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Benge Swings, Misses Meet Speaker Lite

By Arnold Hamilton

State House Republicans are experimenting with a new leadership model: The revolving door speaker.

Three legislative years, three different speakers.

Will they go for four?

The question is not as preposterous as it might, at first blush, seem – given that the 2008 session will be unlamented as the least productive, most venal in decades.

When tax and ethics woes forced former Speaker Lance Cargill's exit on session's eve, Tulsa's Chris Benge became the compromise choice, acceptable to three GOP factions vying for House supremacy.

There was a certain logic to the selection: As chairman of the House's most powerful and important committee – Appropriations and Budget – Benge earned the respect of Republicans and Democrats alike for his fair-mindedness and collegiality.

There also was cautious optimism that Benge's even-keel personality would help create a less poisonous, more productive environment in a House ruled by fiat [Speaker Todd Hiett, 2005-06] and duplicity [Cargill, 2007].

Four months and one session later, Benge's standing is shaky, at best. His survival may depend on his campaign fund-raising prowess and whether the GOP can maintain, if not expand, its 57-44 House advantage.

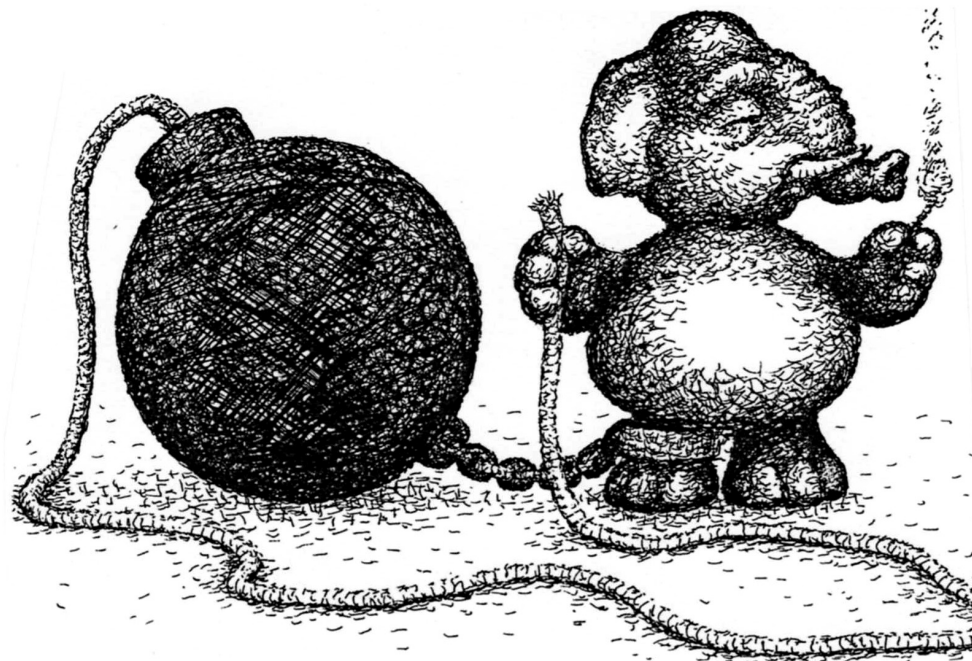
A chaotic, unsatisfying legislative session – coupled with a tough November – could ignite a revolt in a Republican caucus so divided that Benge was elected by a one-vote margin.

Where did Benge go wrong?

From the outset, Benge failed to put his stamp on the House. He opted to stick with Cargill's team, leaving leadership posts and committee chairs unchanged.

His decision? Or a precondition of his election as speaker? Either way, it left in power key Cargill lieutenants whose arrogance created more than their share of enemies.

Second, Benge failed to rein in several committee chairs whose heavy-handedness thrust the speaker into an unenviable public relations corner



on more than one occasion.

Recall General Government and Transportation Committee Chairman Guy Liebmann of OKC silencing Cherokee Chief Chad Smith.

Recall Economic Development and Financial Services Chairman Ron Peterson of Tulsa turning a deaf ear to parents with autistic children.

Recall Judiciary and Public Safety Chairman Rex Duncan of Sand Springs dismissing legislators questions about his procedural rulings on tort reform with the school-yard equivalent of "because I said so."

Third, Benge failed to recognize he could assemble a more productive coalition by marginalizing the noisy, but small group of hard-right zealots and uniting less ideological, more traditional Republicans with 44 House Democrats.

Benge mistakenly thought he could manage an ever-unwieldy, Big Tent operation like the House from the bottom up, rather than the top down. All he did was put the inmates in charge of the asylum.

Even worse, the power vacuum enabled former state Rep. Fred Morgan, now the chief lieutenant to Co-Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee,

to step into a Karl Rove-like role in which he helped set the House agenda, as well.

The result: The 2008 Legislature became a playground for Republican wedge issues.

With fears mounting that even Red State Oklahoma might be slipping in what is shaping up to be a terrible Republican year nationally, Morgan and Co. seized the opportunity to rally the base and bolster the November turnout.

They pursued constitutional amendments to establish English as the official language and expand term limits beyond the governor to all statewide officeholders.

They also championed a new voter ID requirement that could have disenfranchised thousands of poor, minority and senior voters [read: Democratic votes].

And they rammed through another anti-abortion measure, this time requiring women – even victims of rape and incest – to undergo ultrasounds before terminating an unwanted pregnancy.

What did they do about the serious issues facing Oklahoma?

They punted, adopting a standstill

budget that didn't even begin to address the priorities that Oklahomans cited in a new Sooner Survey: roads and bridges, teachers' pay, universities and prisons.

Oil and gas revenues are keeping Oklahoma afloat – barely – as the overall economy slows. But they can't disguise what is happening: The \$700 million in tax cuts embraced by a pandering Legislature and governor in recent years are catapulting state revenues into a free fall.

If you're concerned about crumbling roads and bridges and prisons and schools now, wait until there are billions of dollars less to spend in the years to come – years that seem likely to be marked by spiraling costs.

Perhaps Benge should be forgiven his first-session missteps. He rose to power in a difficult spot: The former speaker forced out just as the new session opened. State revenues slowing faster than expected.

It's more likely, though, that House Republicans will conclude that Benge is not the right leader for an increasingly difficult job – the equivalent of the loyal, competent, long-time assistant who, when promoted to head coach, fails spectacularly because he is not the visionary needed to lead the overall program.

As fractured as the GOP caucus is, November's elections could determine Benge's fate.

Two of Cargill's chief lieutenants, Reps. Rob Johnson of Kingfisher and Trebor Worthen of OKC, are not seeking re-election. Who will their replacements be aligned with?

Rep. Terry Ingmire of Stillwater is term-limited. Who will his successor support?

