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Speaker Lance Cargill Style Over Substance

By Arnold Hamilton

There was cautious optimism when Todd Hiatt's mercurial reign as House Speaker ended.

His successor, Harrah's Lance Cargill, promised a new era of openness and transparency. Democrats' bills would be heard. Dissenters' microphones would not be silenced. And back-room deals would be replaced by an honest public exchange of ideas.

He cultivated an image as the Anti-Hiatt – far more sophisticated, urbane and intellectual than the Kellyville dairy farmer.

A graduate of the elite Vanderbilt University School of Law. A Republican whose daily reading includes – gasp! – the New York Times. A renaissance man whose agenda promoted expanding arts education.

With his floppy hair, chewed fingernails and glasses perpetually sliding to the tip of his nose, the boyish Cargill seemed more akin to a fair-minded, searching-for-truth Opie Taylor than an often-ruthless, arbitrary Tom DeLay-wannabe like Hiatt.

It's taken less than a full session for the real Cargill to emerge.

Taking a page from Ronald Reagan's style-over-substance playbook, Cargill artfully works to disguise his arch-conservative, fundamentalist agenda with Motherhood and apple pie backdrops for the TV cameras and warm, fuzzy rhetoric for print.

"I'm absolutely committed to ensuring that Oklahomans have an honest and open government, and I believe we can achieve that goal within a positive bipartisan framework," he said in one news release – language heard early and often.

Consider three key areas: ethics, taxes and power.

- While talking publicly about ethics and campaign finance reform, Cargill systematically summoned lobbyists and other special interests to private, in-session fund-raising meetings.

He's opened his palms not only for his state-regulated political committees, but also for his 100 Ideas group, a tax-exempt 527 that smacks of the unofficial Cargill for Governor [or other high office] committee.

The 100 Ideas operation seeks the patina of good government and bipartisanship, yet neither the speaker

nor the group's manager, former state Rep. Thad Balkman, have been willing to identify who's bankrolling it.

Why the secrecy? Cargill can argue forever that 100 Ideas is somehow different, a private not-for-profit that doesn't fall under state ethics laws and meets all IRS reporting requirements.

Still, wouldn't an elected official who wants to be known for openness and transparency want to step beyond the letter of the law and set the tone for a new day in Oklahoma government?

Cargill argues he is promoting good government by moving his in-session political fund-raising out of the Capitol itself – something he pointedly notes that Democrats didn't do when they were in power.

True enough. But if he were serious about ethics reform, he could have flexed the speaker's considerable muscle to help secure an in-session prohibition on all political contributions. A ban would eliminate suspicion of a pay-for-play system or that a bill's fate depends on who gives what to whom.

Further, Cargill could have worked to address what is arguably the single most important loophole in Oklahoma's campaign finance laws: PAC to PAC contributions. The current system allows lawmakers who set up

multiple political action committees to skirt the spirit – if not the letter – of the law that sets maximum contributions to individual candidates.

It creates a campaign finance labyrinth that makes it all but impossible for the public to know if individuals or interest groups are exerting outsize influence on certain candidates or in specific races.

Cargill's ethics reform package, House Bill 2110, was stalled in a Senate committee, entering the session's final week.

- When it comes to taxes, Cargill staked his position in the GOP's far right wing.

He makes clear he eventually wants to eliminate the state income tax in favor of consumption taxes, a position that benefits his party's rainmakers but hurts the poor and middle class.

He also promised no further income tax cuts this session beyond the four-year plan approved in 2006 – a staged drop from 6.25% to 5.25%.

But in the end, he and his GOP lieutenants accelerated the cuts, meaning the state will have less revenue next year for critical needs than it would have otherwise.

He can parse words and claim he didn't break any promises, but accelerating the tax cuts has the same short-term impact.

Cargill also loosed Rep. Randy Ter-

rill, R-Moore, on a tax-cutting crusade that was breathtaking – taxes on businesses, veterans and others went poof. He also embraced Terrill's immigration reform pablum, deepening the red in Oklahoma's neck and setting the state up for shame and ridicule if racial profiling worsens.

- Finally, as it turned out, Cargill didn't play the power game all that differently from Hiatt.

Despite assurances that Democrats' bills would be heard, Republican legislation was fast-tracked and Democratic measures often left for dead.

Warner Democratic Rep. Jerry McPeak's interim study on education was a case in point. It analyzed the fiscal woes facing schools when the Legislature under-funded last year's \$3,000 teacher pay raise. It led to specific proposals to resolve the crisis.

This spring, while superintendents pleaded with legislative leaders to make good on last year's under-funding, McPeak's proposals couldn't so much as get a hearing.

Similarly, gang violence legislation authored by Rep. T.W. Shannon, R-Lawton, reached the House floor and won approval ahead of an almost identical bill by Rep. Richard Morrisette, D-OKC – even though Morrisette's measure was heard and approved in committee first.

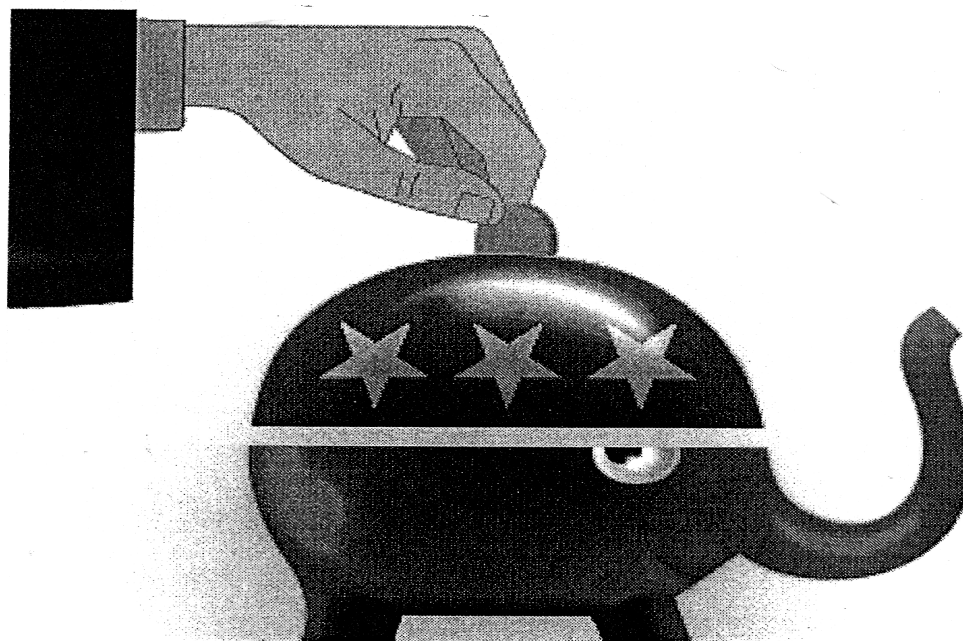
Hiatt was notorious for refusing to allow Democrats to be the primary authors on legislation. Cargill & Co. played similar games – especially after House Democrats vowed to uphold Gov. Brad Henry's veto of the session's first budget package.

When they united against Cargill's back-room budget deal, their bills disappeared from committee calendars.

Cargill also displayed a decidedly anti-public education streak.

Like Hiatt before him, he wanted smaller teacher pay raises [40% less] than the governor, who pledged to get educators' salaries to the regional average. He also touted legislation to strengthen charter schools at the expense of public schools [can vouchers be far behind?]. And now, he vows that future teacher pay raises will be merit-based only.

Bottom line: Cargill looks suspiciously like Todd Hiatt – with a smile.



Observations

A Tragedy

Thanks to Republicans, big losers in the unlamented legislative session were Oklahoma's seriously mentally ill.

The agency was given a meager \$3 million increase, exactly a tenth of what was needed to provide bare minimum services to Oklahoma's most ignored people.

Oklahoma leads the nation in the percentage of the seriously mentally ill. The department asked for \$30 million. Gov. Brad Henry proposed \$20 million but Republicans held out for \$3 million.

Kudos to Oklahoman Reporter Michael McNutt for the only story we saw addressing this tragedy. Not a single line in any budget story we saw even mentioned the deliberate mistreatment of the mentally ill.

Even reluctant legislators now know that 51 drug courts and 12 mental health courts work, but the lack of comprehensive community-based care is a disgrace.

Out of a \$7.1 billion budget, the department operates on a meager \$200 million a year.

The boobs who pass for legislative leaders [Democrats included] overwhelmingly approved yet another tax cut - \$15 million next year, then \$74 million a year thereafter. That's about \$700 million in tax cuts in the past three years.

Ironically, even after a budget deal was struck, there was still \$35 million on the table that could have addressed Oklahoma's mentally ill.

We believe with all the fervor of our soul that those who mistreat the mentally ill - directly or indirectly - will answer to their Maker.

Lonely Voice

The Observer takes no pride in the fact that this publication has been a lonely voice in cataloging the criminal and ethical misconduct in the Bush Administration.

Not even the Reagan, Grant or Nixon administrations compare to the number of White House officials in prison,

or appointees who have already been booted or facing criminal charges.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-CA, has introduced legislation to close the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Never in the country's history has a president sanctioned such widespread torture, corruption and outright criminality as Bush has at Gitmo.

Dozens of prisoners there have been cleared of any wrongdoing but between Bush and a venal Supreme Court, they are being held indefinitely without facing charges.

Consider the latest Bush Administration appointees who are likely to go to prison.

Johnnie Frazier, inspector general of the Department of Commerce and watchdog charged with rooting out wrongdoing at the agency, is himself the subject of three separate government investigations into allegations that he misspent his budget and retaliated against employees who raised concerns about his actions.

Julie MacDonald, deputy assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks, submitted her resignation letter to Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne - a week before a House Congressional oversight committee was to hold a hearing on accusations that she violated the Endangered Species Act, censored science and mistreated staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Add the World Bank farce and Wolfe giving his sweetie a huge pay increase the first day on the job.

Boo Hoo

The Wall Street Journal, whose editorial page would make any John Bircher proud, has criticized Gov. Brad Henry for his veto of the so-called tort reform bill.

Leave it to the WSJ to defend a law so bad, even some supporters held their noses and voted for it. Among other defects the WSJ doesn't mention is the portion that legally exempts nursing homes from having to admit injuries or even deaths.



There is no lawsuit epidemic in Oklahoma. There is no flood of frivolous lawsuits. This bill was written by corporate Oklahoma and its top cheerleader was the reactionary Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce.

Given the source, the governor should wear the WSJ criticism as a badge of honor.

At Last

At last, a bill to keep Oklahoma college students' names and addresses from being sold to credit card companies has won final approval from the state Senate.

The governor was eager to sign it, given the nasty headlines across the nation on corrupt student loan activities.

Students in Oklahoma have committed suicide because of credit card debt, according to Sen. Jim Reynolds, R-OKC, author of the measure.

Reynolds said reports indicate the average credit card debt for college students in this country is \$2,200. Often the cards issued to students have high annual percentage rates, making it even more difficult for students to get out of debt.

Reynolds said because of the federal Freedom of Information Act, schools would still have to allow access to student names and other information considered public record.

Pat On The Back

Good for state Rep. Joe Dorman for winning passage of legislation to integrate inmates back into society.

House Bill 2101, the Transformational Justice Act, would encourage state prisons to partner with faith-based, community and voluntary organizations to help inmates reenter society and reduce the rate of repeat offenders.

"There are no programs currently in place to teach offenders the skills they need to be productive members of society upon release," said Dorman, D-Rush Springs. "It is time for the Legislature to take seriously the concept of 'corrections' when we send these men and women off to prison."

It was our experience in covering the prison at McAlester that a Methodist chaplain and a Catholic priest held more sway than a bevy of counselors.

Dorman authored House Concurrent Resolution 1008, which would create the Oklahoma Reintegration of Inmates Task Force to select a location for an inmate integration program and determine the projected costs of such a program. Inmates who are less

than a year away from release would be eligible for the program.

A 2004 study by the Urban Institute, an economic and social policy research group, showed that inmates who are involved in work programs while incarcerated are approximately 20% less likely to re-offend upon release.

Although HCR 1008 did not get a hearing from a GOP committee chairman, Dorman said he plans to reintroduce it next year. Go for it!

The Lege Rules

No surprise that the Oklahoma Supreme Court upheld a district court opinion throwing out a \$1 billion lawsuit filed by a teachers' union and others that accused the Legislature of under-funding state schools.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court held that a lawsuit by the Oklahoma Education Association and three school districts had "failed to allege facts which would give them standing to assert a violation of Oklahoma students' constitutional rights."

They admitted that when it comes to the Constitution, the Legislature trumps the state's highest court.

"Questions of fiscal and educational policy are vested in the Legislature, and its wisdom in these areas are not within the scope of this court's review," the opinion said.

That's not the point. Does the Constitution require the state to adequately fund education or not?

The high court let stand Oklahoma County District Judge Daniel Owens' ruling dismissing the case. Owens agreed with arguments of defendants' attorneys who said the suit involved "a political question" that was not within the court's jurisdiction to decide.

Roy Bishop of the OEA spoke the truth for almost all Oklahoma educators: "Unlike the courts of most other states that have recently considered school funding challenges, the Oklahoma Supreme Court has clearly and unequivocally stated that it does not have the authority to force the Oklahoma Legislature to comply with the Oklahoma Constitution."

Choir Boy Senate President Pro Tem Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, said the court recognized that "the authority and responsibility for appropriating funds is vested in the Legislature. How much is appropriated to each specific agency is a not a matter for outside interests, like the teachers' union, to decide."

What would Morgan know about legislative fidelity? He sold his political soul to the Republican Party ages ago.

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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

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry who went eyeball to eyeball with GOP Speaker Lance Cargill on the budget and Cargill blinked, blinked, and blinked.

The Tulsa World's scientific poll showed two-thirds of Oklahomans want to keep abortion legal and safe. It's a nonpartisan scientific poll.

Dart: To U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn for his gratuitous attack on OU and OSU, saying federal funds they receive should be spent in other states. He is a genuine loon.

Democratic State Sen. Jay Paul Gumm and Rep. Rebecca Hamilton came within 50 votes [out of 800] of being censured at the Democratic Party State Convention. They voted for a badly flawed GOP abortion bill.

Laurel: To 52% of Oklahomans who say Bush is wrong on the war – wrong, wrong, wrong. Okies are slow but they usually get there. [Oklahoma Poll]

Didja know that Google's electric power use in its new data center in Pryor will be exempt from the Open Records Act? So much for openness in government.

Dart: To Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, for refusing to acknowledge that Oklahoma is 50th in combined local, state and federal taxes. Terrill may have a full six-pack but lacks that little thingy to hold it all together.

More than 400 deportable detainees held by the Department of Corrections due to federal inaction cost Oklahoma taxpayers \$8 million last fiscal year.

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for appointing Oklahoma County Commission Chairman Jim Roth to replace Denise Bode who has moved to D.C. Roth is eminently qualified.

Bush's plan to privatize Social Security is dead. The fund stands at \$2 trillion, expected to hit \$4 trillion by 2014. Why doesn't Congress let the fund, not individuals, invest in the stock market?

Dart: To the Pope, truly issuing papal bull when he said America's Native Americans yearned for Christianity. Half were slain by "Christians" and millions were lost to imported diseases.

Oops! Our proofreading eyes betrayed us in the May 10 issue. Dodd and Kucinich are the only two divorcees among the Democratic presidential contenders.

Laurel: To the 50 State Teachers of the Year, recommending 10 changes in the No Child Left Behind law. It was drafted by Bush cronies without any input from teachers.

The teachers retirement bill was signed with great fanfare by Gov. Brad Henry. If the Legislature keeps its word the fund will be 80% funded by 2026. That's a big "if."

Dart: To Sen. Jay Paul Gumm, D-Durant, for using the sales tax holiday as a cover to vote for that sorry Republican tax package, despite millions of unmet needs of Oklahoma.

Sen. Mike Mazzei, R-Tulsa, proved in his debate in favor of the \$74 million tax hike that when the average Republican legislator opens his or her mouth, it is only to change feet.

Laurel: To OKC Channel 25 Fox News for a comprehensive story on Oklahoma's CareerTech avionics program and the fact that hundreds of students have been turned away thanks to the Legislature.

Easily the most outstanding Republican in the Oklahoma House is Rep. Gus Blackwell of Goodwell. His tireless effort to create a tiered system for sex offenders has been remarkable.

Dart: To the Wal-Mart family, spending more than \$17 million promoting vouchers. Strange, since surely the majority of their customers attend public schools. Vouchers are a dagger in the heart of public education.



Rep. Mike Shelton, D-OKC, is right on for his call for the governor to make college appointments from a wider range of Oklahomans. OSU's constitutional governing board should have been revamped years ago.

Laurel: To the Columbus, OH, Dispatch for revealing that eight so-called voucher schools are an educational fraud, including one run by televangelist Rod Parsley.

In a poll of Oklahoma attitudes, 27% identify as political liberals, the rest are conservative. Asked if Oklahomans are "open minded," 38% said no.

Dart: To three GOP candidates for president who say there is no such thing as global warming. They are Arkansas Baptist Gov. Mike Huckabee, Kansas Catholic U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback and Colorado Catholic Rep. Tom Tancredo. [AP]

Wow! Did you see the editorial in the OU student newspaper? It trashes the journalism taught there, claiming it is riddled with systemic problems, funding shortcomings and a "great vapidity" within.

