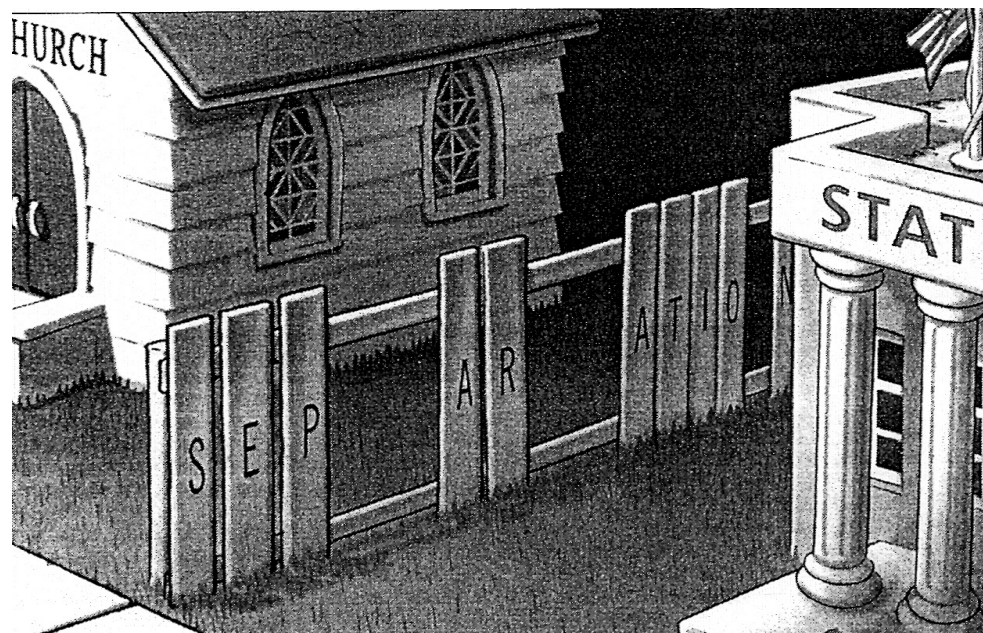
It can't be for lack of evidence. It is not only there for the finding within these pages, but there was testimony before the Supreme Court referee that so indicated.

I did not have the time or the opportunity to attend any of the sessions before the referee. However, the attorneys kept us informed of proceedings. They advised that one petition circulator had admitted he was from out of state, and agreed to testify on behalf of the anti-petition side.

He was placed in protective custody for fear the other side might "persuade" him to not testify, or recant. He then disappeared, but was found a few days later. He did testify that he was not a resident or legal voter in the state of Oklahoma.

He also implicated other petition circulators as well as supervisory personnel.

Another petition circulator purportedly testified under oath that he was a legal resident of the state of Oklahoma. However, under cross examination, and questioning by the referee, he purportedly advised that his suitcases were in his car.



to leave open the possibility of "intelligent design by a creator."

He turned out not to have, as he claimed, a degree from Texas A&M.

One measure of just how many Bushies were appointed to promote a religious agenda is how often a Christian right connection surfaces when we learn about a Bush administration scandal.

There's Ms. Goodling, of course. But did you know that Rachel Paulose, the U.S. attorney in Minnesota – three of whose deputies recently stepped down in protest over her management style – is, according to a local news report, in the habit of quoting Bible verses in the office?

Or there's the case of Claude Allen, the presidential aide and former deputy secretary of health and human services, who stepped down after being investigated for petty theft.

## MEDIA ARE AWOL – AS USUAL

Most press reports, though they mentioned Allen's faith, failed to convey the fact that he built his career as a man of the hard-line Christian right.

There's another thing most reporting fails to convey: the sheer extremism of these people.

You see, Regent isn't a religious university the way Loyola or Yeshiva are religious universities. It's run by someone whose first reaction to 9/11 was to brand it God's punishment for America's sins.

Two days after the terrorist attacks, Robertson held a conversation with Jerry Falwell on Robertson's TV show "The 700 Club."

Falwell laid blame for the attack at the feet of "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians," not to mention the ACLU and People for the American Way. "Well, I totally concur," Robertson said.

The Bush Administration's implosion clearly represents a setback for the Christian right's strategy of infiltration. But it would be wildly premature to declare the danger over. This is a movement that has shown great resilience over the years. It will surely find new champions.

Rudy Giuliani is speaking at Regent's Executive Leadership Series.

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# Meet The Millennials: Liberal, Independent

By Froma Harrop

They like Rudy and Barack. They worry most about Iraq, and over half think the country's on the wrong track. They are liberal, but not always.

We speak of 18- to 24-year-olds, a group that's worn many labels. Some call them "Generation Y" because they're younger than Generation X. They've been named "Generation 9/11" for obvious reasons. My favorite tag is "Millennials," because of its historic sweep. The last Millennial Generation lived in the year 1000, when the Vikings were ravaging the British Isles.

A big political question about this group is: How will they vote? The bigger one is: Will they vote? It's hard to gauge these folks because so many rely on cell phones, which may not be used for polling. On the other hand, they're easy to reach on the Internet.