Four others – Reps. John Wright of Tulsa, Susan Winchester of Chickasha, Greg Piatt of Ardmore and Tad Jones of Claremore – will be entering their final terms, if re-elected. Will they view the House landscape differently?

Benge disproves the old adage that nice guys finish last.

Maybe it ought to be reframed into this question: How long do nice guys who finish first, last?

Observations

Well Done!

After four years of tireless work, Rep. Marian Cooksey, R-Edmond, finally has won passage of legislation to crack down on those who kidnap and sell human beings. The new law creates new penalties for anyone convicted of human trafficking "for forced labor or forced sexual exploitation" who relies on the "use of force, fraud or coercion" to trap victims.

Those convicted of human trafficking will face at least five years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$10,000 for each conviction.

Anyone convicted of human trafficking involving victims younger than age 14 will face at least 10 years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$20,000.

Those convicted of the crime could also be ordered to pay restitution to their victims and the bill allows law enforcement officials to seize trafficker's property - including aircraft, vehicles and money - to help offset the state expenses of prosecution.

The Department of Justice estimates between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked in the United States each year. The largest concentrations of trafficking survivors who received federal assistance were in Oklahoma, California, Texas and New York.

House Bill 1021 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives on a 93-0 vote and the state Senate 45-0. Gov. Brad Henry signed it into law.

A September 2004 Human Rights Center report titled, "Hidden Slaves: Forced Labor in the United States," found that at any given time more than 10,000 forced laborers are working in the United States. Most of them work in prostitution, domestic services, agriculture and sweatshops.

In 2004, nine people in Oklahoma City were charged with running a child prostitution ring that involved human trafficking. Pimps transported girls as young as 13 from Oklahoma to cities in Texas, Florida, Colorado, Pennsylvania and Arkansas for prostitution.

In September 2006, a federal court in Oklahoma City handed down a judgment against men running a human

trafficking scheme where workers from India were lured to Oklahoma for forced labor at a Tulsa manufacturing facility.

Coburn Again

The most decent thing George Bush has done as president - helping battle the huge AIDS pandemic ravaging Africa - is put on hold by the former doctor from Oklahoma, Sen. Tom Coburn.

Coburn has been joined by six other Senate members in putting a hold on the president's aid package because Coburn says it's too much money.

This from the Republican twerp who has voted for billions being wasted in Iraq and by the Pentagon stateside.

Not only is he an embarrassment to Oklahoma, he's becoming an international embarrassment - a black eye for Oklahoma across the globe.

Adults with advanced forms of AIDS can weigh about 60 pounds. Children with AIDS are like a shadow falling on a scale. Maintaining weight becomes difficult with vomiting and diarrhea, with tuberculosis and fungal infections, with cancers such as Kaposi's sarcoma and Lymphoma.

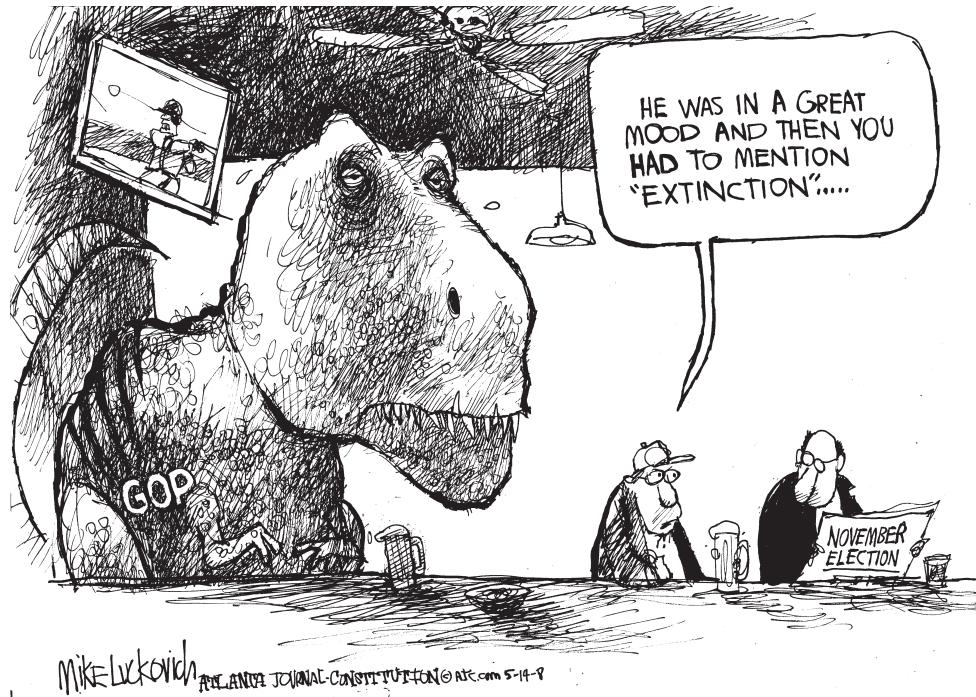
Columnist Michael Gerson wrote "you'd think that a few million of these wasting bodies would weigh more on the moral balance than seven senators. But you'd be wrong."

This is another of Coburn's attempts to grab the spotlight. He went to war against veterans earlier in the session. He supports fellow Republican Sen. Jim Inhofe's claim that global warming is a hoax. Coburn's shoe size exceeds his moral IQ.

At Last

One of our prayers has been for a foundation to answer the anti-Oklahoma, anti-public education Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, funded by a bevy of rich bigots.

It's here! The Oklahoma Policy Insti-



tute: Better Policy, Better Information was unveiled May 9 and is headed by none other than David Blatt, premier head of the Tulsa-based Community Action Project.

Blatt has no peer when it comes to digging up factual data to inform Oklahomans, not confuse them with diatribes such as those produced by OCPA and its rightwing zealots.

The OPI began by launching "On The Brink," noting that a growing number of Oklahoma families are suffering financial hardships despite a strong state economy. The full factual report brief can be found at www.okpolicy.org.

For years OCPA has pumped out political bilge, aided and abetted by the Daily Disappointment editorial page.

If we didn't know better we would swear homeschooler Brandon Dutcher is the lost son of the Gaylord clan. They routinely publish his pieces without any critical analysis.

We plan to furnish OPI reports for you. They are fair, unbiased and an antidote to the malarkey you read on too many editorial pages and in papers too lazy to do their own research.

Low Standard

The Office of Labor-Management Standards [OLMS] has reached a new standard for provable lies from the Bush Administration.

The American Conservative Union's political convention in Washington, DC, featured Labor Secretary Elaine Chao who did a number on union officials indicted, convicted, or sentenced, based on OLMS investigations.