Laurel: To the Dallas Morning News for exposing three more charter schools for rampant financial mismanagement, imaginary travel, fictional repairs and hundreds of thousands of missing dollars.

Once again Brandon Dutcher, homeschool defamer of all things public education, has been passed over as head of the extremist Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs. They named ex-legislator Hopper Smith.

Dart: To a GOP President and a former GOP Congress for watching the foreign sale of 13,948 U.S. companies worth \$1.7 trillion. They hide the foreign profits in the Caymen Islands.

Another downside to the war in Iraq is revealed by an MSNBC survey – deployed troops losing custody of their children. There are now 140,000 active duty single parents.

Laurel: To Dr. Frank J. Miranda, associate dean at the OU College of Dentistry, named 2007 Dentist Of The Year. He has had a wonderful 33-year career there.

There are 47 million uninsured Americans. Even among the insured, there has been an 86% increase in family insurance premiums since 2000.

Dart: To the Oklahoma GOP web page, featuring a grossly distorted photo of Speaker Nancy Pelosi. For as long as we can remember, many Republicans are anti-women.

Rep. Ann Coody, R-Lawton, has HB 1476 to teach financial literacy to all high school students. Kids ages 12-15 spend \$100 a week, and the average college senior has over \$7,000 in debts and four credit cards.

Laurel: To the State Health Department for seeking \$4 million for children's programs. The agency notes that 193 children have died from child abuse and neglect in the past five years.

The Legal Aid's William G. Paul, OKC; Rick Bozarth, Taloga; and Stan Foster, OKC, have been given the Oklahoma Justice Award for their role in a three-year successful effort to raise \$1.5 million for Legal Aid.

Dart: To Wal-Mart for labeling a group of Texas Benedictine nuns a "security threat" because they raised questions about the firm's business practices.

The worm is turning – 58% of Americans say the feds should adopt a program providing health care for every citizen. Some 84% want the Children's Health Insurance Program to be expanded but Bush proposes cutting it.

Laurel: To OKC attorney and former judge Bill Burkett, honored by the Journal Record with the Law Day Award for his service to the profession and the community.

Nearly 90% of National Guard units in the U.S. are rated "not ready" by the Army, including Oklahoma's 45h Brigade. Why? Billions in shortfalls for equipment and training – yeah, Bush "supports the troops."

Shame on Phyllis Worley and her ilk for praising that totally bogus U.S. Chamber report criticizing Oklahoma schools. Worley is president of Oklahoma Natural Gas Co. – she's full of it.

Laurel: To the Wall Street Journal news side for breaking the story revealing that the Bank of America is offering credit cards to illegal immigrants. In 2005 it eliminated fees for transferring money to Mexico.

True story. An Arkansas legislator has introduced a constitutional amendment to delete a prohibition against "idiots and insane persons" voting. Would a similar amendment here improve our Legislature?

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

How to start each day with a positive outlook ...

1. Open a new file in your computer.
 2. Name it "George W. Bush."
 3. Send it to the trash bin.
 4. Empty the trash.
 5. Windows will ask you, "Do you really want to get rid of 'George W. Bush'?"
 6. Firmly click "Yes."
 7. Feel better?
- P.S. Next week we'll do Dick Cheney.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I loved your article "My Brother." You addressed an issue that has long troubled me - that to question decisions made by our government is somehow "unpatriotic."

The absurdity of such an accusation shows that many of our citizens have forgotten what America is and was from the beginning. Our problem is that too few people question.

In my communication classes I always manage to quote Lincoln's Gettysburg Address particularly the last part: "... that this nation, of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

We must be reminded often that this is our country, with government officials who are hired by us, to serve us, and when they don't do the best job for our country, they need to be told about it and banished if they forget who and what they represent.

I want my country back, my country that was loved around the world and respected, or maybe that was just a childhood fantasy.

Carrie McGee
Seminole

Editor, The Observer:

I believe that if our elected representatives had to suffer for the decisions they make maybe they would think twice before cutting taxes the way they are.

That is why I propose that the executive branch of our state government be forced to have their salaries cut by 20% any time the economy drops so that it causes a shortfall, causing layoffs of our teachers, state employees, or cutbacks in any departments.

This should start at the governor and go all the way down, even including the department heads. They don't have to worry about their salaries so it doesn't bother them to cut other

peoples salaries and jobs.

But you could never get the Legislature to hear such a bill, much less pass one. So they know they are safe to do whatever they want regardless of who or how it hurts our state. When are the voters of our state going to wake up and see what is happening?

Troy Green
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

Rep. John Trebilcock has not only embarrassed himself [a DUI arrest] and family but there was no mention of remorse about his poor voting record. This is not what the people expect of a public official.

There should be rules requiring legislators to be considered a ghost employee when they miss fulfilling their duties to the taxpayers. Maybe we should consider a penalty of removal from office or a reduction of pay for such poor disregard of his elected responsibility.

I recall Trebilcock asking others to step down after a DUI charge but he seems to think he's above such action. He has ignored that for some reason.

G.C. Fisher
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

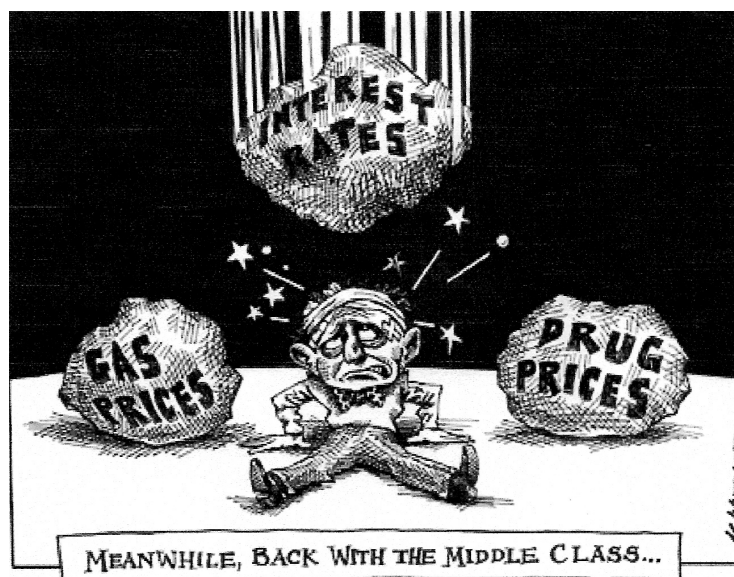
We were shocked and disappointed to read that Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett does not believe the science on global warming is solid.

Over 2,000 scientists from around the world contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's [IPCC's] fourth assessment report, which revealed the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and increases in average global temperatures are higher than at any time during the past 650,000 years.

These scientific leaders say that burning fossil fuels is responsible for the observed increase in carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas related to global warming. The IPCC has therefore concluded that the global warming we have observed in recent decades is the result of human activity.

Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor made Tulsa the 500th city in the country to pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

Oklahoma City seems to be taking action to become more energy efficient, such as considering green municipal buildings and planning for improved public transportation, so why won't Mayor Cornett sign the non-



binding "Cool Cities" pledge?

It would be great for the city and the state if our position on climate change made us progressive rather than foolish on this issue for a change.

Jody Harlan
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

I really believe the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know. For that reason, I have read, and am urging everyone I know to read, *The Architect: Karl Rove and the Master Plan for Absolute Power*.

This book is written by James Moore and Wayne Slater. They are seasoned political reporters and wrote *Bush's Brain* which was also about Rove and was made into a documentary movie.

One reviewer commented after reading this book, what a sad little man in reference to Rove. Well, he might be a sad little man but he is very powerful and most Republicans would follow him off a cliff.

They know that he is their best chance for hanging onto power. Nothing is beneath him. Believe me; I saw what he did to Ann Richards, Jim Hightower and others in Texas. He is mean as a snake, and completely without conscience.

Even though Bush promised to fire anyone in the White House who was leaking information, and even though we know from the Libby trial that Rove was one of the leakers, Bush will never get rid of him. He cannot afford to. Rove knows all of his dirty secrets. In fact, he helped him with them.

And for anyone who doubts it, it is well known and well documented that Rove is an agnostic. Many are surprised about this in light of the way he and Bush thump that Bible for their political benefit, but it is true.

No one should be surprised at anything Rove does. He is a sad little man, but also a monster. Don't put anything past him.

If you doubt, just read this book.

Deborah Lewis
Garland, TX

Editor, The Observer:

Evangelicals and the religious right praise the Jews. Why? So that Evangelicals can go to Heaven, that's all. It says in the Bible that those who praise the Jews will be praised; those who curse the Jews will be cursed.

But then ask an Evangelical if the Jews will go to Heaven? The answer, a resounding "No." My friend, it is then and there that you have cursed the Jews.

Jim Stodola
Corinth, TX

Editor, The Observer:

How will informed people respond to Sen. James Inhofe? He is the biggest Oklahoma disaster since the Dust Bowl, an era from which only a stage play and a football team helped us escape reality.

Robert Lawton Jones
Santa Fe, NM

Editor, The Observer:

During World War II, sacrifices beyond count were made throughout our nation. Among other things there were no new cars for sale, and if you had a car it was tough to purchase fuel.

In the mid-to-late 1960s the network TV news at dinnertime gave us daily, agonizing film of the ongoing fighting, and dying, in Vietnam. There was no cable TV, so we couldn't simply change channels and turn away. Late in that decade the draft lottery was enacted. Though the process was heavily biased to protect the richer among us, it did place millions of men at risk who had not been before, and certainly focused our attentions more closely on the heavy tolls being taken. The nation was awash in protests and social uprising over the war, and we all suffered for that, regardless of our stand on the war.

Today, we only have to take as much of the pain from the Iraq war as we choose to take. There is no draft, and we don't have to watch, listen to, or read media reports on the devastation if we don't want to. There are no interruptions in our daily lives of work and play, and not even a tax hike to fuel, entertainment, or luxury products to fund a war that's breaking the back of the economy.

Wall Street and heavy-hitter contractors are enjoying huge profits from the war, just as the gold traders did immediately following the 9/11 attacks. But for the rest of us there is little inconvenience, and almost no sacrifice.

Lacking any penalties for most Americans, and almost no intrusion into our daily lives, the war drags on under its own inertia, prosecuted and supported by a relatively small contingent of administration, congressional, and military proponents, with tacit approval from all of the rest of us who are content to keep the horror of this war at a distance.

We will look back on this in shame.

Tom Taylor
Mechanicsburg, PA

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Frosty's Notebook

Teacher Pay

Are Oklahoma teachers better paid than most other professionals? So wrote Jay Greene and Marcus Winters in a paper for the rightwing Manhattan Institute, titled "How Much Are Public School Teachers Paid?"

Naturally it received lots of attention from conservative think op-ed pages such as the Daily Disappointment, the Wall Street Journal, and so-called think tanks such as the public education-bashing Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

Greene and Winters attempted to give more credence to their contention by pointing out that, really, this is not their conclusion. They just took it from the latest Bureau of Labor statistics' National Compensation Survey [NCS].

Oh what tangled webs we weave when first we practice to deceive.

This particular NCS provides figures for 2005 in terms of hourly and weekly wages. Sure enough, teachers dock in at \$34.06 per hour, while economists garner \$33.85, and architects earn a meager \$30.22.

Greene and Winters didn't bother to calculate wages on an annual basis because, they say, the NCS provides only the hourly wage and length of work-week.

The main table in the text does not have annual wages but supplemental tables do. The NCS for 2005 put the average teacher's work year at just over 1,400 hours, while the year for economists and architects exceeds 2,100 hours.

An average of elementary and secondary teachers' annual salaries [they don't differ much] comes to \$46,995 nationally. Oklahoma comes in 48th at \$42,124. Economists earn \$72,810, while architects take in \$65,108.

The figure for teachers is close to the annual estimates made by the teacher unions and, while it is not a starvation wage, neither is it a princely sum.

It would certainly be hard, though, to argue from this figure that "teachers are better paid than most other professionals."

In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS] has rejected reporting some occupations' compensation in terms of hourly wages because they don't show a true picture.

Said one BLS official: "We are actively studying which occupations and groups of occupations should not have earnings estimated and published by hour. Flight



crews on airlines, outside sales representatives, operating personnel on over-the-road railroads are but a few of the occupations in addition to teachers."

Leave it to Gerald Bracey, writing in Kappan magazine, to skewer the "study" and provide the factual truth.

Greene and Winters glide by inconvenient facts. They write, "Yet, although previous research has used BLS data to draw conclusions about the proper level of teacher pay, no one has organized and reproduced the data so that others can easily observe the information and form their own interpretations."

So their task was merely to "organize and reproduce" the data and put it in an easy-to-read form? In fact, that previous research - *How Does Teacher Pay Compare?* - from the Economic Policy Institute [EPI] directly contradicts the conclusions Greene and Winters offer. [EPI is no friend of public education.]

In the EPI booklet, Sylvia Allegretto, Sean Corcoran, and Lawrence Mishel analyzed jobs in terms of skill criteria: knowledge needed, supervision received, guidelines applied, complexity, scope and effect, personal contacts, purpose of contacts, physical demands, work environment, and supervisory duties.

When these competent researchers compared teachers' salaries to 16 other occupations that had similar total numbers on the criteria, teachers trailed all but one - the clergy. They trailed architects by \$275 a week.

Public School Critics

GOP Sen. Kathleen Wilcoxson and Sen. Judy McIntyre are two examples that you would identify with a member of a Florida civic club.

The civic club member was reacting to a presentation on public schools by saying "we could improve education by simply getting rid of government operated, tax-gouging schools."

The horrific and mostly false "public hearing" by the Senate Education Committee featured a wholly specious U.S. Chamber report card on Oklahoma public schools.

As co-chairs of the Senate Education Committee, these two public school critics pointedly didn't invite State Superintendent Sandy Garrett because they didn't want the truth.

The truth is, the Chamber not only used data as old as four years, many conclusions drawn at the hearing were Republican propaganda - not a word of truth.

Naturally, the far right Daily Disappointment cheered the fake report in an

asinine editorial.

Public schools serve every child who arrives, regardless of national origin, gender, race or socioeconomic status.

The goal of democracy is to produce citizens from all of society who are prepared to succeed as contributing adults.

There will always be a need to focus and monitor high achievement for all children, regardless of how they are schooled. Where are the parents?

The astute observations of Alexis de Tocqueville, who came to America in 1832, remain a classic guide to America's success.

He saw our democracy as a beacon for the world - universal free public education.

Even though the public school system is far from perfect, public education remains the primary pillar supporting American democracy, two State Senate critics notwithstanding.

Fake Conservatives

Would you please quit referring to George Bush & Co. as "conservative!" Barry Goldwater and Dewey Bartlett must be rolling over in their graves to hear that crowd claim that word.

Anyone who doubts it needs a refresher course in Goldwater's *The Conscience Of A Conservative*. I am a social liberal but Goldwater's book converted me into a fiscal conservative.

Check the facts. We're importing more and producing less each year while continuing to sell off more of our large companies. Our tax base has receded and we now have fewer American-owned companies remaining to produce wealth and generate taxes.

Our government is borrowing billions more to continue to operate and pay its bills. This has impacted every level of our economy.

Check this summary from EconomyInCrisis as we continue living on ever increasing debt since 1987:

- Home mortgages from \$1.8 trillion to \$8.2 trillion.
- Consumer debt from \$2.7 trillion to \$11 trillion.
- Government debt limit recently increased to \$8.9 trillion.
- Household debt has quadrupled.
- The 2006 balance of trade deficit [debt] of \$765 billion equals over \$1.4 million leaving the country every minute to pay for excessive imports.

Balance of trade deficits [the means through which foreign countries accumulate our money to buy us out]:

- 2001 - \$363 billion = \$690,000 per minute
- 2002 - \$421 billion = \$801,000 per minute
- 2003 - \$495 billion = \$942,000 per minute
- 2004 - \$611 billion = \$1,200,000 per minute
- 2005 - \$711 billion = \$1,400,000 per minute
- 2006 - \$765 billion = \$1,450,000 per minute

No country can continue to exist on debt when there is very little probability of ever repaying it. How can we continue to delude ourselves by continuing to call ourselves a super power?

Our standard of living and strength is dependent on ever increasing imports. The whole economy can only be temporarily sustained by ever increasing debts.

Our lenders will inevitably discontinue loaning us any more money. Now that our productive capabilities have become uncompetitive and insufficient, how will we then function when the money runs out?

Can we do something now to forestall all of this?

Of course we can. Quit voting for phonies in either party. Quit falling for the false god of tax cuts when we aren't paying our bills in Oklahoma or Washington.

Don't exclusively depend on the media for facts. TV news is a joke and most dailies are now in the hands of corporate chains. The rare exception is the Tulsa World - a good newspaper.



TEACH
DON'T PREACH
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

\$7.1 Billion **Governor Triumphs In Budget Battle**

Democratic Gov. Brad Henry played hardball to win almost all of his proposals – a \$7.1 billion budget. He did it by holding up a Republican tax cut bill until the last minute.

Henry waited until the end of the five-day deadline to sign the tax cut – \$15 million next year, \$74 million a year thereafter. In all, taxes have been cut nearly \$700 million in the past three years.

In a session that began with an estimate of only \$18 million surplus, it ended with an astonishing \$200 million.

Henry won his \$1,000 pay hike for teachers after House Speaker Lance Cargill had said it would be no more than \$600. Oops! A funny thing happened on the way to an agreement. Cargill blinked.