Democrats have long pursued the so-called youth vote. Their perennial hope has been that young people, who are traditionally liberal, would march to the polls in greater numbers. But they usually wake up the first Wednesday in November realizing that their Great White Whale had overslept once again.

## THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING YOUTH VOTE

When the voting age was dropped to 18 in 1972, all hailed a new era for youthful involvement in our democracy. The reality is that over the last 35 years, the youngest group's participation in elections has steadily dropped.

Democrats detected a sign of life in 2004, when the Millennials' turnout rose to 47% from 36% in 2000. But the Bush-Kerry match excited more of everyone. In the end, young people's share of the electorate remained at 17%, unchanged from 2000.

A surge in college voters in 2006 is said to have delivered victory to Democratic Sens. Jon Tester of Montana and Jim Webb of Virginia. But others give the credit to single women.

A new Pew Research Center survey touches on the apparent lack of political knowledge among Millennials. Its objective was to test whether Americans are more or less informed about current affairs than they were in 1989. The conclusion is that they know about as little now as they did then.

## Presidential Hopeful Would Make History

The first presidential caucuses and primaries are only months away.

Here are facts and tidbits of information about prospective candidates:

- John McCain would become the oldest U.S. president if elected. At age 72 in 2008 he would be three years older than Ronald Reagan at the time of his election in 1980. He would be the first Arizona resident to win the White House and the first U.S. Naval Academy graduate to become president since Jimmy Carter.
- Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois would be the first African-American president, the first president born in Hawaii, and the first United Church of Christ/Congregationalist president since Calvin Coolidge.
- Hillary Rodham Clinton would be the first woman president, and the first New York State resident to occupy the Oval Office since Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney would be the first Mormon president.
- Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee would be the first Southern Baptist preacher elected president, and the second Arkansan [after Bill Clinton].
- Sen. Chuck Hagel would be the first Nebraska resident to win the presidency, and the first Nebraskan to be nominated since William Jennings Bryan. [Gerald Ford was born in Nebraska but grew up in Michigan.]
- Sen. Joe Biden would be Delaware's first president.
- If Reps. Duncan Hunter of California or Dennis Kucinich of Ohio becomes president, either would be the first House member to go directly to the White House since Garfield in 1881.
- Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani or Rep. Tom Tancredo would be the first Italian-American president, and Giuliani would be only the second president [since Grover Cleveland] to have been a mayor.
- Tancredo would be the first Colorado-born President.
- John Edwards, the 2004 Democratic vice presidential nominee, would be the first North Carolina resident to be elected president.
- If either Biden, Giuliani, Kucinich, Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback, Connecticut

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The survey did compare age groups, and the 18- to 29-year-olds did far worse than the others. Only 15% had a "high knowledge" of current affairs, and 59% had "low knowledge." The remaining 29% were in the middle.

## YOUNG AMERICANS POLITICALLY CLUELESS

These weren't trick questions about the president of Pakistan. Only 26% of respondents in the youngest group knew that the Sunnis are one of the two main branches of Islam, the other being the Shiites. Only 55% could name their governor.

As a Pew analyst told me, knowledge of public affairs always increases with age. Still, the report offers little optimism for any vast improvement. Only 15% of the 18- to 29-year-olds read a daily newspaper. More of them [26%] get their news from Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" or "The Colbert Report" than by listening to National Public Radio [17%].

Another recent survey, from Harvard's Institute of Politics, attempts to assess the political attitudes of the 29 million Americans ages 18 to 24. It finds that 35% identify with Democrats and 25% with Republicans, but 40% with neither. Some 61% think health insurance is a basic right, and only 23% want religious values to play a strong role in government.

The Millennials sound liberal but feel independent. If push comes to shove, they'd probably be Democratic voters, were they to vote.

Stand aside, Boomers and Xers, the Harvard report declares, "The Millennial Generation is preparing in 2008 to make their voice heard again, perhaps louder than ever." We shall see.

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Sen. Chris Dodd or New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson is elected, he would be the second Catholic chief executive [after JFK].

- Brownback would be the first Kansan to become President and the third Republican presidential candidate from the Sunflower State [after Bob Dole in 1996 and Alf Landon in 1936].
- If he were to win, Richardson would become the nation's first Hispanic-American president and the first New Mexico resident to become chief executive.
- While Ronald Reagan remains the only divorced U.S. president, a number of potential Republican candidates are divorced, including McCain, Hagel and Giuliani [three times!].
- Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich of Georgia is not only divorced, he served divorce papers to his cancer-ridden wife in the hospital, then married a young aide and put her on the House payroll at \$55,000 a year.
- So far, the only Democratic candidates who are not divorced are Dodd and Kucinich.

## Our Greatest Moral Crisis

"As a physician, environmentalist, and evangelical Christian, I can state without reservation that global warming is real and that it disproportionately harms our one billion neighbors who live on a dollar a day or less. But, as Christians, our concern should not just be global warming; it should extend to caring for all of God's creation.

"We might argue about the extent of man's contribution to global warming, but we cannot deny the dome of smog that hangs over many of the world's cities, the thousands of species that are going extinct, and the increasing scarcity and access to fresh drinking water."

— J. Matthew Sleeth, MD, *Caring for Creation: The Greatest Moral Crisis of Our Age*

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