The Center for American Progress proved she had cooked the books. The center found that the 111 convictions the OLMS reported in 2004 had been double-counted.

In actuality, there had been only 57 guilty pleas or convictions of union officials in that year.

Landrum/Griffin Act was passed in 1959 to ensure unions operate transparently and legally. A standard procedure that previously required select union officers to file two-page forms identifying potential conflicts of interest has been expanded to a nine-page declaration aimed at more than 100,000 lower-level union officials.

The Bush Administration has filled sub-cabinet offices with partisan apparatchiks, and the Labor Department is no exception.

Union violations are as big as a gnat's behind compared to the billions stolen by corporate barons such as Bush's buddy who ran Enron.

About Bullies

A new study conducted by scientists at York University finds that students who bully tend to have difficulties with other relationships, such as those with friends and parents.

Consequently, targeting these relationships may offer ideas for intervention and prevention.

Thanks to the timely action of then-Sen. Herb Rozell, D-Tahlequah, Oklahoma enacted the first comprehensive, anti-bullying law in the nation.

The York study, which was published in Child Development, notes that children who bullied tended to be aggressive and lacked a moral compass.

Bullies also typically experience a lot of conflict in their relationships with parents and friends.

The findings indicate that bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions - i.e., the key is in a focus on a particular bully's strained interactions with parents and risky associations with peers.

Bullying is no laughing matter. There is no cure for bullying, now a phenomenon on the Internet. Children have actually killed themselves after being relentlessly bullied.

Bush's Legacy

Few were surprised by the findings in a survey of professional historians. President George W. Bush's presidency was viewed by 98% of the historians as a failure and a full 61% called him "the worst president ever."

The survey was conducted by Professor Robert McElvaine of Millsaps College for the History News Network and is a follow-up to a 2004 survey where only 81% of historians viewed Bush's presidency a failure.

No doubt, Professor McElvaine will draw the ire of the Rush Limbaughs who spend their time defaming Democrats for criticizing Bush.

Don't pay any attention to anybody's opinion - including ours. Check the record, dig out the facts. The tragedy of the Bush legacy is how long it will take to undo the damage and pay the \$11 trillion debt he leaves in his wake.

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

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

U.S. House Republicans have selected "The Change You Deserve" for a campaign theme, not knowing the drug Effexor XR uses that slogan for fighting anxiety disorder, panic disorder and depression. A good fit.

Laurel: To Canadian Valley Tech Center for appointing Greg Winter as superintendent. He is one of the most gifted leaders in the CareerTech system.

Read our lips one more time. We have scoured the courts and can't find a trace of the alleged epidemic of frivolous lawsuits – despite what legislative Republicans keep saying.

Dart: To Sen. John McCain, on the presidential campaign trail calling for wind energy, yet in 2005 he voted against the clean wind energy bill. Flip meet flop.

Did anybody get the tag number of the truck that hit GOP Sen. John Ford's Voter ID bill? Who said there is no afterlife? Senate Democrats rose from the dead in the last weeks of the session.

Laurel: To the Educational Coalition for hammering a proposed \$500 million bond issue. Bonds would be retired using general fund revenue, once again reducing education funding. We're now 48th in per pupil spending.

Say what you will about the Democratic dogfight for President, it has energized America, adding nearly four million new voters thus far and rousing the young. In Oklahoma more than 63,000 new voters had registered by May 1.

Dart: To a military that is reduced to taking convicted felons but has forced out more than 13,000 gays – 58 fluent in the Arabic language.

We hoped for better from new Speaker Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, but he turned out to be a soft-spoken Lance Cargill when it came to doing the right thing, such as the bill on autism.

Laurel: To those revived Democrats in the state Senate who surprised everyone with a slick maneuver that killed the sorry English Only bill – the GOP election year wedge issue.

Ouch! Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill in DC, reports that only 37 out of 247 Republicans in Congress have donated to the McCain campaign, as of April 1.

Dart: To Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, for his personal attack on Sen. Patrick Anderson, R-Enid, because Anderson's office, swamped by English-Only partisans, forwarded them to author Terrill's office.

Thanks to 12-year term limits, the Republican Party is losing one of its finest, Owen Laughlin of Woodward. He has been a straight-shooting class act in the state Senate.

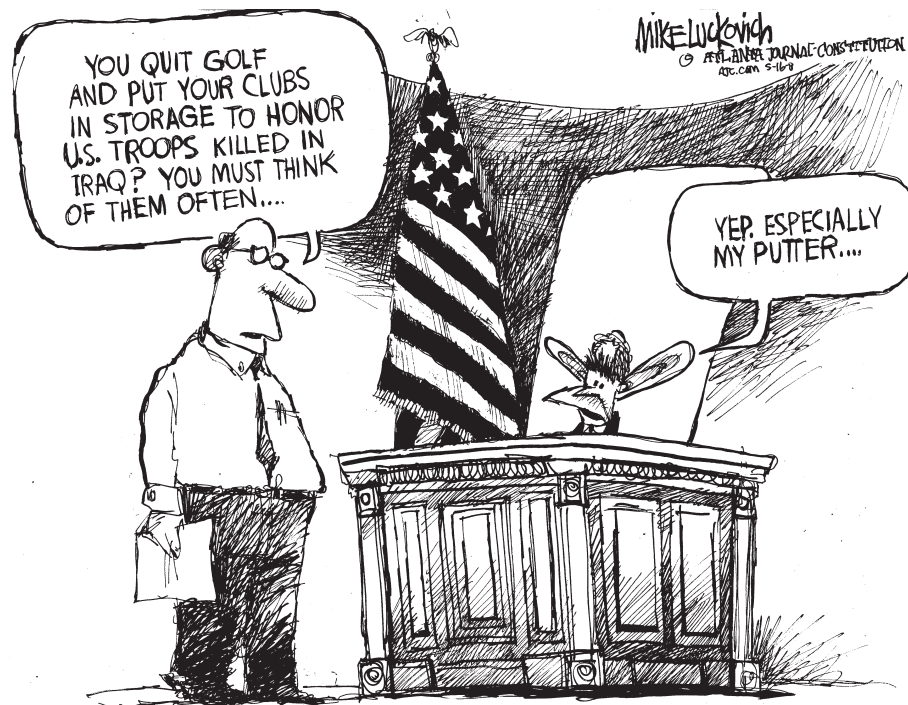
Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for announcing well in advance he would veto GOP Rep. Dan Sullivan's bill to require an "expert" to vouch for a lawsuit before it could be filed.

From 1998 to 2000, with a Democratic president and Republican Congress, earmarks rose from \$13.2 billion to \$17.7 billion. From 2001 to 2006, with a GOP president, they exploded to \$29 billion. In 2007, with Congress Democratic, earmarks fell to the 1998 level of \$13.2 billion, a 54% drop.