HENRY CREDITS BIPARTISANSHIP

“This budget agreement is the result of hard work and bipartisan cooperation, and I thank legislative leaders of both parties for finding consensus on important issues,” the governor said – obviously with tongue in cheek.

“Great things happen when different sides work out different priorities,” said House Minority Leader Danny Morgan, D-Prague.

“Our constituents sent us to the Capitol to adequately fund state agencies that meet the needs of all Oklahomans. This inclusive bipartisan budget is truly a victory for this state.”

Highlights of the budget agreement include:

- A four-point tax relief package to speed reduction of the state’s top marginal income tax rate, provide a \$200 childcare credit for stay-at-home parents, offer a back-to-school sales tax holiday and elimination of the franchise tax on most small businesses.

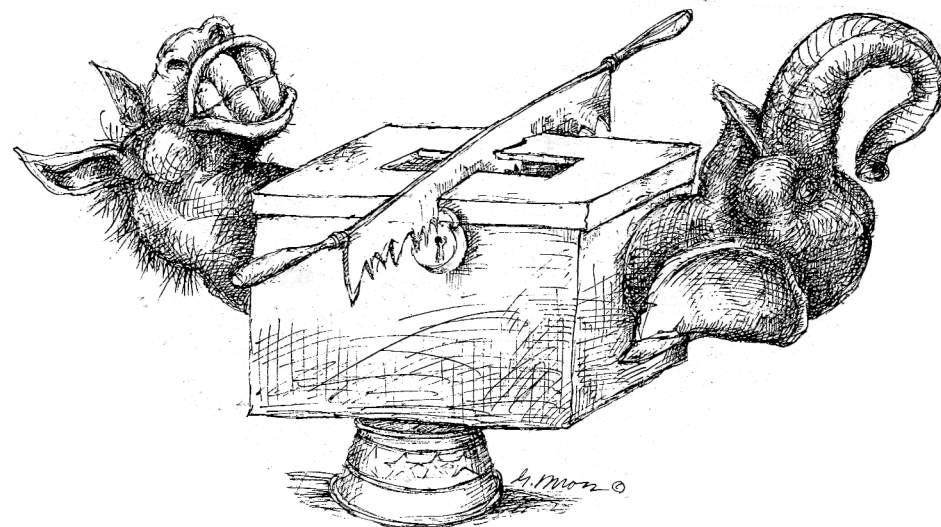
- An average \$1,000 per-teacher pay increase, weighted toward veteran teachers and those with advanced degrees. Funds in this area also include an incentive-based program to encourage the hiring of specially-qualified teachers.

- A deposit of \$10 million into the Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System as an initial down payment on a long-term historic reform to fund Oklahoma’s broken teacher retirement system that will pump more than \$200 million into the system over the next five years.

TAKING CARE OF PRIVATE PRISONS

- \$5 million to fund per diem increases at private prisons and halfway houses to ease state prison overcrowding.

- \$3 million for drug courts and the “Smart on Crime Initiative.” Drug courts have been shown as one way to reduce prison overcrowding.



- A permanent funding source for the Oklahoma Learning Access Program [OHLAP] with new college GPA requirements for OHLAP scholarship students.

- A tuition-lock program that allows incoming in-state Oklahoma college and university students to opt in to a guaranteed tuition rate for four years.

- A \$33 million increase for the State Regents for Higher Education to cover operational expenses.

- An increase of the authorization for endowed chairs at Oklahoma colleges and universities from the current \$50 million to \$100 million.

- \$15 million for the Oklahoma Centennial Commission, as that entity completes celebrations, plans and projects for the 2007 State Centennial.

HENRY WINS HIS BIOENERGY PROPOSAL

- \$10 million for a state Bioenergy Fund, using \$4 million in existing appropriations from Oklahoma Center for Advancement of Science and Technology [OCASST].

- \$5 million in funds for Educare centers to match private funds from the George Kaiser Family Foundation.

- \$16.5 million for capital projects at the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and regional universities, including the state’s Cancer Center.

- \$2.5 million for rural fire department equipment costs and \$1.4 million for firefighter training.

- \$6.5 million for the Conservation Commission to address critical needs for flood control structures across the state – leveraging state funds for 2-to-1 matching federal dollars.

- \$10 million for the State Emergency Fund and costs from devastating ice storms earlier this year.

As usual, Corrections took a hit, \$30 million less than their minimum needs. One insider said it would take a \$70 million supplemental next year.

U.S. Chamber Flunks, Not Oklahoma Schools

By Ed Cannaday

During my days as a high school principal, a school board member once asked me why I did not attempt to manage the schools the same way I had successfully managed my former dairy farm operation. I told him the key to my success in the dairy was that I culled the 10% lowest producers from my herd each year. If I did the same thing in my school, I could show similar success.

Obviously, we must be cautious when applying business principles to “social service” programs.

How should a state measure the educational system’s efficacy? I agree that student academic achievement must be one of the critical aspects of this measurement. It is in this area that I have problems with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s decision to give Oklahoma an “F.”

As I listened to the speakers at a recent hearing on the Chamber’s report, I was shocked by their lack of understanding of the differences between “criterion” and “norm referenced” measurements.

For the last 10 years, the state of Oklahoma has committed its educational achievement measures to criterion reference testing. Actually, Oklahoma schools administer 21 of these tests each year. Specifically, this type of measurement is based on a specified criteria, PASS [Priority Academic Student Skills]

Objectives.

These are produced as a result of a collaborative effort of subject-area teachers and administrators. These are communicated to the schools through several media sources. There should be a high positive correlation between these objectives and the tests administered by the schools.

For more on the Chamber’s distorted views, see “The U.S. Chamber Lies About Lawsuits” on Page 14.

On the other hand, norm referenced measurements are set by institutions based on objectives at the national level.

It was in this area that the Chamber chose to give Oklahoma Education a failing grade.

If we are to be measured by such norms, the specific criteria that will be used must be regularly communicated to our schools. It would be accurate to compare the Chamber’s conclusion to a teacher walking into class one day and administering a “pop quiz” and using that to determine the students’ semester grade.

– Ed Cannaday, D-Porum, represents House District 15

Oklahomans Honored For Interfaith Outreach

The Oklahoma chapter of The Interfaith Alliance [TIA] recently received the Bishop P. Francis Murphy Local Activism Award for their dedication to interfaith outreach.

“The Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma is a shining example of how religious pluralism and citizen activism can make a difference in a community,” said Interfaith Alliance President Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy. “Their work has demonstrated an outstanding dedication to religious liberty.”

TIA Oklahoma was selected from among 47 chapters nationwide. The award was presented at TIA’s National Leadership Gathering in Denver.

The Interfaith Alliance is a grassroots organization of more than 185,000 members nationwide dedicated to promoting the positive and healing role of religion in public life.

Among numerous accomplishments, TIA Oklahoma lobbied state government on faith-based initiatives, intelligent design in the classroom and violence prevention issues. The group sponsored a National Day of Prayer interfaith service

at the state Capitol and organized a forum with theologian Bishop John Shelby Spong that over 300 people attended. TIA Oklahoma performed outreach to a variety of faith communities, helping to sponsor a Ramadan dinner and an Oklahoma Buddhists conference.

The award was established in 2000 in memory of Bishop Murray, a founding board member of TIA and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore [Catholic]. The award is presented to a TIA chapter that best exemplifies Bishop Murphy’s belief that religion can be a constructive force in public life.

“In a time when there are those skeptical enough to assert that religion has little to offer in the way of a positive influence on public policy or a healing presence in society, TIA Oklahoma draws inspiration from Bishop Murphy and his unfailing vision of a more just society for all,” said Rev. Jeff Hamilton, TIA Oklahoma President.

For more information on The Interfaith Alliance, visit www.interfaithalliance.org. For information on TIA Oklahoma, e-mail TIAOKC@aol.com.

The Anti-Tax Spiel Can Kill Warr Acres

By M. Scott Carter

If you travel far enough on Oklahoma City's Northwest Expressway, past the restaurants, banks, and struggling strip malls, you'll eventually wind up in Warr Acres.

Warr Acres – a short hop away from Bethany – is a nice, sleepy little community. It's a good place to raise a family.

And, it really doesn't take long to get there, either.

Oh, you'll know you've arrived when you see those stupid signs informing you about how you've entered Oklahoma's version of low-tax Nirvana.

These signs – large ones – sit along side the road and proudly inform drivers they are now in the hamlet that offers the area's lowest sales tax rate, and how, if you dare to travel out of this glorious little community, you'll be faced with, God forbid, higher taxes.

Of course, there's a little more to the story.

THEY WON'T PROMOTE THIS STORY

And it's a story that I doubt the Warr Acres City Council or the city's mayor, Marietta Tardibono, will spend much time promoting.

But for you folks that follow city government, and for the loyal readers of this column, here's the 411: Warr Acres is close to going belly up.

Yep, they ain't got no money.

None. They are doing good to keep the lights on; their budget is dismal and they can barely pay for municipal services.

Why?

The answer is simple: Because they have no tax base.

"And why is that?" you ask.

That answer, too, is simple: Warr Acres has spent so much time touting the anti-tax line, anti-government line they have their tax base artificially low.

And chickens, my grandfather used to say, come home to roost.

PRICES KEEP GOING UP

Funny thing about life in the U.S., those prices for everything from gasoline to stamps keep increasing.

But with their "low tax-no tax" sales line, Warr Acres officials are discovering that now, they can't keep up.

Granted, the city – on the verge of falling apart – recently voted to increase its tax rate.

But it may be a classic example of too little, too late. Don't believe me?

Here's the situation from the mayor's own pen:

"These last six months have been trying to say the least," Tardibono said, during her state of the city speech in February.

"Many are calling upon this new Legislature to do something on a state level to help us out. Our representatives will be working this session to pass legislation which could be our saving grace."

That's interesting.

WARR ACRES IS LOW TAX KINGDOM

Warr Acres, the community that touts itself as the area's low-tax kingdom, wants the rest of us to help out. They want state lawmakers to shift some state law or some state money their way; they would like the rest of the state to help them pay for services they can't [or won't] pay for themselves.

Swell.

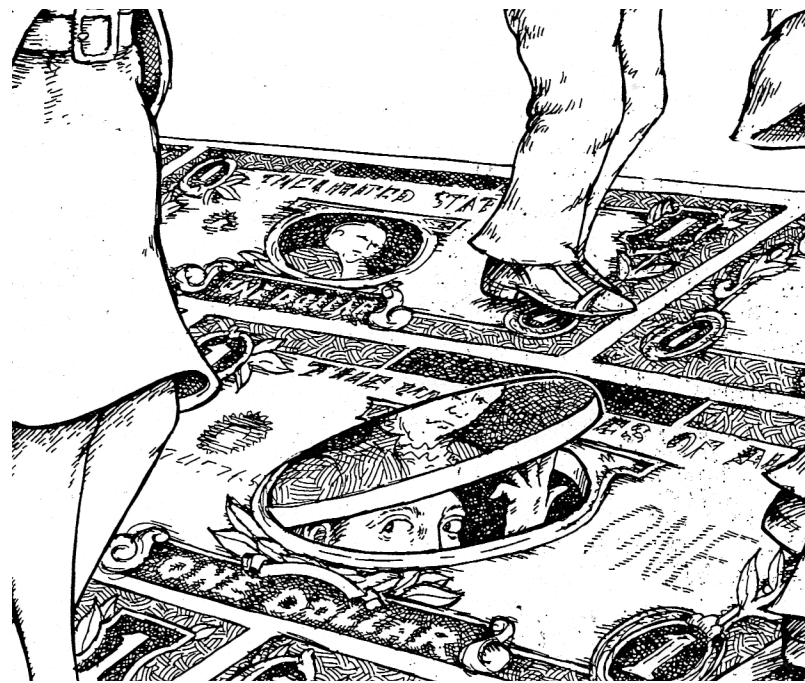
Tardibono continues, talking about how the city has reduced its staff from "... 87 employees in 2003 to 64 which I consider to be a skeleton crew."

Then she adds, the city "would have been in serious trouble, had not the voters approved the one cent sales tax."

Okay, so you get the picture. Here's this little town that bitched and moaned about taxes so much that it became their marketing theme.

Only it didn't work.

Businesses and shoppers didn't flood the plot that is Warr Acres. There was no mammoth influx of spending capital to keep the city's budget in the black.



The signs didn't work.

And, because the taxes they do assess have not kept pace with inflation, they've come to the point where they've almost run out of money – as in struggling to keep the pay for municipal services.

SMALL SALES TAX HIKE NOT ENOUGH

So the Warr Acres City Council convinces voters of the need for a sales tax increase and then sends a lobbyist to the Legislature to twist arms and plead for state revenue because they are still struggling.

Oh yeah, did I mention the signs?

Here's the deal: If we, as Americans, are going to live in America, then we're going to have to tax ourselves enough to cover governmental services. If you want fire, police, schools, roads, water, sewer, libraries and other municipal services, then you're going to have to help pay for them.

There is no other way to do it.

And it's real damn sanctimonious to put up signs that talk about how your town is some little low-tax oasis, then when money gets tight, your town expects the rest of us to bail you out.

Funny thing, those roads going into and out of Warr Acres are paid for by the other municipalities in the area that are in the "high tax" part of the city.

But I don't hear any complaints about that.

Shoot, I don't like paying taxes. I'd rather keep every cent of my money. But that ain't going to happen. So what do we do?

Try this: Elect intelligent, progressive, honest people to government.

Then instruct them to hire the same type of governmental staff.

THIS IS HOW MOORE DOES IT

After that, set a reasonable, solid tax system in place that will cover the cost of services, recruit new businesses and spent a good portion of your money on a quality educational system.

Then keep the public informed and make sure they know what you're doing every step of the way.

Sound familiar?

Well, that's the recipe city officials use in Moore.

Here, you don't have to look hard to see a dynamic, growing, progressive city with solid, top-flight leadership.

Take a look around you. Voters passed a temporary tax increase to fund public safety improvements. The city has the necessary revenue to keep police on the streets and water in the pipes.

And all that's happening while Moore's growing and expanding by leaps and bounds.

But my favorite part of this little tale is this: Instead of those stupid, moronic warning us of "higher taxes ahead" signs, we've got a water tower with Toby Keith's name on it.

I love it.

Because here in Moore, we understand that taxes are necessary and our leaders use those funds wisely.

– From *The Moore American* and www.eveninshadders.blogspot.com

Senator Wants To Be Buried With Pet

By Karen Webb

My state Sen. Kathleen Wilcoxson is pretty strange and my state Rep. Paul Wesselhoft is stranger because he wants to ban a certain breed of dog.

Now I find out there is a Republican senator in Florida who codified his right to be buried with his dog.

If you think Pet Cemetery was scary before, just wait until it is populated with loony Republicans.

Florida Sen. Jim King wants to be buried with his Valentine gift that he "received many years ago" from his wife. How many is "many years?"

No, it isn't a box of petrified chocolates or a bouquet of very dried flowers.

It was a dog.

I was a little peeved at my hubby about 20 years ago when he decided to take me to a Star Trek convention on Valentines Day.

Talk about a turn-on – toddlers crying in their Worf suits and the only thing even remotely sexy was a video made up of the clips of the crew of "I'm too Sexy for my Shirt."

George W. Bush wrote a cute poem about the Lump in his bed, but this woman

gave her husband the ashes of his beloved lab and he has been saving them.

Had Sen. King died first, would they be saving his ashes to bury with Rover? Would they have killed Rover to bury with him or would they have dug up old Jim so they could put Rover in with him?

In the "many years" since his beloved lab died, has he not had any other pets? I don't know that the Florida law prohibits killing the dog to bury with the owner or vice versa. It does say you can't just dump the pooch in the casket – it has to be in a separate urn.

I suppose if King had tropical fish they could cremate him and flush him with the guppies. I know there are people who are really attached to their pets, but this is more than a little strange.

Well, it isn't as strange as ex-GOP Sen. Rick Santorum having pictures of his wife's miscarriage on his desk, or transporting it across the state so the grandparents could rock it and the other children could kiss it.

They just get creepier and creepier.

– The author lives in Moore

Sexual Violence In Oklahoma Rampant

Sexual violence in a community has typically been difficult to estimate or characterize due to under-reporting and social norms that encourage secrecy.

One National Violence Against Women Survey estimated that 17% of women and 3% of men 18 years of age and older had been victims of a completed or attempted rape at some time in their life and .3% of women and .1 % of men had been raped in the past year.

Since the majority of rapes are unreported to police, the Oklahoma State Department of Health [OSDH] has undertaken surveys to estimate the true incidence and prevalence of rape and sexual violence among Oklahoma's population.

The Oklahoma Women's Health Survey [OWHS] was a random telephone survey of women 18-44 years of age who were married or had been in a relationship in the past year.

THREATENED OR FORCED SEX

As part of the OWHS, respondents were asked about sexual violence. The survey found that 12% of women surveyed had experienced threatened, coerced, or forced sex since age 18 and 1.7% had experienced forced sex in the past year.

These data indicate that 74,600 to 88,500 Oklahoma women in the population surveyed have been victims of forced sex in their lifetime, and 8,500 to 14,500 of women had been victims of forced sex in the past year.

The perpetrator of the most recent forced sex incident was an intimate partner [66%], friend or acquaintance [19%], stranger [11%], relative [2%], or other person known to the victim [2%].

During 2005, the Oklahoma Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System [BRFSS], a random telephone survey of persons 18 years of age and older, included questions about sexual violence.

UNWANTED SEX VICTIMS

Data from that survey estimated that 11.6% of women and 1.3% of men in Oklahoma had experienced unwanted sex in their lifetime.

Forcible or attempted rape of a woman is a violent crime tracked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting System [UCR]. In Oklahoma



during 2004, police reported 1,557 forcible and attempted rapes to the UCR.

The rate of forcible and attempted rape in Oklahoma was 38% higher than the national rate.

The YRBS survey showed that 9.1% of high school girls and 5.2% of high school boys had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.

Twelve percent of 9th grade girls, 10.5% of 10th grade girls, and 7.6% of 11th grade girls reported they had been forced to have sexual intercourse.

THEY WOULD REPORT THE CRIME

The vast majority [91.4%] of women surveyed indicated that if someone sexually assaulted or attempted to sexually assault them, they would likely report the assault to the police.

Of those, 60.8% felt very or somewhat confident that the police would handle the assault seriously and with respect, 36.5% felt slightly or not at all confident that the police would handle the assault seriously and with respect, and 2.7% did not have an opinion

Ninety-two percent of women surveyed said that if someone sexually assaulted or attempted to sexually assault them, they would likely to go to a hospital for medical treatment; 92.5% felt very or somewhat confident that medical personnel would handle the assault seriously – and with respect.

OU's Women's Studies Are Unfairly Attacked

Editor's Note: Finally someone in the news media besides the Observer has outed the drivel chronically seeping out of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs. This is an editorial in The Journal Record, a superb business publication.

The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs recently published an article that condemned, as a waste of taxpayer money, the Women's Studies program at the University of Oklahoma.

While we applaud OCPA's ongoing effort to protect our pocketbooks, we couldn't disagree more with the view expressed in the organization's May 1 Perspectives.

Jennifer Roback Morse, the author, is a Ph.D.-packing economist with Ivy League teaching credentials. And that makes her commentary all the more disturbing.

Morse isn't really picking on OU. She doesn't think Oklahoma taxpayers should stop funding Women's Studies; she thinks all taxpayers should stop funding Women's Studies at all universities. She told students at the University of Virginia this year that they too should eliminate Women's Studies.

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Consider the source. Morse is a research fellow these days with the highly conservative Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, whose supporters include James Dobson and Campus Crusade for Christ's Bill Bright.

Both in Virginia and in her Perspectives piece, Morse spent more time arguing that there was a need for a Men's Studies department than she did arguing against Women's Studies.

We haven't formed an opinion on Men's Studies yet, but at first pass it sounds pretty good. The more we learn about each other, the better we're likely to get along – just as we think there's room at a state institution of higher learning for classes in Spanish and French; photography and watercolor; the histories of Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism and Christianity.

Her views, and apparently those of OCPA on this point, are simplistic and archaic. Writes Morse: "Feminism means roughly this: Women and men are the same, except that women are better." She further contends that "feminism has taken the personal relationship that is the most important to most people, namely marriage, and injected poison into it."

IT IS WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT

But then Morse was a presenter at a conference called Contraception is not the Answer, put on by the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago last year. So abortion is out, contraception is out, and according to a Feb. 1 piece Morse penned for OCPA, Oklahoma taxpayers are also getting hoodwinked into paying for too many Medicaid births at our hospitals.

That's pretty much what we'd expect to hear from Morse, who is also a super-conservative columnist for the National Catholic Register. But it's not at all what we'd expect to hear from a woman with solid university credentials and a Ph.D.

Does Morse not realize that without the feminist movement she would unlikely hold a Ph.D., much less in economics? That she would have been hard-pressed to get the professorships she left behind more than a decade ago?

In arguing against OU's Women's Studies programs, Morse makes her agenda all too clear: Women need to take off their shoes, get back in the kitchen and have some more babies [at their own expense, of course]. She contends in her Medicaid piece for OCPA that "under-population is our looming social problem, with infertility and a lifetime of loneliness the major personal crises of our time."

SHE BENEFITED FROM THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

No, she's not kidding. Morse, who has benefited greatly from the women's movement, apparently plans to use those advances to shove women back into their repressive pre-World War II hole.

Shame on you, Dr. Morse.

We propose Oklahoma taxpayers instead fund a Women's Studies scholarship at OU and grant the first one to Morse. Clearly she's missed the point, and some time in that department might help.

Shame, too, on OCPA for printing a piece that pretends to address a local issue when the writer could have substituted "Hawaii" for "Oklahoma" and sold it to a conservative think tank in Honolulu for use in a newsletter there. It would have made no difference to her

Yes, we want to watch our wallets. No, we don't trust our public officials to always make the decisions that are best for us. But pushing what amounts to anti-woman propaganda under the guise of being a watchdog for Oklahoma taxpayers isn't fooling us.

What's foolish is the notion that women should bow out, and the shame would be in the monumental loss to our society when those contributions disappeared.

© The Journal Record

Resegregation Well Underway In Schools

After years of progress following the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision to desegregate public schools, segregation rates in our schools have been rising across the country.

Incredibly enough, the Bush Administration is asking the Supreme Court this year to forbid school districts to take voluntary action to foster desegregation.

Why should we care? For one thing, desegregated schooling has clear educational benefits – reduced prejudice, improved cross-racial cooperation, increased life chances for African-American students, and in some cases, higher achievement especially among younger children.

Despite it not being a priority of our elected leaders, teachers can play a vital role in promoting desegregation. If they are lucky enough to teach in diverse classrooms, they can engage students in discussions about race and inequality and speak publicly about the benefits of racial diversity.

Teachers must be leaders in the struggle for an integrated society. The future of a healthy multiracial society is at stake.

CareerTech Grad On National TV

By Lauren Merryman

Armed with new skills in the electrical trades, Carolyn Kent is getting a second chance at life after release from Mabel Bassett Correctional Center.

Kent is a recent CareerTech Skills Center graduate from instructor Mick Marsee's Electrical Trades program. CareerTech Skills Centers are located behind prison walls in 23 correctional facilities in Oklahoma.

Selected to be part of the team for ABC TV's popular show "Extreme Makeover Home Edition," Kent helped wire a house in Lawton as an employee of Holt Electric, the company chosen to do the wiring in the house. The show aired April 22.

"After working on 'Extreme Makeover' and playing a part in assisting these people, I found I like helping others," said Kent. "Now I am volunteering with Habitat for Humanity during the weekends to help wire houses."

SHE WAS QUIET AND WITHDRAWN

Marsee remembers Kent in her first days of class as quiet and withdrawn. "Carolyn was a quiet student with low self-esteem," Marsee said of his former student. "After a few weeks she became a talkative and active member in class. She was the first student in my class to be released and was carrying the torch for every female inmate in Oklahoma."

For more than 35 years, CareerTech Skills Centers have offered specialized, occupational training to adult and juvenile incarcerated individuals.

"During the past five years, about 65% of the students trained by the Skills Centers have received jobs relating to the training they received while incarcerated," said Dom Garrison, CareerTech Skills Center superintendent.

MAKING A SMOOTH REENTRY

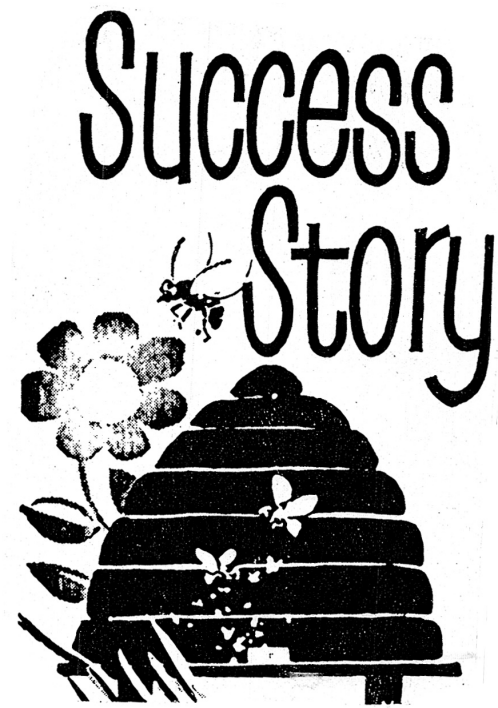
Skills Centers work with government and community organizations, including faith-based organizations, to help ensure a smooth reentry for released graduates.

"It is critical that offenders have advocates to work on their behalf during the initial 10-14 days after release from prison," Garrison said. "Emergency housing, transportation and food are often provided for the offender by these non-profit organizations."

Kent's Skills Center experience is now paying off.

Only six weeks after being hired by Holt Electric, besides being on a television show, she received a raise from \$8 to \$9 an hour. She also plans to enroll in the local union Electrical Apprenticeship Program where she will attend class two nights a week.

"I wish there were more employers like Ronny Holt, willing to give ex-offenders another chance," said Kent. "Society's way of continuing to punish ex-offenders



keeps them from getting their lives back on track."

SKILLS CENTERS HAVE MANY PROGRAMS

In addition to electrical trades, Skills Centers provide training in manufacturing, transportation, distribution and logistics, architecture and construction, business management and administration, and hospitality and tourism.

The courses offered give inmates a sense of self-pride and accomplishment, often after years of being verbally abused and suffering from a lack of self esteem, according to Marsee.

"Students begin to realize that they don't have to depend on anyone because they now have a real trade to take to the work force, which allows them to become part of the community," Marsee said.

Without Mabel Bassett's Skills Center program, Marsee believes that Kent would have been thrust into the world, struggling to find work and make enough money to live on, pay court fees and fines.

JOBS DIFFICULT FOR EX-OFFENDERS

"The main reason people return to prison after being released is because the search for a job is difficult so they go back to their old ways and soon end up incarcerated once again," Marsee said.

Kent is convinced Marsee's program helped her achieve this success in life.

"I do not think I could have gotten the job without his program and the effort he put forth to go through and find me this job," Kent said.

- Lauren Merryman is in communications and marketing, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education

In This Centennial Year ...

Meet The Alfalfa Bill You May Not Know

By Bob Darcy

In his 1947 self-published *Palestine*, William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, former president of Oklahoma's Constitutional Convention, speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, congressman and governor, honored with Murray Hall and North Murray Hall by then-Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, wrote:

"Deal with the Jewish problem by giving them ... Madagascar Island ... on condition that all Jews shall become nationals of such Jewish state [with one exception, that Jews and their families who came to America prior to 1900 shall retain, if they desire, their American citizenship]."

Murray advocated not allowing Jewish refugees, "Refu-Jews," into the United States and those Jews in the United States, citizens or not, be rounded up and shipped to Madagascar. Palestine should be reserved for Christians and Muslims. "Mohammedans are Pro-Christ."

The Madagascar idea can be traced back to 19th Century French and Polish anti-Semites. Nazis adopted and elaborated it. In the 1930s Hermann Göring, Reichsbank President Hjalmar Schacht and foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop all circulated it. But Madagascar was French, not German, and it went nowhere.

PLAN SEEMED FEASIBLE UNDER NAZIS

Then, in 1940, France fell and it seemed to the Nazis that Great Britain would soon follow. The plan became feasible. Franz Rademacher, head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jewish Department proposed to divide Europe's Jews into two groups. The eastern Jews to be held in Poland, the western Jews deported to Madagascar, desirable for its isolation.

In Rademacher's plan, defeated France would give Madagascar to Germany. Europeans living in Madagascar would be removed. Defeated Britain would transport the Jews. Jews would be responsible for local government in Madagascar under a German SS police governor. The operation would be paid for by Jewish property confiscations.

"This arrangement would prevent the possible establishment in Palestine by the Jews of a Vatican State of their own, and the opportunity for them to exploit for their own purposes the symbolic importance which Jerusalem has for the Christian and Mohammedan parts of the world. Moreover, the Jews will remain in German hands as a pledge for the future good behavior of the members of

their race in America. Use can be made for propaganda purposes of the generosity shown by Germany in permitting cultural, economic, administrative and legal self-administration to the Jews."

Hitler discussed the plan with Mussolini in June 1940. On August 15, 1940 Adolf Eichmann released the draft Madagascar Projekt to implement the design. But Britain did not fall and Madagascar itself was soon in British hands. Nazis moved on to the Final Solution.

Murray thought the Madagascar Plan could be adapted to America's own "Jewish Problem." But Alfalfa Bill Murray was no admirer of Adolf Hitler. To the contrary, Murray ranked Hitler with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Stalin and Mussolini as an "international outlaw." But he saw opportunity in the imminent German victory.

"Suppose Germany should capture the British Isles ... Do you think Australia and New Zealand and Canada would continue to send to England for goods, or prefer to come to America for them? We'd be the hub of the English-speaking peoples ... England and France ... were unprepared for war because they undertook to rule their governments with Jews and Communists ... we're repeating the same mistake here ..."

ANTI-SEMITE, BIGOT AND SEGREGATIONIST

This colorful Oklahoma anti-Semite was also a race bigot and architect of Oklahoma's segregation and Jim Crow. For several decades he gave the nation the impression Oklahomans were dangerous in their ignorance.

Murray was no friend of OAMC, now Oklahoma State University. He came up with the "Murray Foundation" to help poor students with loans. Revenue for the foundation would come from taking OAMC faculty's book royalties. And he managed to get rid of OAMC's best-ever football coach, Pappy Waldorf. Had OAMC kept Waldorf, we, not OU, would be the football powerhouse.

Murray Hall and North Murray should have permanent interactive exhibits highlighting Alfalfa Bill Murray's contributions to race bigotry, anti-Semitism and his on-going feud with OAMC. Or we should change the name and honor Clara Luper who dedicated her life to dismantling Murray's racist institutions and redeeming Oklahoma.

- The author is regents professor of political science and statistics at Oklahoma State University

PUBLIC FORUM

Romney's Liberal Logic On Abortion

By Danny Adkison

A recent Supreme Court decision has apparently caused some Republicans to rethink their thinking on abortion. One presidential candidate announced that he had a change of heart on the subject and had a new opinion on the matter. It is one that should be attractive to most conservatives.

It just so happens that, taken to its logical conclusion, it is exactly what liberals believe, too.

The presidential candidate is Mitt Romney. He is the Republican running for president who is surprising all the pundits by doing so well in the polls and seems to have the money, looks, and demeanor of the textbook candidate.

His new position seems to be the position most Republicans [and probably some Democrats] are going to take on abortion heading into the 2008 elections. It is a position that Ronald Reagan would be proud of, and it is Reagan, not Bush, whose name is dropped mostly by Republicans these days.

FOLLOWING HIS POSITION TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLUSION

What most people might not have thought about is that if you take Mr. Romney's position to its logical extreme, you end up with the position taken by liberals. No kidding. There is no arguing with logic. Except, that is, with its major and minor premises [and those are supplied by Mr. Romney].

Furthermore, even if one wants to quibble with the logic, the end result of Mr. Romney's thinking will produce the results liberals want in this area [which can be easily demonstrated by looking at another issue in which this very thing has occurred].

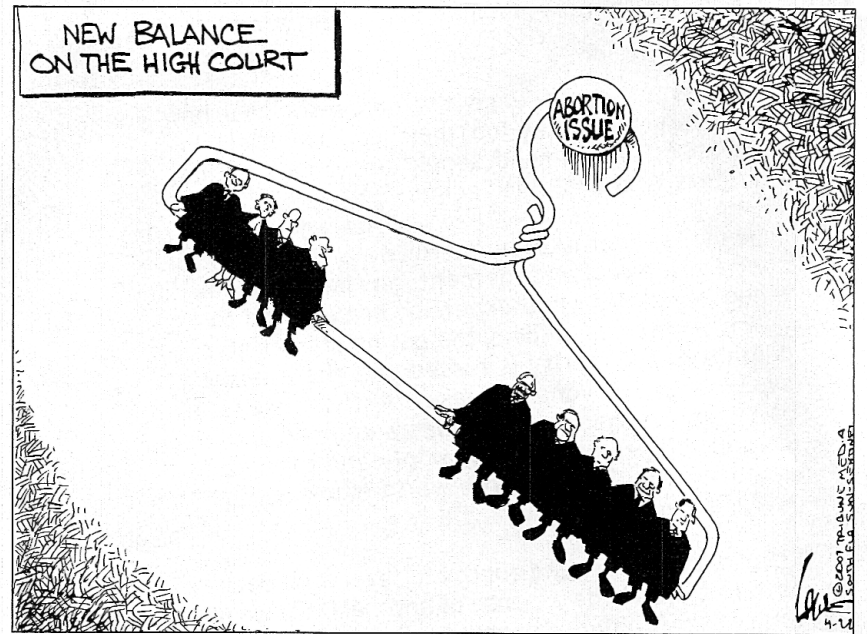
Let's start with the logic of Mr. Romney's position.

Mr. Romney has stated that since the recent Supreme Court decision upheld the banning of the abortion procedure known as partial birth abortion, he has decided that the subject of abortion should be taken off the national agenda. Where should it go? It should go to the states. The states should decide for themselves whether or not to allow abortion.

ABORTION DEBATE SHIFTS TO STATES?

Accepting this argument [along with its premises] and following its logic to its conclusion leads to an interesting result. Why shift the argument of abortion from the national agenda to the states? Those making this argument would say it is because the views on the issue of abortion vary by region. The states in the Bible Belt, for example, would be more inclined to want to prohibit abortion while those liberal states in the Rust Belt would be more inclined to allow it.

Yet, if it is true that some states are more accepting of allowing abortion than others, it must also be true that some parts of a state are more inclined to allow



abortion than other parts of a state. So, why not allow counties in each state decide for themselves whether or not to allow abortion?