Dart: To Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC, for her continuing tirades against gay people. Now she's in line with James Dobson who swears it's a choice freely made.

Long-term care has increased 21% in five years to \$51,607 a year, still well below the national average of \$76,460. Alaska, the most expensive, is \$187,902.

Laurel: To Rep. Doug Cox, R-Grove, for dissenting from his colleagues blasting the Oklahoma Health Care Authority for caring for unborn infants of undocumented workers.



Don't fall for that phony campaign promise to eliminate the federal part of the gas tax. In fact, it would on average save 30 cents a day while adding \$10 billion to the ballooning national debt.

Dart: To a legislative leadership so intent on cutting taxes by \$700 million, Oklahoma will have 27 drivers license exam spots instead of 59, all due to lack of funding. [We rank 50th in combined local, state and federal taxes.]

More than 70% of Americans think that George W. Bush is a travesty as president. He comes in at 28% approval rating, falling 60 points since 9/11.

Laurel: To Sen. Todd Lamb, R-Edmond, for his Oklahoma School Security Act. Lamb said it's imperative that action be taken to stop school violent crimes and bullying. Amen.

Rest easy: The Observer never has – nor ever will – sell the names and addresses [snail-mail or e-mail] of its loyal readers to anyone. The only mail you'll ever receive because of us ... is from us!

Dart: To those Tulsans who register but don't vote. The community college bond issue drew a turnout of 6.39% of the 347,478 registered voters. It failed.

U.S. Rep. Dan Boren, D-OK, has been named to the NRA board – the same organization that once labeled law enforcement as "jack booted thugs."

Laurel: To Dr. Eric Steger, retiring after 38 years as economics and marketing professor at East Central University. Known as a remarkable instructor, exceptional listener and willing mentor, he touched the lives of an estimated 12,000 students.

Plans for a state bond issue to fill the huge gaps caused by more than \$700 million in tax cuts went down the drain when the state went four months in a row in declining revenue collections.

Dart: To the GOP House for refusing to pass Sen. Debbie Leftwich's social host bill to punish parents or others who provide beer and liquor to minors in the home.

Republican educators better arm themselves with the facts concerning Sen. John McCain's run for the presidency. He strongly supports vouchers and the failed No Child Left Behind Act. He also supports taking Social Security private.

Laurel: To Congressman Tom Cole, R-OK, chairman of the Republican Congressional Committee for admitting the public has lost confidence in the GOP. And that includes Cole.

OU President David Boren ought to quit complaining about lack of legislative funding for endowed chairs. He has \$1 billion in the OU Foundation. Use it.

Dart: To Rush Limbaugh, returning from the Dominican Republic, he was detained for possessing Viagra but had no prescription. He said his doctor had another doctor prescribe it. A likely story.

We're as tired of reporting on Oklahoma's neglect of children as you are reading about it. The latest report ranks Oklahoma 47th in the well-being of children – poverty, child deaths, teen deaths, child abuse and birth to teen mothers.


Laurel: To retiring Pryor School Superintendent Dr. Larry Burdick after 44 years of distinguished service. He is one of Oklahoma's unsung heroes.

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-OK, has company in his belief that global warming is a hoax. John Coleman, founder of the Weather Channel, says global warming is "the greatest scam in history." Take that, you polar bears!

Dart: To the faux patriots in Oklahoma's flag-waving congressional delegation. Not one supports Sen. Jim Webb's excellent new GI bill. Worse, Sen. Jim Inhofe knuckled under to pressure from John McCain and the White House and withdrew his initial endorsement.

LawHelp.org was nominated for a national Webby Award for Best Law Website. The site includes OKLaw.org, the state's online guide to free legal information, maintained by Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma Inc. in partnership with Pro Bono Net. Awards will be announced June 10 in New York.

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

The Bush Administration is at it again. When you are in deep doo-doo, blame the Democrats.

VP Dick Chaney appeared at the Oklahoma Republican State Convention and attempted to pass the buck. The price of oil, driven up by the speculators [not OPEC], blame the Democrats. The obscene profits posted by the oil companies, blame the Democrats. There is no shortage of oil. There is no shortage of gas at the pumps.

The Bush war in Iraq, now at a trillion dollars, blame the Democrats. The National Debt, now at over \$9 trillion, blame the Democrats. The real estate debacle, blame the Democrats.

The national economy is in the crapper and the Bush Administration's answer is to cut taxes to the rich. The majority of Americans are not buying this line. Over 70% of the American people are dissatisfied with the administration, its handling of the war and the economy.

Fortunately, we will all have an opportunity to do something about this in November.

Jack O'Connor
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

Why the "Dart" to Sen. Joe Lieberman for supporting John McCain? I am a Democrat and voted for Sen. Clinton in the Oklahoma Primary. Sen. Lieberman is an independent and should be free to support whomever he prefers.

Michael Barlow
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

I was pleased to see the praise for Diane Ravitch, "an educational historian and a first-rate mind," in the May 10 issue of the Observer. As a reading specialist, former elementary teacher, and mother of three college graduates, I have been reading Diane Ravitch for years. One of my favorite Diane Ravitch books is *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*, published in 2000. I especially recommend the sections of her book that explain phonics and whole language.

Ravitch puts reading instruction in historical context and also discusses the important research of the late Harvard professor Jeanne Chall. If we truly want to reform education, we should study the history of education. Reading Diane Ravitch is a great place to start.

Diane Brown
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

The Internet has clocks displaying minute and second changes in world population and other alarming categories. I would suggest installing an Oklahoma Alarm Clock in the state Capitol rotunda, displaying our scary rates alongside national averages.

The digital read-outs per minute on the Oklahoma Alarm Clock:

1. Increasing number of women in Oklahoma prisons per capita.
2. Oklahoma teenage births.
3. Oklahoma colleges and universities new grads moving out of state.
4. Bridges and roads decaying.
5. Number of uninsured children and elders.
6. National rating of Oklahoma on public health programs.
7. Number per capita on welfare, food stamps and assistance.
8. Oklahoman's life expectancy in comparison with other states. [To live longer statistically, move to Arkansas or Texas.]
9. Oklahoma's rate per capita of military killed or maimed in Iraqi and Afghanistan.
10. Oklahoma infant mortality.

Bob Jackman
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Good grief! Sure hope the Oklahoma City School Board has some rules about Board Members quitting one day and selling them farms to build new schools on the next! Some might be more interested in selling farms than they are in promoting a first class school system in Oklahoma City.