But if one is willing to accept that, then why not allow each city to decide the abortion issue. In fact, why not just follow the argument to its final logical conclusion – let each individual of each state decide whether or not it is acceptable to have an abortion!

This, it turns out, is the very position liberals take on this issue. Liberals aren't pro-abortion. They abhor it. They merely argue that the decision is a personal one between a woman and her physician. That, it turns out, is the logical conclusion of Mr. Romney's decision.

THIS CAN'T BE ROMNEY'S MOTIVE, CAN IT?

But, you say, this can't be why Mr. Romney is proposing this idea. It probably isn't. That doesn't mean it is not the logical conclusion of what he is proposing. Furthermore, if Mr. Romney's argument were to be adopted, where would it lead?

We have the answer to that. That is because since 1973 the Supreme Court did exactly what Mr. Romney is proposing, only on a different issue. In that year the Supreme Court announced that pornography would no longer be defined by national standards. Rather, each state could decide [and some think the Court said each city or neighborhood] for itself what was pornographic.

In case you haven't noticed, you don't see many pornography prosecutions in this nation anymore. That is because of the 1973 decision. By denying a national standard as to what the definition of pornography is the local authorities have found it almost impossible to win a pornography prosecution. So why bother.

Why wouldn't the same thing happen with abortion? How ironic that one of the leading Republican presidential candidates for 2008 has taken a position that logically and practically would have the exact opposite result conservatives claim to take.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

Taking The Politics Out Of Abortion

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Every once in a while, when hearing or reading about some abortion controversy, the question occurs to The Militant Moderate: "Who advocates abortion? Who favors abortion?" The answer always comes up, "Nobody."

Of course, that excludes a few warped eugenicists with a 1930's mentality that favor improving the heredity of the human race by eliminating the less fit.

Indeed there may be those who just don't want to pay taxes for the care of the severely handicapped and the mentally retarded, and who resent the huge medical bills for infants born with life-threatening defects. But the irony is that those who are politically opposed to taxes to pay for the care of problem children are the same ones who want to force mothers to birth those infants. Well, at least they belong to the same political party.

On the other hand, some of us favor keeping the government out of the private business of a woman and her family. And, indeed, some of us believe in leaving decisions involving the health of the mother to a dialogue between the woman and her doctor. We believe in leaving medical practice and procedures to the doctors, and not the government.

GOVERNMENT INTRUDES WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG

Most proposed abortion laws seek to put the government in control of personal or medical situations where it does not belong. Recent court decisions are doing the same thing with certain medical procedures.

It seems that most of these legal and emotional controversies center on: (1) late term abortions; and (2) the so-called partial birth procedure. In fact, from all the prominent negative publicity and emotionalism about these, one would think that most abortions must indeed be both late term and done with that procedure.

Research indicates that only 1.4% of abortions are performed after 20 weeks of pregnancy. That is about 4.67 months, barely over half-term and far short of entry into the third trimester. Thus abortion in the third trimester, to which so many concentrate their objections, is relatively rare.

Of this small number of later term abortions, most are performed out of medical necessity and not from preference. Relatively few across the nation, about 2,000 only, require the partial birth procedure. Again, those are primarily to pro-

tect the life or health of the mother, including politically pro-life women in danger. Few doctors will even consider a late term abortion otherwise.

PRESERVING MEDICALLY NECESSARY PROCEDURES

The heads of hydrocephalic fetuses, involved in most partial birth procedures, pose extreme medical risk to mothers. Carrying to term threatens the mother's body. Normal delivery or normal late aborting threatens the mother's life and health. Either natural or Caesarian methods threaten the mother's ability to have another child, according to doctors.

The partial-birth procedure is sometimes said to be "pro-life" because it preserves the ability of the mother to have other children.

Both pro-life and pro-freedom mothers must be allowed to choose medically necessary procedures for the sake of their health and the preservation of their childbearing ability. Most of these rare late term abortions are non-political. Instead, these are medical decisions, and they should remain free of government interference.

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

Panchito Has A Point

Panchito and Pedro worked together and both were laid off, so they went to the unemployment office.

When asked his occupation, Panchito answered, "Panty Stitcher. I sew elastic on da ladies' cotton panties." The clerk looked up. Panty Stitcher. Finding it classified as "unskilled labor" she gave him \$300 a week unemployment pay.

Pedro was asked his occupation. "Diesel Fitter," he replied. Since diesel fitter was a skilled job, the clerk gave Pedro \$600 a week.

When Panchito found out, he was furious. He stormed back into the office to find out why his friend and co-worker was collecting double his pay.

The clerk explained. "Panty stitchers are unskilled labor, but diesel fitters are skilled."

"What skill?" yelled Panchito. "I sew the elastic on da panties, then Pedro puts dem over his head and says, 'Yeah, diesel fitter.'"

Oklahoma Journalist Finds Hope In Mali

By Terry Clark

From a rooftop in Mali, this is Terry Clark reporting...

I visited this West African country in March with professors and other journalists from Oklahoma State who received a U.S. State Department grant, titled "Nurturing the Fourth Estate." It was designed to help develop the media in this stable, 90% Muslim, democracy. They needed an old newspaperman to go along, and I'm doubly qualified.

I think we did that, but I learned far more about journalism than I ever tried to teach.

Yes, I did sit on a rooftop and receive the gift of a lifetime from our guide and interpreter – a communal meal on a pallet with live African music as the sun went down in the dusty sub-Saharan sky.

A RENEWED INSPIRATION FOR JOURNALISM

I made my first venture into broadcast journalism, using a video camera to record sights and sounds and people. I used a digital SLR and a point-and-shoot to capture some unbelievable images and memories. I kept a daily journal, by hand, that numbers almost 100 pages for 10 days.

I came back with renewed inspiration and actually proud to be a journalist in the real sense of the word – keeping a daily journal and discovering much about journalism and freedom and a special people.

And I learned that Mali's media can teach American media many things that we've pretty much lost or forgotten.

For the record, Mali is immensely poor and dirty. Literacy is only about 30%. Lifespan averages 48 years. Eleven million people eke out a living in a country twice the size of Texas. Half the population is under 14, and intestinal diseases and malaria kill half the children.

But I saw happy people, I saw people wearing bright-colored clothes, I saw people who had nothing and yet had everything. I saw no malnutrition – many eat fresh vegetables and fruit every day, though many have only a porridge called Toh. I saw no lazy people – people who work harder than we imagine, and who still smile and laugh and play and love family – people who have hope. I saw imaginative people who create paintings, and sculpture and jewelry and carvings and fantastically colored dyed cloth. I saw people who like Americans, and people who remember living under a dictatorship 16 years ago, and who treasure freedom.

100 DEGREES, AND THE HOT SEASON HADN'T ARRIVED

I saw people where the term "no sweat" has probably never been heard – when we were there, the daytime temperature hovered around 100 degrees, and dust hung in the air. But the hot season hadn't arrived. April and May will set in and the temp will rise to over 120. Rain won't come until June when the cotton and other crops can be planted.

The people are suspicious of concentrated power, just like Americans were when we gained freedom from the British. As a result, they're committed to decentralization and have set up a true federal system – like we used to have. Asked if they got together on national holidays to sing songs, march and so forth, they responded that they wouldn't tolerate mandatory group activities. I wondered what they'd think of our "Pledge of Allegiance" in schools. The main native language, Bambara, actually means "I refuse submission." The people are literally "jealous" of their freedom.

That's only a portion of what I saw and experienced and tasted.

FM RADIO OFFSETS LITERACY PROBLEM

Now some notes from my journal on the media.

The main media in Mali is FM radio, because of the illiteracy. In their federal system they've split the country into more than 200 communes [don't think Communist – it's a French word – the official language in this former colony – for community]. Each commune is allotted three radio stations, and most of them, with only about 40- or 50-kilometer ranges, devote most of the programming to educational material on health, disease, agriculture, women's issues, etc. In all media, including newspapers, there's almost no advertising. I thought advertising was essential to a free press. Not so. Our advertising for the most part seeks brand recognition and tries to create "need." In Mali, there is need everywhere.



Accordingly, most media are run on shoestrings, and pay is low. Newspapers use the official French language, and circulations – because of the low literacy rate – are low. Largest is about 17,000 in the capital city of Bamako, population over one million.

But Mali media have clear purpose. At one radio station, the passionate female owner said, "The antenna is our weapon. We are the voice of the voiceless."

Asked if they play music – and many do – one journalist told us, "When all Malians have enough to eat, then we'll play music."

In fact, the radios and newspapers remind me of what community newspapers were 100 years ago in this state and country – multiple voices, lower circulations, depending on subscribers and local support for existence. They're also partisan in many cases, just like our newspapers were when they chose names like The Waurika News-Democrat or the Cherokee Republican.

FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

Their constitution guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, "with respect to law." But there is a very strict libel law. We asked several journalists if they'd been harassed or put in jail, and the response was often, "Of course." While uncommon, it happens and they view that as part of their job.

Ask them their purpose and they'll say it is to help the people of the country and maintain their freedom. They speak of "mobilization" of the electorate. Note in my journal after one such visit:

"The media have a passion and purpose for what journalism is supposed to be. In America, the purpose of most media seems to be to make money and satisfy stockholders. It's not an accident that we refer to our media as 'markets.' Theirs are 'voices.'"

Over and over again, we heard that the biggest need of journalism was more training. Interesting note: They linked more training for journalists to increasing journalism ethics. They also attributed declining newspaper circulation to a lack of ethics and people losing respect for journalism. One said that if we expected people to respect our ethics, we had to make sure they understood what we cover and why.

"America, are you listening?" I wrote.

NO GLAMORIZING OR ROMANTICIZING MALI

I have guarded against trying to glamorize or romanticize this country and people. There are so many problems and faults. But getting past those, these people, their rich cultures and their media inspire with passion and example and hard work. This short report doesn't even begin to address the issues and lessons, from a rooftop in Mali to a computer in Oklahoma.

If you'd like to view my reactions and reports in more depth, and some of my colleagues' while we were there, go to the following blog: nurturingthe4thestate.blogspot.com.

Vive Mali!

– The author is chairman of the University of Central Oklahoma's Department of Mass Communications

Smallfry Describe Angels On High

"I only know the names of two angels! Hark and Harold." Gregory, 5

"Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it." Olive, 9

"It's not easy to become an angel! First, you die. Then you go to heaven; then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes." Matthew, 9

"Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else." Mitchell, 7

"My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much help." Jack, 6

"Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from holy cows." Jack, 6

"Angels talk all the way while they're flying you up to heaven. The basic message is where you went wrong before you got dead." Daniel, 9

"When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to 10. And when he lets out his breath, somewhere there's a tornado." Reagan, 10

"Angels have a lot to do and they keep very busy. If you lose a tooth, an angel comes in through your window and leaves money under your pillow. Then when it gets cold, angels go north for the winter." Sara, 6

"Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his son, who's a very good carpenter." Jared, 8

"All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses, and boys didn't go for it." Antonio, 9

"My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth." Katelynn, 9

"Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the kid get over it." Vicki, 8

"What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them." Sarah, 7

– Thanks to LeAnn Troy for sending this along

BOOKS

Green Movement Could Unite The U.S.

By Alvena Bieri

THIS MOMENT ON EARTH

Today's New Environmentalists and Their Vision for the Future

By John and Teresa Heinz Kerry

Public Affairs Press

254 pages, \$25

Is there a fresh, new environmental movement forming in this country?

John and Teresa Kerry answer yes in their new book that is praised on the back cover by none other than Al Gore. Kerry gives credit to Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* for getting the U.S. headed back on the right environmental track, calling it "brilliant."

So the tone of the Kerry book is generally upbeat and positive despite its outlining of the demanding environmental problems that face us.

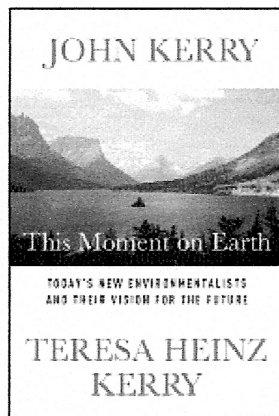
The authors end, of course, with the usual things we citizens can do to help the situation, those simple-sounding things like watching our thermostats to conserve energy, turning off lights when we leave the room, using compact fluorescent light bulbs, and driving smaller, more fuel-efficient cars.

They have also included a comprehensive list of environmental groups for us to contact.

The dangers of global warming are in the spotlight right now, but there are other concerns too, like air pollution, which is of course related to it, and endangered water supplies. Take the effects of coal-fired plants as an example of a health hazard especially to children.

A couple of years ago scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency found that about one in every six babies, or 630,000 of the 4 million born in our country every year, has a blood mercury level high enough to cause "learning disabilities, impair motor skills, and, affect intelligence."

Where is the plan to help solve this problem? Where in fact is any widespread



public concern or even outrage?

We are constantly reminded of the political connections to environmental concerns. The Kerrys say what we already know about bad air, and all the while the big utility companies give major money to Bush. In fact, the 30 biggest have donated over \$6 million dollars to him and the rest of the Republicans in the last few years.

Then comes an optimistic story about Pittsburgh, PA, the hometown of both Teresa Heinz Kerry and the environmentalist Rachel Carson. It was a city straight out of the Industrial Revolution, but it declined in the 1970s with its steel production going way down.

But Teresa says that now a new vision has emerged, a green building movement, with natural ventilation, and daylight sensors being used which save about 35% on electricity. The Economist magazine has now ranked Pittsburgh "the most livable city in the U.S."

There are other bursts of hope here and there, in locations and in history. Individuals like Rachel Carson and her successful struggle against DDT is a prime example of one individual who made a tremendously good difference. After several years of work, she published her book "Silent Spring" which came out in 1962 and became a best-seller.

Now a few companies seem to be catching on. DuPont is cutting its energy use by 30% by changing the way they package, their products. Michael Dell of Dell Computers asks customers for small contributions for environmental causes.

As we have said, ultimately the problems go back to politics, and we need strong leadership from the top, not the weakening of clean air and other standards that were on a good course in the Clinton years.

The Kyoto Treaty, as we remember, never actually went to the Senate to be voted on, Kerry says. All the other major industrial countries approved it.

The Kerrys believe that a turnaround – a truly new and responsible environmentalism – could unite Americans of all political backgrounds. That would be a marvelous development, and so would the new industries and jobs that could grow out of such a movement.

Finally, we need to be assertive and anticipate problems before they overtake us, they advise.

A final quote: "Our current system has put us in a position of forever managing crises and fears and panic instead of preventing them."

This is a book to treasure, to study, and to tell your friends about.

– The author lives in Stillwater

Founders Sought Freedom From Religion

MORAL MINORITY

Our Skeptical Founding Fathers

By Brooke Allen

Ivan R. Dee, Publisher

256 pages, \$24.95

Books about all aspects of our Founding Fathers keep rolling off the presses.

The latest I ran across is Brooke Allen's. She writes for publications like the Atlantic, the Nation and the New York Times.

She first reminds readers that many colonists came to America for religious freedom. Ironically, some of them then turned right around and started persecuting those who disagreed with them.

Just as the differing stands on slavery were, religion was often divisive. There were great contrasts in thought systems in the 18th Century, the time when the United States broke with England. That century was not an age of faith but of science, and Allen writes, "the American founding fathers were in its vanguard."

What follows in the book are the personal stories of six icons of that time.

The first, one of my personal favorites, is Ben Franklin. At the height of his fame and fortune, he was known and respected all over the western world as a scientist and publisher. He even became a friend of Voltaire in France.

Franklin, who came from a Presbyterian family, had the habit of thinking for himself from a very early age. He said he became a Deist at age 15 and dropped church, saying Sunday was his "studying day." Still, he became friends with

George Whitefield, a Methodist preacher during the Great Awakening. He also knew Dr. Joseph Priestly, an early Unitarian.

The other founders seemed flexible in a way since most had association with well-established churches. George Washington was "a lukewarm Episcopalian," according to biographer Joseph Ellis. He didn't take communion and he "died as a Roman Stoic rather than a Christian saint," Allen writes.

John Adams was deeply affected by his Puritan heritage. Allen calls him the hardest working and "most learned" of all the founders. He went to Harvard when he was 15. At one time he described himself as "a church-going animal," a Unitarian who didn't believe in the trinity or the divinity of Jesus.

Jefferson's religious views are well-known. He was very proud of his Virginia law for assuring religious freedom. He believed "reason is the only oracle given you by heaven," Allen writes.

Alexander Hamilton, like Washington, often seemed pious on the outside, she writes, and understood instinctively that many politicians use the language of religion to their own ends and that it is dangerous to counter and oppose truly religious people.

Allen concludes by writing about the philosophies underlying the U.S. system of government, writing that it was founded not on biblical precepts, but mostly on the Saxon common law of England.

This is a thoughtful, well-written book.

– Alvena Bieri

The Saga Of America's Deadliest Avalanche

By Mike Nobles

THE WHITE CASCADE

The Great Northern Railway Disaster and America's Deadliest Avalanche

By Gary Krist

Henry Holt & Co.

336 pages, \$26

This is the true story of two trains, one passenger and one mail, operated by the Great Northern Railway that departed Spokane, WA, on Feb. 23, 1910, to traverse the Cascade Mountains through Stevens Pass on their way to Seattle. The area, known as the snowiest in the U.S., was so remote and dangerous it had been considered a miracle of engineering when completed in 1893, allowing Spokane, Seattle, and Everett, WA, to be connected to the rest of the country and allowing travel in an efficient manner.