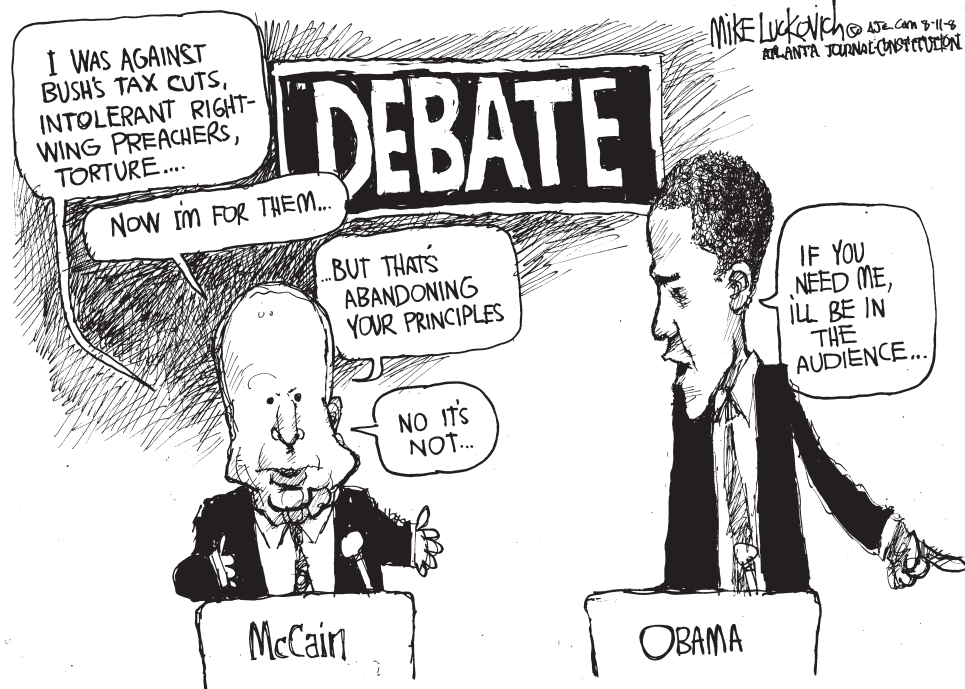
Max Edgar
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

It was my understanding the "river project" was defeated by the majority of Tulsa County voters. So, who is going right over their heads to secure federal welfare funding for economic development benefiting the business community?

The Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce Business Union recently organized and funded a fly-in trip to Washington, DC, for 30 city, business and community leaders. They will "cultivate relationships" with Oklahoma's federal delegation for appropriations to assure the Tulsa region is effectively represented in the determination of "public policy" for river funding! Who do they think they are fooling?

Immigration reform will also be at the forefront of the groups' agenda. I'm sure it will contain language to ensure "business employers" must



sponsor any exploited, alien worker within their cheap labor pool!

Carol Seim
Owasso

Editor, The Observer:

Well, folks, we finally made it to No. 1 on something: Forbes magazine has listed the most junk-food-obsessed cities in the U.S., based on how much is bought per capita.

Congratulations, Oklahoma City, you are No. 1 in the country!

No. 2 Pittsburgh, No. 3 Memphis, No. 4 Little Rock, No. 5 St. Louis, No. 5 Nashville, No. 6 Indianapolis ... Dallas/Ft. Worth is No. 20.

Darla Reynolds Sparks
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Responding to the article Chaplain: It's Time to Get Off The Pot [Observer 5.25.08]: One must question how many of the marijuana addicted patients at Valley Hope are there because they have a desperate need to get off pot versus those there with a desperate need to get into a court-satisfying treatment program.

She gives pot credit with being a gateway drug, right behind alcohol. She could have mentioned tobacco as the gateway most often credited with leading to other drugs. She does mention it later as a drug we should get rid of without suggesting that we make either it or alcohol illegal. She isn't actually saying that having marijuana and other substances be illegal is a good idea. She is tired of financing the jail space so she wants to "reduce demand for dope in any form" and that's why she requested that the Observer get off the marijuana bandwagon.

Few people try drugs because they read stories about the damage due to the Drug War, the agricultural/organic potential of hemp, or the palliative medical effects of marijuana. They try drugs because there is something about being human that predisposes us to be interested in mind-altering experiences and something about the reports of ones peers that outweighs all the government reports about lung damage and negative effects on mood and mind.

That these reports later turn out to be as non-replicable as earlier reports about how it made men grow breasts and become crazed killers and rapists does not aid demand reduction efforts. Indeed, the one thing that actu-

ally brings down use of a drug seems to be tolerance of it. The Netherlands is reported to have the lowest incidence of teen marijuana use and they also have the greatest availability and tolerance.

I don't agree that the maximum remedy for the problem is her approach of decriminalization. The substance you are consuming should state clearly on the label what it is and pay a fair share of taxes. Legalization would bring us to the position that what you do to you is a matter between you, your god and your pocketbook with the justice system overseeing our responsibility to be civilized with each other no matter what mental condition we've achieved.

It might be something like what the founders had in mind for what it means to be an American.

Clinton L. Wiles
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Obama isn't a victim in the Rev. Wright saga. Obama used going to church and having a relationship with the minister like an American flag lapel pin. He really doesn't understand that Wright is more mainstream in the black ministry than an extremist. Obama knows all the words about the underbelly of America but he has a poor understanding of what they mean. That is the main reason Obama ran away from helping Rev. Wright during the slanted media exposure.

Rev. Wright was preaching to his black congregation and almost everything he said is true. America was and still is, a very prejudiced country. Our government, business and religious leaders have always done a better job of taking care of themselves than making America a better place to live. We may be overwhelmed with emotion and give a little when we see a specific person in peril but we don't want to do the hard work of correcting the real problem. That is a big part of why most other developed countries are taking better care of their citizens.

Obama owes Rev. Wright an apology. We can expect Obama to treat us like he treated Rev. Wright. Obama is just a politician who is above average at hyping to the non-thinking in America who don't know the difference between saying and doing. When it comes to the hard work, don't look for much real help from Obama.

Larry Brown
Bethany

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Frosty's Notebook

Bigotry

Why all the media talk only about Rev. Jeremiah Wright? I'm a Roman Catholic and I'm just as upset by "Reverend" John Hagee's attack on the Catholic church.

I knew there were still bigots out there but I never dreamed that a megachurch televangelist who reaches millions of viewers would spout such venom.

Go to YouTube, search for "John Hagee Roman Church Hitler," and judge for yourself. He is shown lecturing in his church, pointing to the image of a woman raising a chalice.

This, he exclaims with thunderous voice, is "the Great Whore," the Roman Catholic church. Hagee says the whore is drinking "the blood of the Jewish people."

The Catholic church has long since made its peace with Jews, and several popes have apologized for past discrimination – as well they should have.

I have known bigotry first hand growing up in McAlester, attending a Catholic school, enduring the taunts of "cat licker" and "pope worshipper."

I debated with my intelligent Protestant friends, demanding the respect any religion deserves. Some came around, some didn't.

A girl I asked to a Teen Town dance turned me down. When she told her mother I had asked her, her mother said she couldn't go with a Catholic.

Every morning there were five-minute KTMC radio attacks on Catholics by preacher Augie Henry from the dominant Protestant church. Lies such as claiming monastery monks in Hartshorne were getting nuns pregnant and burying the bodies of the babies.

I can only imagine how Barack Obama must feel with the relentless attacks on his Christian beliefs, the Internet lies, and bogus claim he is a Muslim [as though that were a mortal sin.]

The media easily skimmed over the big event when John McCain stood with John Hagee who endorsed him over the religious conservatives' favorite, Mike Huckabee.

McCain was later to lamely say that he disagreed with Hagee's remarks about the Catholic church but he would not repudiate the endorsement.

Hagee issued a lame apology, hoping to minimize the damage for McCain, his pick for president.

We will defend to the death Hagee's right to spew garbage, but it is something else when the Republican candidate for president won't vigorously rebuke the likes of Hagee.

Hagee appears twice daily on cable's Trinity Broadcasting, reaching 75 million homes. The damage he has done to public education is incalculable.

Hagee has even blamed the American government for concocting AIDS. He claims God created Hurricane Katrina to punish New Orleans for its sins.

Hagee's forum for that ludicrous calumny was "Fresh Air" on NPR in September 2006. He reaffirmed it in a radio interview just weeks ago.

I challenge those who questioned whether a Mormon could be president. I thought Huckabee's proposal to rewrite the Constitution as a Christian document was ludicrous but I didn't attack his Southern Baptist roots. That denomination includes my in-laws who are superb Christians.

Hagee didn't volunteer his endorsement. He was approached by McCain, who sought it. McCain was trying to establish a working relationship with the religious right whom he had previously condemned.

'Best In The World' Myth

Want to see my Irish temper rise? Suggest that I don't love Oklahoma and America, that the Observer is too negative toward both. Those accusations, usually coming from rightwingers, are false.

The Observer gives as many laurels as darts. We most recently praised the state's higher education system, public school teachers, and a CareerTech system second to none – to mention a few.

The Observer has crusaded for a sane justice and correctional system, more aid for poor families and a fair tax code, with emphasis on taking the sales tax off groceries.

I saw the state soar under Democratic Gov. Howard Edmondson. Oklahoma set national public education standards under Republican Gov. Henry Bellmon.

The collapse began under Republican Gov. Frank Keating, a hateful, spiteful man.

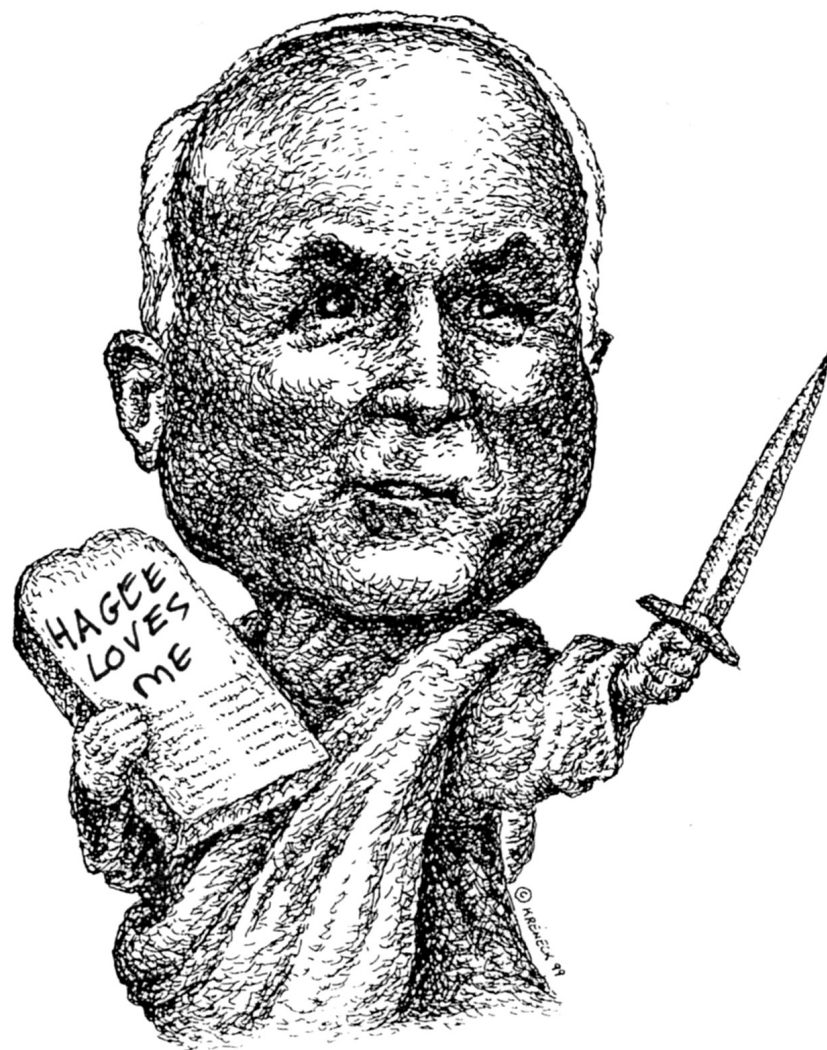
The national collapse came under George W. Bush, the Texas tragedy who has thrust the country into a no-win war, an unprecedented national debt, the worst health care in the Western world and slashed programs for the poor.

Consider the status of our children today. In international comparisons of health care, the infant mortality rate is a crucial indicator of a nation's standing. The United States ranks No. 28, with seven per 1,000 live births.

That's worse than Portugal, Greece, the Czech Republic, Northern Ireland and 23 other nations not exactly known for cutting-edge medical science – a dismal embarrassment.

An abysmal showing goes to socioeconomic factors: poor, uninsured women failing to get prenatal care or engaging in bad behaviors [smoking, using illegal drugs, becoming pregnant as teens] that put fetuses' and babies' lives at risk.

You can look at 28th place and say, yes, it's terrible, but it doesn't apply to my



Among other campaigns of pure bigotry, Hagee preaches that America should enter a pre-emptive "holy war" with Iran. Notice how the fans of war and their offspring are seldom in harm's way.

He supports Israel only as the place of the Second Coming. Jews who don't accept Christ that day are bound for hell.

Hagee's diatribes against public education are endless, made up of pure air. Public school teachers are some of the most committed Christians I have ever met. Given their paychecks, they must be doing the Lord's work.