Shortly after their departure the trains were enveloped in what was to be the largest snowstorm recorded to that date. By day two, Feb. 24, the trains are stalled

at Wellington Station where they are to remain until the fateful day of Tuesday, March 1. It was on that date, at 1:42 a.m., that an avalanche struck both trains, sweeping all 125 passengers and crew members off the tracks into a steep ravine. A total of 96 men, women, and children died.

In a highly readable, narrative style, Krist tells the story of the events leading up to the disaster through the eyes of both the victims and their would-be rescuers. There is also a discussion on the developing American railroad empires being built by industry titans during the golden age of steam railroads.

This riveting book tells the day-to-day, almost minute-by-minute story of a catastrophe that unfolds, unlike most disasters, over the course of a week's time. Thus, the suspense builds as passengers and crew alike have time to consider their predicament and possible options. Indeed, a number of times I found myself thinking this can't be happening and wondering how it was going to end, even though I knew the outcome! This is that good a story. This is a true story that will appeal to history fans, especially railroad history, as well as adventure lovers and readers that enjoy and appreciate really fast-paced, first-rate writing.

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

Despite Dirty Tricks American Unions See Labor Rising

By David Francis

American corporate executives spend several hundred million dollars a year on “union avoidance” lawyers and consultants [less politely called “union busters”] to keep their companies union-free.

Other costs involved in campaigns against trade unions may well boost the bill above \$1 billion a year, estimates management professor John Logan.

The United States, says Logan of the London School of Economics, is the only industrialized nation to have a “union avoidance” industry of any size engaged in helping management resist unionization, undermine union strength, or unload existing unions.

This industry, consisting of dozens of law firms and consultancies, has ballooned since the 1970s. Its success is one reason why trade union membership has declined to 7.4% of non-supervisory workers in the private sector and 35% of non-supervisory government workers, or 12% overall in 2006, down from 12.5% in 2005.

INTIMIDATING WORKERS

That success, say trade union supporters, hangs on intimidating workers with bullying techniques that are accommodated by toothless laws and pro-management federal institutions.

But Stewart Acuff, organizing director of the AFL-CIO, the confederation of American trade unions, is not discouraged. Public opinion polls show that over the past eight or nine years more and more American workers want union representation.

A 2006 poll finds that, given a choice between a union and no representation at all, 32% of non-union workers would vote for a trade union. And 90% of unionized workers would vote to keep their union.

Perhaps that's no surprise. Studies find that unionized workers are paid better on average than non-union workers in the same industry. And that fact explains in some degree why management figures it's worth hiring “union avoidance” professionals to keep union organizers at bay.

THEY HIRE UNION BUSTERS

In fact, 70% of firms facing a union organizing campaign hire them. Further, these “union busters” create demand for their services by stirring up management fears that unionization could have dire consequences for their firms, Logan said. They contribute to the aggressive and adversarial nature of U.S. labor-management relations, he says.

Encouraged by the Democratic Party's success in last year's congressional election and the passing of the Employee Free Choice Act by the House of Representatives on March 1, Acuff sees a revival of the union movement ahead.

That bill received support from 13 House Republicans. Acuff predicts that when the Senate takes up the legislation, it will get the 60 votes needed to avoid a filibuster, but not the two-thirds vote needed to escape a promised veto by Bush.

It may take the election of a Democratic president in 2008 to get labor laws amended to facilitate more union organizing, he says.

STOPS BUSINESS DIRTY TRICKS

The proposed law provides for real penalties for firing a union organizer.

Though illegal now, the penalty for such firings is so immaterial that companies do so in one out of four workplaces where unions are attempting to organize



employees, according to Kate Bronfenbrenner, an expert at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY.

Currently, in cases where an illegal firing is determined, the worker gets only back pay minus any earnings he or she has received from a replacement job. After seven years, a worker in one case was reinstated to his job and got a mere \$1,300 in back pay, notes Lance Compa, who also teaches at Cornell.

The proposed law would provide for a \$2,000 penalty plus triple back pay.

Under existing law, managers can “predict” that their plant and jobs could be sent elsewhere, often to Mexico. But they can't “threaten” to do so – a difference that is meaningless to workers concerned about jobs in uncertain times.

NLRB ELECTIONS ARE NOT SECRET

The Free Choice Act also would change when unions are recognized. At present, management can insist on an election supervised by the National Labor Relations Board. Professor Bronfenbrenner holds that these elections are not really by secret ballot.

Management or their consultants can find out how each employee will vote by one-on-one interrogation of employees, secret surveillance using ID badges, or other methods. Union backers feel threatened, seeing the prospects for their jobs fading, she says.

The proposed law lets unions be recognized if they get a majority of workers to sign a card saying they want union representation. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce charges that this would threaten workers' choices, making them vulnerable to coercion by union organizers.

Still, Bronfenbrenner sees public opinion shifting in favor of organized labor, possibly influenced by Democratic presidential candidates John Edwards, Barack Obama, and Bill Richardson, all supporters of the Free Choice Act.

If unions grow, this “worker power,” Acuff says, can provide an alternative to “unchecked corporate power” and push more workers into the middle class.

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Ignore Balanced Budget Baloney

By Robert B. Reich

When Bill Clinton was in the White House and the Republicans ran Congress, it was Republicans who demanded that the federal budget be balanced. That was because they wanted to cut federal spending.

Now that George Bush is in the White House and Democrats run Congress, it's Democrats who are outraged by what they consider to be an irresponsibly rosy scenario in the President's new budget, which he claims will be balanced by 2012.

Impossible, say the Democrats, who want to roll back his tax cuts for the wealthy.

Let's call a time-out here and ask ourselves why it's so important to balance the federal budget in the first place.

The federal budget is just an accounting convention – and a lousy one at that. It doesn't distinguish between spending to pay off obligations made in the past, spending intended to make us better off today, and spending to make us more productive in the future.

FAMILIES KNOW THE PRIORITIES

Any family knows the difference between past, present, and future – between, say, paying down the mortgage, going on an ocean cruise, or paying college tuition for the kids.

You've got to honor past obligations, because your credit-worthiness depends on it. If you don't make those mortgage payments the bank could foreclose on your house.

Meanwhile, you've got to live today on the basis of what you can afford to do today. That ocean cruise may be tempting but if you haven't saved enough, forget it.

It's an extravagance.

And you should make investments in the future. Even if you have to borrow to send the kids to college you should do so because that's a smart investment.

Smart investments will help your family live better in the future and pay off its loans more easily.

FEDERAL BUDGET TELLS US NOTHING

The federal budget doesn't at all resemble a family budget. The federal budget is a static account that tells us nothing about past, present, or future.

Price supports designed to protect today's farmers are treated the same way as education and health care for our nation's children.

They both show up as categories in the yearly budget – even though the farm price supports are to keep a group of people secure today, while education and child health care are really investments in America's future.

Social Security surpluses show up in the budget as this year's revenues that offset this year's expenses. In reality the surpluses are payments by post-war boomers who are still working but who in a few years will be retired and making big withdrawals.

What looks like revenues will soon turn into big liabilities. The federal budget hides this inconvenient fact.

No one in their right mind should worry about balancing this silly agglomeration.

We should worry instead about putting aside enough to deal with past obligations, devoting no more than we can now afford to current needs, and making adequate future investments – even if we have to borrow in order to make them.

© CommonDreams.org

The U.S. Chamber Lies About Lawsuits

By Justin Bank

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is running a TV ad alleging that "lawsuit abuse" is costing "your family" \$3,500 a year. That's false. The figure is from a study that estimates the cost of all lawsuits, not just abusive ones.

Even the author of the study cited by the Chamber says its ad is "misleading." The fact is his study makes no attempt to specify which lawsuits are legitimate and which can be considered abusive.

Furthermore, the study specifically warns against drawing any conclusions about the costs and benefits of the judicial system and even acknowledges that the benefits could outweigh the costs. The Chamber ignores this warning. It also fails to note that the same study estimates the cost of all lawsuits at the lowest level in 10 years.

RUNNING THEIR LIES ON CABLE

The Chamber's ad, which is running on national cable stations, says that "lawsuit abuse is forcing your family to pay \$3,500 more each year for everyday goods and services."

The figure is derived from an analysis done by Towers-Perrin Tillinghast, a management consulting firm. But lead author Russ Sutter told FactCheck.org that the ad makers are "misleading in how they characterize it."

Sutter pointed out that his study "looked at all torts; we don't segregate between legitimate and illegitimate [Torts are civil wrongs, rather than criminal, which are the basis of most lawsuits. Plaintiffs who win their cases are often awarded monetary damages.]

The Chamber ignores the distinction between legitimate suits and abusive ones. The ad uses the term "lawsuit abuse" twice.

THEY DON'T GIVE FRIVOLOUS LAWSUIT FACTS

The ad also shows a man shoving bills into a briefcase and says that "some trial lawyers are exploiting our courts, using frivolous lawsuits to make millions."

The study does not attempt to estimate what fraction of all lawsuits are frivolous.

A bedrock principle of our system of justice is the fact that those who have suffered harm from somebody else's carelessness or bad actions have redress through the courts. It is also one of the benefits that the analysis doesn't attempt to quantify.

Chamber of Commerce Ad: "Lawsuit Climate 2007"

Narrator: *You save each year for important things like retirement and college. But you probably didn't know that lawsuit abuse is forcing your family to pay \$3,500 more each year for everyday goods and services. Some trial lawyers are exploiting our courts, using frivolous lawsuits to make millions.*

Some would say that's almost criminal. Lawsuit abuse is a national problem. See where your state ranks.

Instead, Tillinghast focuses solely on costs. The authors' interpretation of costs is a combination of three specific factors:

Awards paid or expected to be paid to plaintiffs, defense costs, and expenses in the administration of claims.

THEY ADMIT THEY MAY BE WRONG

In the explanation of the methodology the study's authors acknowledge the possibility that benefits could be greater than their estimate of costs. They specifically avoid taking a position on this.

Tillinghast: *The study examines only one side of the U.S. tort system: the costs. No attempt has been made to measure or quantify the benefits of the tort*

The Truth About Malpractice Suits

President Bush recently reintroduced his bogus claim that good doctors are being forced to quit their practices because of frivolous lawsuits.

"We should not have a legal system that's running good doctors out of practice and running up the cost of your medicine," he said in the State of the Economy Report.

As in the past, however, Bush's statements about this issue are misleading. New research by Public Citizen demonstrates that medical malpractice litigation is not out of control.

Bush's mischaracterizations detract from the real health care crisis – an epidemic of medical errors and a serious lack of physician oversight. More than 99,000 people were killed by hospital errors last year.

Public Citizen has released two reports about the state of the medical malpractice system in America.

In the first report, "The Great Medical Malpractice Hoax," Public Citizen analyzed data from the federal government and found that the total number and inflation adjusted value of malpractice payments to patients are almost the same as in 1991.

At the same time, America faces a real crisis in a lack of patient safety and doctor oversight. One physician identified in Public Citizen's report had more than 30 payments for medical malpractice yet had never once been disciplined by his state medical board.

The second report, "Bush Fear Mongering on Ob-Gyn Access Belied by Facts," focused on Bush's claim that "lawsuits are driving many good doctors out of practice – leaving women in nearly 1,500 American counties without a single [ob-gyn]."

In the report, which analyzed data from the federal government and the American Medical Association, Public Citizen found that, contrary to the Bush's claims, the number of counties without an ob-gyn is actually declining every year while the number of ob-gyns per women of childbearing age is growing. Access to ob-gyn care is, in fact, improving.

system, such as a systematic resolution of disputes, and the study makes no conclusion that the costs of the U.S. tort system outweigh the benefits, or vice versa.

The Tillinghast study found that the total cost of torts in the U.S. for 2005 was \$261 billion, which is \$880 per person on average. The Chamber seizes on this last number to extrapolate the figure that the average American family of four paid a "litigation tax" of more than \$3,500 [\$3,520 more specifically].

But the average household is actually 2.60 persons according to Census figures. Even the average family household is only 3.18 people.

OVERSTATEMENT FOR MOST VIEWERS

So even if the per-person figure had been fairly represented, the Chamber's \$3,500 figure for "your family" would be an overstatement for most viewers of the ad.

The Chamber also ignores several key findings from the study, all of which show that costs associated with tort lawsuits are actually slowing in growth. For instance:

- U.S. tort costs grew by 0.5% in 2005. This was much lower than the growth rate of 5.7 % in 2004, and was the smallest increase in tort costs since 1997.

- The 0.5% rate of growth in tort costs in 2005 was less than overall economic growth of 6.3%. Since 1950, growth in tort costs has exceeded growth in GDP by an average of 2 to 3 percentage points.

The Towers-Perrin Tillinghast analysis is funded by the company.

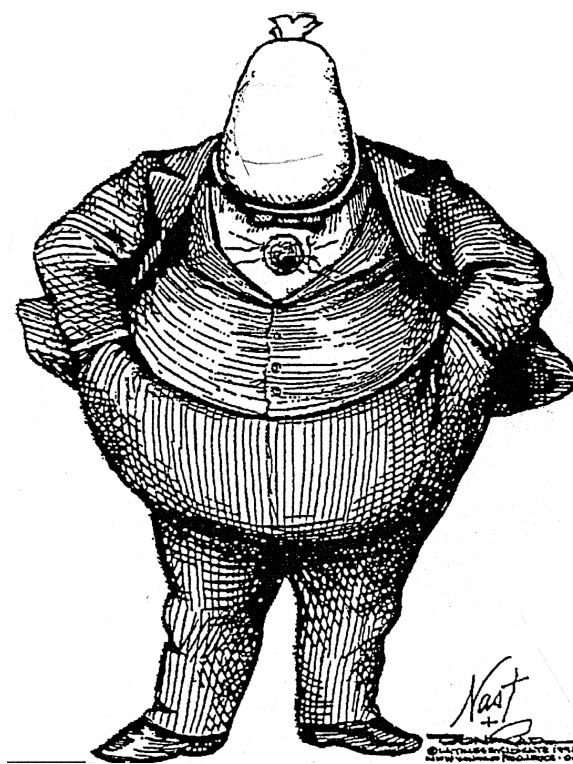
However, it is worth noting the company is a self-described "leader in consulting to the insurance and financial services industry."

The company has calculated tort costs for about 20 years and has been doing so annually since 2001.

The Chamber of Commerce is not the first group to get overzealous with these figures. The insurance industry group American Health Insurance Plans – which like the Chamber would like to change the legal system to shield business interests from high-damage awards – did so in 2005, as we reported here.

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Editor's Note: *The U.S. Chamber not only misrepresents lawsuit abuse, it does the same to public education.*



can Medical Association, Public Citizen found that, contrary to the Bush's claims, the number of counties without an ob-gyn is actually declining every year while the number of ob-gyns per women of childbearing age is growing. Access to ob-gyn care is, in fact, improving.

"The President's claim that ob-gyn care is threatened by malpractice litigation is especially pernicious," said Laura MacCleery, director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch program.

"It is not only inaccurate, but is crafted in such a way so as to make women believe they must choose between their legal rights and health care. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth."

Once again the old joke – know when Bush is lying? When his lips are moving.

Public Citizen

Fridays With Frosty

Join Oklahoma Observer Founding Editor Frosty Troy for commentary every Friday at 7:35 a.m. and 4:44 p.m. on Oklahoma's Public Radio. Neva Hill's commentary airs Thursdays at the same times.



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101.9
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Boren Votes No **Hate Crimes Are Soaring In America**

By Armanda Terkel

Since 1991 more than 100,000 hate crime offenses have been reported to the FBI. In 2005 alone, there were at least 1,017 crimes based on sexual orientation.

Yet under the current law, "the federal government is not able to help in cases where women, gay, transgender or disabled Americans are victims of bias-motivated crimes for who they are."

The House voted 237-180 to approve the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act [LLEHCPA], a bipartisan effort that would enable federal officials to work with state and local officials to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

The entire Oklahoma delegation voted against it, including the lone Democrat, Rep. Dan Boren – even though such hatred has touched his own family. Boren was one of only 14 Democrats to do so.

Far rightwing groups are aggressively opposing this legislation, spreading baseless myths and shrill rhetoric.

The last time the House passed this legislation was in September 2005, with 223 lawmakers supporting it, including 30 Republicans.

DISPELLING ONE OF THE MYTHS

- Myth #1 – Hate crimes protection is unnecessary.

"There are no crimes covered by the hate crimes bill, H.R. 1592, which are not already prosecutable under existing laws," wrote the Family Research Council [FRC] in its May 1 newsletter.

Former chief counsel to President Nixon, Chuck Colson, argues, "Some say we need this law to prevent attacks on homosexuals. But we already have laws against assaults on people and property."

Despite the right-wing's rhetoric, LLEHCPA would give the federal government much-needed new authority to assist states in going after hate crimes in all categories.

Under the current federal hate crime law enacted in 1969, the federal government has the authority to investigate and prosecute "attacks based on race, color, national origin and religion and because the victim was attempting to exercise a federally protected right."

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD HELP

LLEHCPA would give the federal government the ability to help where women, gay, transgender or disabled Americans are also the victims of bias-motivated crimes.

A 2006 Harris Interactive poll found that "64% of gays and lesbians are concerned about being the victim of a bias-motivated crime."

Eighty-five percent of law enforcement officials believe "bias motivated violence to be more serious than similar crimes not motivated by bias."