Obama repudiated Louis Farrakhan's endorsement but McCain told a TV interviewer he condemns any "anti-anything" remarks by Hagee, but is still "glad to have his endorsement."

McCain is following in George W. Bush's footsteps – playing up to the religious right, representing 30 million in the Republican base.

Just a few years ago I thought McCain was the best of the Republicans. Now he makes Bush's flip-flops pale by comparison.

I changed Catholic churches once upon a time due to politics preached from the pulpit. I abhor the church's teaching on family planning but, like Rev. Wright's parishioners, I didn't join a pastor or a Pope, I joined a church where I attend regularly and where I love to worship with my fellow Catholics.

One thing I learned growing up in McAlester – the bigotry spewed at me came from children who learned it from their parents, often at Sunday School. It's no longer the case and I thank the Lord for that.

part of the health-care system – the one for the non-poor insured.

That, in a nutshell, is why support for health-care reform is fragile and shallow. Many people of goodwill support extending coverage to the 47 million Americans who have no insurance.

This is where you start getting the requisite genuflection to the United States as having "the best health care in the world." One problem: new research shows the United States well behind other developed countries on measures from cancer survival to diabetes care. That cannot be blamed on the rich-poor or insured-uninsured gulf.

Such failures may contribute to the estimated 44,000 to 98,000 annual deaths from medical mistakes in hospitals, and to deaths preventable by medical care.

Those total about 101,000 a year, according to a new study in the journal Health Affairs. That per capita rate puts America dead last in the study's 19 industrialized countries.

America's five-year survival rate for cervical cancer? Worse than in Italy, Ireland, Germany and others. The survival rate for breast cancer? You'd do better in Switzerland, Norway, Britain and others. Asthma mortality? Twice the rate of Germany's or Sweden's.

It isn't realistic to expect America to be the best in every measure of medical quality. None of this tells us how to reform the U.S. system. It does say the "best in the world" is misguided medical chauvinism that should not block attempts at reform.

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton at least addressed the problem. John McCain said he favors tax credits so the uninsured could buy their own insurance.

A typical Republican, he wants to make the greedy insurance industry even richer.

On Energy, Cole Sorely Needs New Material

By Lynn Green

Recently, U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, R-OK, released a column decrying the skyrocketing prices of methamphetamines, which he blamed on excessive left wing government regulation.

He called for the government to remove regulations from the meth industry so that the commodity would become more available to average Americans.

Well, that's not exactly what he said. He was talking about oil, but his take on the problem of high energy costs and its solution made about as much sense as it would have if he were talking about meth.

First, Cole trots out some old, tired lies about the source of the problem. He claims that we would all enjoy low gas prices, like the ones we enjoyed before Bush took office [\$1.46 a gallon], if only those environmentalists and the government just got out of the way. We would build all the refineries we need and drill for all the oil we would need. Baloney!

COLE IGNORES REALITIES

Never mind the fact that domestic refining capacity is presently increasing by an average of 177,000 barrels per day of production, the equivalent of building a new refinery every year.

Never mind that the opposition to new refineries would primarily come from citizens who would face all the health and safety problems associated with this industry.

Never mind the fact that if we got all the oil out of the north slope of Alaska, we would only have enough to keep America going for around six to eight months.

Never mind that burning all that oil would only accelerate the amount of CO2 we are throwing into the air choking our cities and flooding our coastlines, not to mention increasing ozone levels which would further degrade our air and increase respiratory illnesses in America.

'BAND AID ON CANCER'

The main problem with Cole's "Band Aid on cancer" solution to our energy needs is that he wants to feed our addiction to old fossil fuel energy when what we need is a cure for that addiction.

His is the thinking of the past. What we need is the energy of the future.

False prophets like Cole want us to believe that we need not make any real



changes to obtain energy independence. He preaches his comforting snake oil gospel to itching ears when we need someone to tell us the truth.

We will not cure our oil addiction without real change.

To cure an addiction, the addict must practice new habits to replace old ones. Exploring, developing, and implementing future energy sources such as wind, solar, and biomass energies will, in the end, create new economies and ultimately better, more sustainable economies.

We will be able to come clean of our old habits.

WELL-POSITIONED FOR NEW ENERGIES

And guess what? Oklahoma is exceptionally well positioned to take advantage of future energy development, even more than we have been with old energy.

Oklahoma oil production peaked around 1927. However, our winds, abundant sunshine, and fields can make us a world leader in future energy production.

We will not get there by listening to old energy toadies like Cole and other false prophets who try to distract us by blaming those who seek our healing as opposed to enabling our current habits.

Cole's old way of thinking is wrong for an Oklahoma facing a new century.

- The author lives in The Village

An Open Letter To Speaker Bengé

A Republican Can't Get House Brass To Listen

By Wayne Rohde

Editor's Note: Wayne Rohde's letter illustrates all too clearly how corporate interests - in this case, the powerful insurance lobby - dominate the GOP-controlled Oklahoma House. In mid-May, the Rohde's finally got their meeting with Speaker Chris Bengé, but House leaders still refused to allow a vote on Nick's Law, knowing it likely would pass.

I am the father of Nicholas Rohde, a 10-year-old autistic boy from Edmond. You might know him as the boy commonly referred by the legislation as Nick's Law. As a registered Republican, I am ashamed of the actions of the Chairman and the coordinated effort of the House Leadership [April 9] to suppress public debate, input, and necessary comment on Nick's Law.

What happened today was a great travesty and injustice in the House of Representatives. It gives me no pleasure to ask you, the House Leadership, and Chairman Ron Peterson for a formal apology regarding the way in which parents and family members were treated in the House Economic Development and Financial Services Committee Hearing this week.

I am also extremely displeased with your actions to cancel a scheduled meeting with a group of parents on Thursday. We were not given the opportunity to reschedule and were not provided a reason for the cancellation. It is very suspicious the cancellation came at the same time you called for a caucus meeting.

The Chairman announced that the committee would hear comment and allowed public debate for every bill that was considered today in the committee except for one, SB 1059 presented by Rep. Daniel Sullivan. It was obvious that a coordinated effort was in place to not allow any public comment on the original bill nor allowing committee members to question the House author of the bill. It was very apparent me, sir, that the members of my party were not happy with what was about to happen. Most were looking down or not engaging the parents and other public. I demand that you stop the type of action that was displayed by the chair. It is not healthy for our state government and it gave the public a very bad display of how our elected officials conduct the peoples business.

As several committee members stated after the hearing, "It was a very sad day at the Capitol."

"We disgraced the House today," was another quote.

The Chairman violated his own policy of allowing public comment. Several local TV stations have recorded the actions of the chair and the vice chair. Public debate or member questions on the original bill were not allowed except for a motion to do-pass the legislation. Many members and public guests left the committee room after the proceedings truly disgusted.