- Myth #2 – Local law enforcement officials do not need more resources to combat hate.

The National Review published an editorial arguing, "There is no evidence that local law enforcement has a special need for federal resources to help it combat hate crimes."

LOCAL JURISDICTIONS WITHOUT RESOURCES

But as the Human Rights Campaign [HRC] notes, "Too many local jurisdictions lack full resources necessary to prosecute hate crimes."

"For example, when Matthew Shepard was murdered in Laramie, WY, in 1998, the investigation and prosecution of the case cost the community of 28,000 resi-



dents about \$150,000, forcing the sheriff's department to layoff five deputies in order to save money."

The legislation would allow federal officials to get involved where local law enforcement is unwilling or unable to do so. It would also make grants available to train local law officers to go after hate crimes and help combat violent crimes committed by juveniles.

It is endorsed by 31 state attorneys general and leading law enforcement agencies, including the National Sheriffs' Association and the International Chiefs of Police.

HATE CRIMES A PERSISTENT PROBLEM

Hate crimes continue to be a persistent problem. As HRC president Joe Solmonese notes, "Approximately 25 hate crimes are reported each day in our country – more simply go unreported."

"One in six of these crimes is motivated by the victim's sexual orientation."

According to a new report by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the number of hate groups – such as the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis – has increased 40% since 2000.

- Myth #3 – The bill would criminalize free speech.

"There's a vote coming up on some insidious legislation in the United States Congress that could silence and punish Christians for their moral beliefs," said Focus on the Family founder James Dobson on his radio broadcast.

"That means that as a Christian – if you read the Bible a certain way with regard to morality – you may be guilty of committing a 'thought crime.'"

The Concerned Women for America put out a statement claiming that this legislation is meant to "grant official government recognition to both homosexual and cross-dressing behaviors and to silence opposition to those behaviors."

PASTORS COULD BE PROSECUTED? NO WAY

Colson wrote that "pastors who preach sermons giving the biblical view of homosexuality could be prosecuted."

Not one of these statements is true. LLEHCPA goes after criminal action such as physical assaults – not name calling or verbal abuse.

The bill clearly states that "evidence of expression or associations of the defendant may not be introduced as substantive evidence at trial, unless the evidence specifically relates to that offense."

- Myth #4 – The bill is opposed by all religious groups.

Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, head of the Traditional Values Coalition, said, "Liberal

See HATE CRIMES Page 16

Sunday Shows Are White Men's Realm

By Joe Garofoli

Here's a silver lining in last month's avalanche of news coverage of Don Imus: The disc jockey's racist and sexist remarks inspired at least one Sunday morning talk show to invite women and people of color to discuss Imus' comments.

Seeing non-white men on the Sunday shows is as rare as seeing them on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

According to a study by the liberal organization Media Matters for America, at least 77% of the 2,150 guests who appeared on the four major Sunday shows in 2005-06 were men; at least 82% were white.

So that made the April 15 episode of NBC's "Meet the Press" somewhat unusual. PBS anchor Gwen Ifill and Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson – both African Americans – were invited as panelists in the wake of the Imus controversy.

According to the study, "Fox News Sunday" on the Fox News Channel offered the most diverse racial composition of guests, with 82% of its guests identifying white, 16% African American and the rest Latino or of other racial background.

JUAN WILLIAMS SKEWS THE STUDY

Media Matters said the higher proportion of African-Americans on Fox can be attributed to the weekly appearances of National Public Radio senior correspondent Juan Williams, who accounted for 99 of the 126 appearances.

The least diverse Sunday news program was CBS "Face the Nation" whose guest list was 90% white.

"Fox News Sunday" also featured the highest percentage of female guests [37%] among the four Sunday shows studied, "Meet the Press" had the fewest [23%].

In terms of race and ethnicity, "African-Americans are badly underrepresented on the Sunday shows, but Latinos fare even worse," according to the study's authors.

Though the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Hispanics make up 14% of the U.S. population in 2004, the study found that only 1% of the Sunday guests are Latino.

In a 2001 survey that covered similar ground, the White House Project reported that men outnumbered women nine to one on the Sunday shows. Men now outnumber women by roughly four to one.

The lack of female voices isn't confined to the Sunday shows. According to the Women's Media Center, "women hold only 3% of top positions in mainstream media, comprise less than one-quarter of newspaper opinion writers, and are virtually absent as columnists at major national print or online media outlets."

© San Francisco Chronicle

The Parrot

Laura Bush bought George a parrot for his birthday. She told Dick Cheney, "The bird is so smart! George has already taught him to pronounce over 200 words."

"Wow, that's pretty impressive," Cheney said. "But you realize that he just says the words. He doesn't understand what they mean."

"That's OK," Laura replied. "Neither does the parrot."

Crushing Debt Is College Grad's Fate

By Colin T. Bent

The media these days are beginning to take note of the condition of debt ridden college graduates who have tried to do what any ambitious person would.

They have paid attention in school, gotten good grades and tried to get admitted to the best universities that money can buy.

The only problem is that there are scarcely any grants or scholarships available and so when the euphoria of the acceptance letter wears off and the reality of finding money to meet the ever-escalating college costs hits, they are confronted with the fact that their only means of payment is through giant loans which most will find impossible to pay on their meager salaries.

If this is what the American Dream has come to mean, we scarcely have a future in this country because engineers and doctors and professionals in other countries are graduating in much higher numbers and without the debts that suffocate our young people.

SALLIE MAE SUPER INCOMES

While Sallie Mae execs are reporting super incomes and while colleges are working on growing humongous endowment funds and while textbook publishers are showing great cash flow, the graduates of America are being saddled and bridled with thousands of dollars of debt that they have no way of retiring.

Now I try to understand issues by making the components as simple as possible. So I look back to 1971 when as a young graduate I took my diploma in hand without owing a penny. Had I decided to get a job, the worst I could have expected would have been about \$10,000 a year, having paid about \$2,100 per year with books.

I challenge you to find a private university with charges under 10 times what I paid in 1971 and then I urge you to find a job for a young college graduate that pays him or her 10 times what I could find in 1971.

At the same time, grants and scholarships have not kept pace with the cost

Student Loan Scam Involves Bush Patronage

Another scandal in the Bush Administration was caused by the "look the other way" operations of the Administration. Once again it involves Bush patronage appointments.

An Education Department official placed on leave over a potential conflict of interest in his management of the government's \$85 billion student loan program apparently filed fake disclosure forms.

The forms, finally released by the department, said Matteo Fontana listed ownership in 2002 of stock in two companies that manage student loans: Direct III Marketing Inc. and Education Lending Group.

In fact, the companies are the same; Direct III Marketing changed its name to Education Lending Group at about that time.

Fontana valued the stock in each in the range of \$1,000 to \$15,000.

Department rules generally allow employees to work on matters affecting companies they own stock in so long as the amount does not exceed \$15,000.

SEC FILING PROVED HE FAKED IT

His disclosure forms state that Fontana sold all his stock in the company in December 2002. But a separate disclosure the company filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission nine months later lists him as offering 10,500 shares of Education Lending Group for sale.

His disclosure form for that year makes no mention of ownership of such stock.

Fontana's disclosure for 2004 shows that on July 7 of that year, he sold common stock in a company listed only as EDLG worth \$100,000 to \$250,000, investing a like amount in a vacation home. EDLG is an abbreviation for Education Lending Group Inc.

Education Department spokeswoman Katherine McLane said the ethics office within the department depends on employees to complete their forms accurately and honestly.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-MA, chairman of the Senate Education Committee, has asked for an SEC investigation of the transfer of stock from a company official to Fontana and loan officers at three schools.

Kennedy said his own investigation revealed that the official apparently acquired stock at a discount and sold it to the others at a discount.

NEW YORK AG PROBING POSSIBLE KICKBACKS

The student lending industry is already under scrutiny by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, who is investigating allegations of possible kickbacks to school officials for steering students to certain lenders.

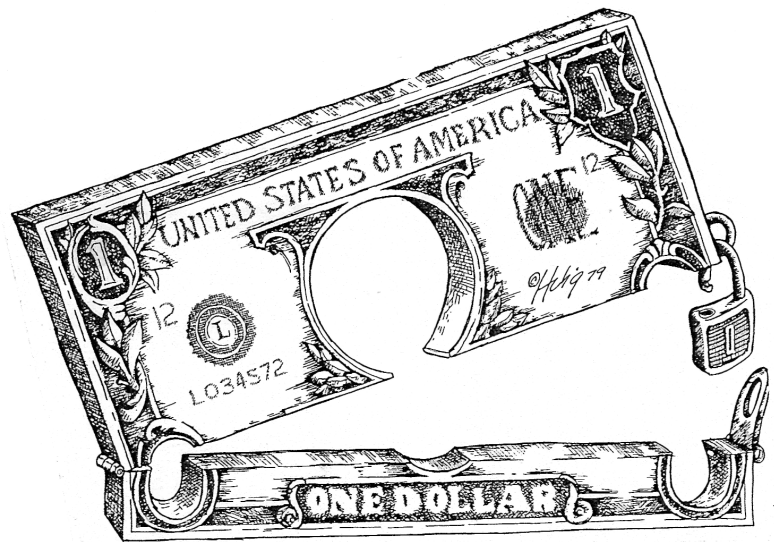
Cuomo's investigators say they have found numerous arrangements that benefited schools and lenders at the expense of students.

The student loan provider will stop offering perks like trips to exotic locations to college employees as part of a settlement in a widening probe of the student loan industry.

SLM Corp., commonly known as Sallie Mae, also agreed to pay \$2 million into a fund to educate students and parents about the financial aid industry, and it will adopt a code of conduct created by Cuomo.

NUMEROUS PAYOFFS HAVE SURFACED

Cuomo said the expanding investigation has found numerous arrangements that benefited schools and lenders at the expense of students.



of a college education and the system of loans can honestly be termed highway robbery.

OUR NATION'S SICK PRIORITIES

The fact that a gentleman or lady who jumps higher and runs faster than the average person can get into any school free of charge while a person with an above average SAT score must fend with huge loans is an indication of just how sick our priorities are in this country.

The need for specific and immediate action to remove this albatross from around the necks of the working poor in our society – who happen to have paid for a college education that does little to place them in high earning jobs – is strong.

Increasing Pell Grants by a few hundred dollars is insulting and useless.

Real solutions that will assist those who have already been shaken down by the system must be found and the expenditures of the universities that depend on loading debt on America's students need to be examined.

Young people in India and China and some Third World countries are graduating in higher numbers and without these huge debts and we are being pushed back into the Stone Age rather being one of the leaders in education for the 21st Century. This is unacceptable and it must stop.

– The author lives in Tulsa

Investigators say lenders have provided all-expense-paid trips to exotic locations for college financial aid officers who then directed students to the lenders.

Investigators found that many colleges have established "preferred lender" lists and entered into revenue sharing and other financial arrangements with those lenders. Some colleges have "exclusive" preferred lender agreements with the companies.

THEY WERE CHEATING THE STUDENTS

Reston, VA-based Sallie Mae, which serves almost 10 million borrowers and has relationships with over 5,600 schools, also agreed to stop running call centers or providing other staffing for college financial aid offices and stop paying financial aid officers for serving on advisory boards.

Citigroup Inc.'s Citibank, which does business at about 3,000 schools, agreed to donate \$2 million to the same fund as part of a settlement with the attorney general's office.

Six financial aid officers at various schools and a federal Department of Education official have been placed on leave after they received stock, consulting fees or other compensation from Student Loan Xpress.

The company was acquired by CIT Group Inc. in 2005 when it bought Education Lending Group Inc.

CIT suspended the top three executives at Student Loan Xpress amid its own investigation into the unit's business practices.

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HATE CRIMES

From Page 15

and homosexual extremists want to silence people of faith whose religious beliefs condemn homosexual behavior.

"This bill effectively adds a footnoted exception to the First Amendment of the Constitution – 'None of these protections apply to Christians or other people of faith.'"

PROTECTING ALL FROM HATE CRIMES

The bill ensures that all Americans are protected against hate crimes.

Sheldon and other members of the radical right are in the minority.

"According to a new poll conducted by Hart Research, large majorities of every major subgroup of the electorate – including such traditionally conservative groups as Republican men [56%] and evangelical Christians [63%] – express support for strengthening hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity."

In mid-April, more than 230 religious leaders representing congregations from every state in the union gathered on Capitol Hill to talk with lawmakers about hate violence.

Additionally, more than 210 law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations, including the Presbyterian Church, Parents Network on Disabilities, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People support the passage of LLEHCPA.

– From the Center for American Progress Action Fund

Jerry Falwell Leaves A Legacy Of Bigotry

By Frosty Troy

He was a bigot, a liar, judgmental and about as far as you could get from the teachings of the man from Galilee.

The Rev. Jerry Falwell, a pioneer among televangelists who turned pulpits into partisan politics, died at the age of 73.

A fundamentalist preacher, Falwell burst onto the national scene in 1979, when he launched an organization he called the Moral Majority.

We said it was neither. What is undisputed is that the Moral Majority became the vehicle that carried millions of born-again Christians out of their separatist tendencies and into the center of political activism.

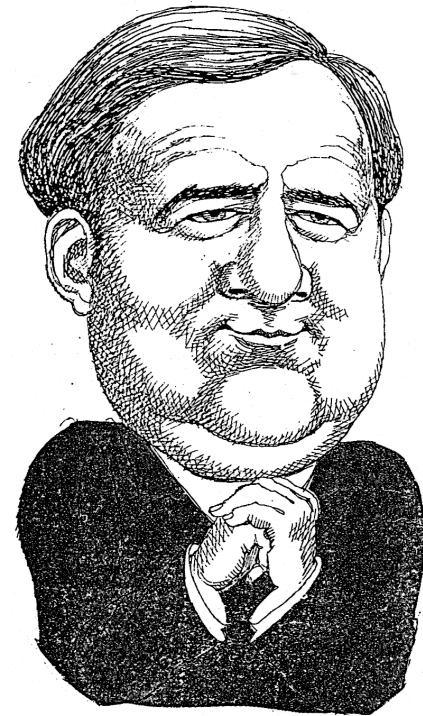
Don Nickles, a lightweight if there ever was one, rode Falwell's Moral Majority coattails into the U.S. Senate.

Falwell embraced the Republican Party and most of them fell in love with his venomous philosophy. He made it popular to condemn people to hell.

His No. 1 goal was to turn America's government over to his kind. He demeaned the constitutional separation of church and state and embraced the specious reconstructionist view that America is a "Christian" nation and only Christians should rule it.

The goal was to overturn the Supreme Court's ban on school prayer and reverse the nation's direction on feminism, abortion and gay rights.

Falwell followers saw him as a capable defender of rightwing politics. We were among his detractors, even more when he said on TV to a gathering of ministers that the anti-Christ is a Jewish male who is alive in the world today.



Two days after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, during an appearance on Pat Robertson's television show, Falwell claimed that the attack was God's judgment on America's immorality.

"I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians, who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way – all of them who try to secularize America – I point the finger in their face and say, you helped this happen."

God have mercy on his soul.

The Gospel According To Jerry

March 1980: Falwell tells an Anchorage rally about a conversation with President Carter at the White House. Commenting on a January breakfast meeting, Falwell claimed to have asked Carter why he had "practicing homosexuals" on the senior staff at the White House. According to Falwell, Carter replied, "Well, I am president of all the American people, and I believe I should represent everyone." When others who attended the White House event insisted that the exchange never happened, Falwell responded that his account "was not intended to be a verbatim report," but rather an "honest portrayal" of Carter's position.

August 1980: After Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith tells a Dallas Religious Right gathering that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew," Falwell gives a similar view. "I do not believe," he told reporters, "that God answers the prayer of any unredeemed Gentile or Jew." After a meeting with an American Jewish Committee rabbi, he changed course, telling an interviewer on NBC's "Meet the Press" that "God hears the prayers of all persons.... God hears everything."

July 1984: Falwell is forced to pay gay activist Jerry Sloan \$5,000 after losing a court battle. During a TV debate in Sacramento, Falwell denied calling the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Churches "brute beasts" and "a vile and Satanic system" that will "one day be utterly annihilated and there will be a celebration in heaven."

When Sloan insisted he had a tape, Falwell promised \$5,000 if he could produce it. Sloan did so, Falwell refused to pay and Sloan successfully sued. Falwell appealed, with his attorney charging that the Jewish judge in the case was prejudiced. He lost again and was forced to pay an additional \$2,875 in sanctions and court fees.

October 1987: The Federal Election Commission fines Falwell for transferring \$6.7 million in funds intended for his ministry to political committees.

February 1988: The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down a \$200,000 jury award to Falwell for "emotional distress" he suffered because of a Hustler magazine parody. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, usually a Falwell favorite, wrote the unanimous opinion in *Hustler v. Falwell*, ruling that the First Amendment protects free speech.

February 1993: The Internal Revenue Service determines that funds from Falwell's Old Time Gospel Hour program were illegally funneled to a political action committee. The IRS forced Falwell to pay \$50,000 and retroactively revoked the Old Time Gospel Hour's tax-exempt status for 1986-87.

March 1993: Despite his promise to Jewish groups to stop referring to America as a "Christian nation," Falwell gives a sermon saying, "We must never allow

See WORST OF FALWELL Page 18

Preachers Playing To The Press

By Froma Harrop

Jerry Falwell seemed "a grandfather figure," Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council said on PBS, "not someone who looked like Elmer Gantry." Many in the media have compared Falwell, who just died, to the huckster preacher in the 1927 Sinclair Lewis novel, and so Perkins was, in a sense, heading the interviewer off at the pass.

It has long struck me how news folks delight in recounting Falwell's outrageous statements and questionable business practices – visions of Elmer Gantry dancing through their prose – without noting their own resemblance to another character in the book. I speak of Bill Kingdom, the "veteran reporter" at the *Zenith Advocate-Times*.

Gantry visits the paper to drum up publicity, but makes little impression on Kingdom. "Bill looked uninterested when Elmer came around with the juiciest of stories about dance-halls," Lewis wrote. Then Kingdom decides to work with Gantry, egging him on to increasingly intemperate acts of crusading as the price for extensive coverage.

When the preacher leads a mob into the flat of a "scarlet woman," Kingdom offers the following critique: "Oh rats! This girl looks as dangerous as a goldfish, Gantry."

Gantry finally earns Kingdom's approval when he leads the police and his followers to break up a beer hall [this was during Prohibition] and has the German-immigrant proprietor arrested. Kingdom sees the headline: "Gallant preacher single-handedly faces saloon full of desperate gun-men and rebukes them for taking the name of the Lord in vain," then thinks, "Oh, I'll get a swell story."

BIGGER-THAN-LIFE PREACHERS

That's the way it works. The media find someone with "the Rev." in front of his name who provokes lively controversy and builds him up into public figure far bigger than his actual support warrants.

The Rev. Al Sharpton is an obvious example. The agitator earned fame for his anti-Asian and anti-Semitic boycotts, the phony rape accusations against

white men and racially inflammatory remarks wherever cameras were present. His minstrel show greatly embarrasses many fellow African-Americans, but the white-dominated media keep it going as a bottomless trove of entertainment.

Falwell is a somewhat different case in that he did start off as a genuine political force. He founded the "Moral Majority" and in the 1980s turned Christian conservatives into a Republican base. But his influence fell as time went on, brought lower by weird comments, such as his suggestion that a purple Teletubby on the children's show was a gay plant.

Sadly, the more thoughtful and less flamboyant evangelicals don't receive a fraction of the airtime the showmen command. A friend who considers himself a social and Christian conservative complains about the media "hanging Falwell around our necks." He has much company.

FALWELL HIT ROCK BOTTOM

Falwell hit bottom after the Sept. 11 outrages, when he said that "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians" – and he threw in the ACLU and People for the American Way – "helped this happen." President Bush denounced the comment, and Falwell apologized, lest this step too far land him in the hole of oblivion.

Asked on PBS about Falwell's infamous remark, Perkins dismissed it as "just that one statement," and he blamed the media for distorting what was said. But even Perkins acknowledged that there was collaboration between Falwell and an allegedly hostile media.

"He knew how to get headlines," Perkins said. "He would make a statement, usually in jest, knowing that a reporter somewhere would pick it up and run with it."

Yes, Falwell knew how to get headlines, but he could not have gotten them without his Bill Kingdoms. The journalists in "Elmer Gantry" don't come off any better than the preachers.

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Price Tag For Iraq To Top \$500 Billion

By Ron Hutcheson

The bitter fight over the latest Iraq spending bill has all but obscured a sobering fact: The war will soon cost more than \$500 billion.

That's about 10 times more than the Bush Administration anticipated before the war started four years ago, and no one can predict how high the tab will go.

The \$124 billion spending bill that President Bush vetoed included about \$78 billion for Iraq, with the rest earmarked for the war in Afghanistan, veterans' health care and other government programs.

Congressional Democrats and Bush agree that they cannot let their dispute over a withdrawal timetable block the latest cash installment for Iraq.

PRESIDENT WANTS \$116 BILLION MORE FOR NEXT YEAR

Once that political fight is resolved, Congress can focus on the president's request for \$116 billion more for the war in the fiscal year that starts on Sept 1.

The combined spending requests would push the total for Iraq to \$564 billion, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

What could that kind of money buy?

A college education – tuition, fees, room and board at a public university – for about half of the nation's 17 million high-school age teenagers.

Pre-school for every 3- and 4-year old in the country for the next eight years.

A year's stay in an assisted-living facility for about half of the 35 million Americans age 65 or older.

PRE-WAR PROJECTIONS: \$50 BILLION

Before the war, Administration officials confidently predicted that the conflict would cost about \$50 billion.

Profiteers Want To Keep Iraq War Going

By Helen Miller

There are two sides in the Iraq problem: Those who want to continue the war indefinitely and those who want to set a deadline for withdrawal of our troops.

The first group consists of the Bush Administration, the military-industrial complex, the oil and energy industries, and Halliburton and its subsidiaries. The second group consists of most of the American people, most of the Iraqi people, and most of the rest of the world.

The second group, the people, is powerless compared to the first. When former President Eisenhower retired he warned the nation to "beware" of the military industrial complex because of its influence in Washington.

These are the industries that make huge profits from war by developing and manufacturing new weapons for the Pentagon and by arming troops fighting the wars.

Therefore, they have a vested interest in starting and prolonging wars.

BIG OIL'S VESTED INTEREST

The oil and energy industries were very influential in persuading this administration to go to war in Iraq. They hoped to control Iraqi oil and to some extent now do.

Halliburton, which is primarily an oil company, has subsidiaries that supply goods and services to the troops in Iraq. They got these contracts without competitive bidding, probably because Dick Cheney was president of the company before becoming Vice President.

WORST OF FALWELL

From Page 17

our children to forget that this is a Christian nation. We must take back what is rightfully ours."

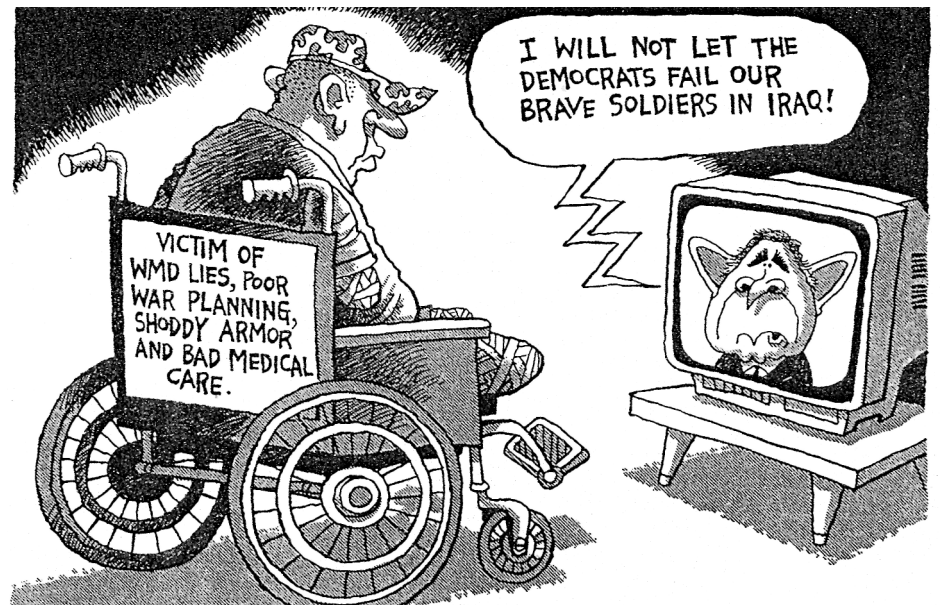
1994-1995: Falwell is criticized for using his "Old Time Gospel Hour" to hawk a scurrilous video called "The Clinton Chronicles" that makes a number of unsubstantiated charges against President Bill Clinton — among them that he is a drug addict and that he arranged the murders of political enemies in Arkansas. Despite claims he had no ties to the project, evidence surfaced that Falwell helped bankroll the venture with \$200,000 paid to a group called Citizens for Honest Government [CHG].

CHG's Pat Matrisciana later admitted that Falwell and he staged an infomercial interview promoting the video in which a silhouetted reporter said his life was in danger for investigating Clinton. [Matrisciana himself posed as the reporter.] "That was Jerry's idea to do that," Matrisciana recalled. "He thought that would be dramatic."

November 1997: Falwell accepts \$3.5 million from a front group representing controversial Korean evangelist Sun Myung Moon to ease Liberty University's financial woes.

April 1998: Confronted on national television with a controversial quote from *America Can Be Saved!*, a published collection of his sermons, Falwell denies having written the book or had anything to do with it. In the 1979 work, Falwell wrote, "I hope to live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be!" Despite Falwell's denial, Sword of the Lord Publishing, which produced the book, confirms that Falwell wrote it.

January 1999: Falwell tells a pastors' conference in Kingsport, TN, that the



White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey lost his job after he offered a \$200 billion estimate – a prediction that drew scorn from his Administration colleagues.

Bush and his economic advisers defend the growing cost as the price of national security.

"It's worth it," Bush said last May, when the tab was in the \$320 billion range. "I wouldn't have spent it if it wasn't worth it."

For war opponents, the escalating cost is a growing source of irritation. A Web site showing a running tally of the war's cost attracts about 250,000 visitors a month, according to the National Priorities Project.

As wars go, Iraq so far is cheap. World War II cost more than \$5 trillion in today's dollars. Korea and Vietnam each cost about \$650 billion in today's dollars, but spending on those wars took a much bigger share of the economy when they were fought.

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The profits from the war for this company are enormous.

These entities have tremendous influence on this administration and may actually dictate what President Bush does in Iraq. They certainly will benefit from continuing the war.

Also, President Bush would much prefer that failure in Iraq occur after he is out of office so the next administration can be blamed for the inevitable chaos which will ensue after our troops leave the region; so for him, the war must go on for at least two more years.

BUSH HASN'T DEFINED VICTORY

He says we must win this war, but there is no real definition of what constitutes a "win."

These factors explain Bush's stubborn unwillingness to consider the recommendations of a bipartisan commission for setting some benchmarks or limits for keeping our troops in Iraq and explains his veto of any bill coming from Congress which sets deadlines for a phased withdrawal.

The cost of this war is appalling: already American troops dead [more than 3,300 and up to 25,000 more injured or maimed], countless Iraqis dead and injured, and our money wasted [hundreds of billions of dollars].

This war is a monumental tragedy, because in the first place it should never have started and now there is no good way to end it.

– The author lives in Stillwater

Antichrist prophesied in the Bible is alive today and "of course he'll be Jewish."

February 1999: Falwell becomes the object of nationwide ridicule after his National Liberty Journal issues a "parents alert" warning that Tinky Winky, a character on the popular PBS children's show "Teletubbies," might be gay.

September 2001: Falwell blames Americans for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the Pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'"

November 2005: Falwell spearheads campaign to resist "war on Christmas."

February 2007: Falwell describes global warming as a conspiracy orchestrated by Satan, liberals, and The Weather Channel.

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Feds Are Probing NCLB Initiative

By Amit R. Paley

The Justice Department is conducting a probe of a \$6 billion reading initiative at the center of President Bush's No Child Left Behind law, another blow to a program besieged by allegations of financial conflicts of interest and cronyism, people familiar with the matter say.

The disclosure came as a congressional hearing revealed how people implementing the \$1 billion-a-year Reading First program made at least \$1 million off textbooks and tests toward which the federal government steered states.

"That sounds like a criminal enterprise to me," said Rep. George Miller, D-CA, chairman of the House Education Committee, which held a five-hour investigative hearing.

"You don't get to override the law," he angrily told a panel of Reading First officials. "But the fact of the matter is that you did."

SEVERAL REFERRALS TO JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The Education Department's inspector general, John P. Higgins Jr., said he has made several referrals to the Justice Department about the 5-year-old program, which provides grants to improve reading for children in kindergarten through third grade.

Higgins declined to offer more specifics, but Christopher J. Doherty, former director of Reading First, said in an interview that he was questioned by Justice officials in November.

The civil division of the U.S. attorney's office for the District of Columbia, which can bring criminal charges, is reviewing the matter.

Doherty, one of the two Education Department employees who oversaw the initiative, acknowledged that his wife had worked for a decade as a paid consultant for a reading program, Direct Instruction, that investigators said he improperly tried to force schools to use.

DID NOT DISCLOSE CONFLICTS

He repeatedly failed to disclose the conflict on financial disclosure forms.

The management of Reading First has come under attacks from members of both parties. Federal investigators say program officials improperly forced states to use certain tests and textbooks created by those officials.

One official, Roland H. Good, said his company made \$1.3 million off a reading test, known as DIBELS, that was endorsed by a Reading First evaluation panel he sat on.

Good, who owns half the company Dynamic Measurement Group, told the committee that he donated royalties from the product to the University of Oregon, where he is an associate professor.

Two former University of Oregon researchers on the panel, Edward J. Kame'enui



and Deborah C. Simmons, said they received about \$150,000 in royalties last year for a program that is now packaged with DIBELS.

SMALLER ROYALTIES IN PREVIOUS YEARS

They testified that they received smaller royalties in previous years for the program, Scott Foresman Early Reading Intervention, and did not know it was being sold with DIBELS.

Members of the panel said they recused themselves from voting on their own products but did assess their competitors. Of 24 tests approved by the committee, seven were tied to members of the panel.

Another researcher, Sharon Vaughn, worked with Kame'enui, Simmons and Good to design Voyager Universal Literacy, a program that Reading First officials urged states to use. Vaughn was director of a center at the University of Texas that was hired to provide states advice on selecting Reading First tests and books.

BUSH CRONY MAKES A FORTUNE

The publisher of that product, Voyager Expanded Learning, was founded and run by Randy Best, a major Bush campaign contributor, who sold the company in 2005 for more than \$350 million.

Now Best runs Higher Ed Holdings, a company that develops colleges of education, where former education secretary Roderick R. Paige is a senior adviser and G. Reid Lyon, Bush's former reading adviser, is an executive vice president.

Members of both parties continue to support the goals of Reading First even as they attack its management. Miller and Senate Education Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy, D-MA, joined Republicans in pledging to tighten restrictions on conflicts of interest in No Child Left Behind.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings declined to comment, but records show the White House monitored the program every step of the way.

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Cutting Dropouts Would Reap Billions

By Susan H. Fuhrman

Two questions come up again and again in discussions on how to improve America's schools particularly for disadvantaged children. Which interventions really work? Can we afford them?

Powerful new research led by Teachers College education economist Henry Levin shows that strategies already proven to boost high school graduation rates can save U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars per year.

Professor Levin and colleagues from Princeton, Columbia and the City University of New York found that even after deducting the costs of these educational strategies, each additional 20-year-old graduate confers a net "public gift" upon taxpayers of \$127,000.

For young black males – the group most at risk for dropping out – the figure is \$166,000 per additional graduate.

ECONOMIC SAVINGS ARE EYE-POPPING

The U.S. could reap \$45 billion in economic benefits per year by cutting its overall dropout rate in half. Cutting the rate by a fifth would still yield \$18 billion per year.

If gains were only among black males, such that they graduated at the same rate as whites, the gain would be about \$4 billion annually.

These findings stem from solid – and conservative – economic analysis.

Prior research has validated the effectiveness of the interventions studied by the Levin team in boosting high school graduation rates.

The interventions include the famous Perry Preschool and Chicago Child-Parent Center pre-K programs, smaller class sizes, within parameters laid out by Tennessee's Project STAR; 10% teacher pay increase for all K-12 teachers; and intensive, small high schools modeled on First Things First, a high school reform strategy that is spreading nationally.

FEWER DROPOUTS WOULD RESULT

Broad application of these interventions would generate from five additional graduates per 100 students [with a 10% teacher salary increase] to 19 per 100 students [via pre-kindergarten programs based on the Perry Preschool model].

The cost per each additional graduate: from \$59,100 to \$143,000, including two extra years of high school and some college.

The Levin team deducted those costs from the eye-opening savings and revenues reaped when young people make it through high school.

These include costs avoided in lost income and tax revenue; increased crime and likelihood of incarceration; increased use of the public health system; and greater dependence on public assistance.

For example, a young black male high school graduate earns more than \$600,000 over his lifetime, compared with just \$292,000 for a young black male dropout. The graduate pays \$222,400 in lifetime taxes; the dropout pays \$118,000.

Ultimately, the fiscal benefit of the five interventions studied outweighs the investment by a minimum of \$65,000 and a maximum of \$150,000.

Take just the teacher salary increase as an example. The Levin team found that the return on investment, so to speak, is 2.55 times greater.

This is powerful stuff. More than 700,000 U.S. 20-year-olds are dropouts, and America's graduation rate trails that of many other industrialized countries.

As the study authors have written, that's a rebuke to our ideals of fairness and justice. Yet as studies by others have shown, this is an instance in which self-interest should motivate us as much as altruism.

THE BENEFIT OF ELIMINATING POVERTY

The Center for American Progress and the Urban Institute recently reported on the economic benefits to society as a whole of reducing poverty. The Alliance for Excellent Education found that if all high school dropouts in 2006 had graduated, the savings would have tallied an additional \$309 billion over their lifetimes.

Research by Teachers College's Campaign for Educational Equity has highlighted the massive demographic shifts taking place in the U.S. and how improving education for all could ensure America's economic viability for the future.

The bottom line: All of us pay the price when kids drop out. As minority and immigrant populations grow, we can face up to the challenge of keeping our nation economically competitive, or we can ignore it, at our own peril.

As Dr. Levin and his colleagues have demonstrated, the choice is clear.

– Susan H. Fuhrman is President of Teachers College, Columbia University, and the founding director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education



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