I would like to remind you, sir, of what happened last week with the Cherokee Chief who was denied the opportunity to speak in a separate committee. One

of the freedoms that all citizens cherish is the ability to speak to our elected officials. When the general public's ability to speak to our legislators is denied because of pure political gain, then those legislators have broken the trust that we have placed in them to speak for us.

Chairman Peterson continued to disgrace his office by leaving the committee hearing not wanting to address the many parents on his actions. As most of us followed him to his office, he clearly did not want to talk to the parents. Rather than address the parents and answer questions, he locked the door to his office to prevent his constituents from talking with him.

Closing the door to discuss matters with individuals can be and will always be respected. But when a legislator locks the doors to his office, he has clearly stepped over the line. The media have reported on this fact and the story has now been released on the AP.

Mr. Speaker, for the last several months, we have directed our ever-growing number of parents and family members to respect the office and the legislative process of committees. We have been polite and courteous to all members, recognizing them as our elected officials. We have complied with this process for every step of Nick's Law.

However, when a legislator or the House Leadership clearly does not respect the citizens and voters of this state, then we have the situation that you find yourself in today.

For two years, I have personally met with many of the legislators and provided information on autism, the costs associated with this epidemic, and what will happen to the state of Oklahoma if we continue on our current path. I have traveled to their local districts this past summer and fall, or met with them at the Capitol. Some of the legislators would not accept the data, facts, and studies that show the related costs associated with insurance coverage of autism. But most of them have embraced this epidemic and wanted to become more educated. Most of the legislators were startled on the financial devastation of the family, and the upcoming financial nightmare when the state has to start paying for the care of these children who will soon be eligible as adults for state welfare.

Chairman Peterson is quoted not less than 12 times in the past two weeks stating that he is concerned about the costs associated with Nick's Law. He is convinced that this legislation will increase the number of the uninsured. He states that he does not want the number of uninsured to go up.

Mr. Speaker, I have sent him the necessary information several times over the course of the last eight months. Today, he stated that he wants to study this issue. He refused to allow a public hearing to discuss this measure. He refuses to

See AUTISM Page 9

Cherokee Fight None Of Congress' Business

By Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Despite my years in politics, I'm still surprised by Congress' inability to learn from past mistakes and tendency to interfere where it should not. One of the richer sources of persistent bad judgment is Congress's tragic history of meddling in the internal affairs of Indian tribes. Yet the House is considering legislation that would destroy the Cherokee Nation, hurt some of America's poorest citizens, and dictate the outcome of an internal political dispute, despite the fact that Cherokee tribal and federal courts are reviewing the issues.

The Cherokee Nation is involved in litigation with a group of individuals claiming to be descendants of slaves, known as Freedmen, who were held by 2% of Cherokees before 1863, when the Cherokees voluntarily emancipated them. The Cherokee people voted decisively in March 2007 to limit citizenship in the tribe to those who descend from Indians who were listed on a federal census taken in 1906. On its face, the fact that an Indian tribe would want to be comprised of descendants of Native Americans should not be surprising or controversial.

However, the Freedmen descendants, whose ancestors were listed under the non-Indian category of Freedmen on that same census, believe they should be citizens of the tribe under treaty obligations.

Members of the House introduced HR 2824, a bill to terminate the Cherokee Nation and eliminate nearly \$300 million of funding, and related amendments to zero out federal funding to tribal citizens in all appropriations areas, such as healthcare [in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, HR 1328] and housing [in the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act, HR 2786], to punish the Cherokee people for their vote.

LET COURTS DECIDE FACTS

I do not claim to know which party in this litigation is correct, and I do not take a side in this argument.

Neither should Congress. The case is being heard in tribal and federal courts. Those judges have all the facts and laws before them. Congress does not. Courts are the proper and fair venue for resolving these issues. Congress is not. Furthermore, congressional interference in an internal dispute would harm all Indian tribes and set a dangerous precedent.

Despite all this, House members are not only threatening the Cherokee Nation, but they are misrepresenting the facts. For example, one of the most egregious distortions is that the Cherokees have expelled all black people from the tribe. This is not only patently false, but it's also deeply offensive to all Indians. It's certainly not a foundation for legislation. In fact, the Cherokee Nation is as diverse an Indian tribe that exists today. There are thousands of African Americans who are Cherokee citizens, including more than 1,500 Freedmen descendants, because they have ancestors who were Indians on the 1906 rolls.

The more than 2,800 individuals who were disenrolled have been temporarily reinstated in the tribe pending the outcome of the litigation. Furthermore, unlike hundreds of other tribes, the Cherokee Nation does not have a blood quantum for citizenship; one need only find an Indian ancestor on the 1906 rolls.

CITIZENSHIP IS COLORBLIND

That means you're a citizen whether you're one sixty-fourth Cherokee or one-half Cherokee. Citizenship is colorblind. Congress has ignored this reality.

In the past, interference with tribal affairs, often justified by a paternalistic "we know best" mindset, has severely damaged the progress of tribes. Often, Congress not only didn't know best, but it based its decision on lies, mistaken assumptions and prejudice.

For example, believing that Indian tribes could not responsibly own land, Congress instituted a land ownership system that prevented Indians from selling their land. When a property owner died, ownership rights were distributed equally among all heirs, resulting in a fractionalization of ownership that denied the

Humphreys' Return To Power Worrisome

By James Nimmo

Just as the mythic Dracula of Transylvania came back from the dead to spread horror among the peasants, so has the flesh-and-blood Kirk Humphreys come back from the politically dead to fling his homophobic horror in the halls of Oklahoma City's public schools.

Reborn in the blood of his religion and bred in the dessicated dessert of intolerance, Humphreys was recently appointed by the Oklahoma City School Board to fill the position of chair until an election is held in February 2009.

Coming above ground with his first public election to the Putnam City school board in 1987, he rose to bigger things as mayor of OKC in 1998. He resigned during his second term to run for U. S. Senate which he lost to Dr. Tom Coburn, 25% to 61%.

Settling back into his businessman's grave of multiple real estate dealings, one would have thought that we had heard the last of Humphreys.

So why the concern regarding his reappearance?

ANTI-GAY RIGHTS RECORD

During his time as mayor of OKC, he was the driving force behind the 2001 attempt to prevent Cimarron Alliance, a GLBT advocacy group, from exercising its First Amendment right to free speech with the display of banners promoting gay/lesbian equality.



benefits of the land to its owners and cost the government millions of dollars in administrative costs.

Despite the fact that the policy was recognized as a failure as early as the 1930s, it was only in 2004 that Congress passed legislation I authored eliminating some of these ownership problems.

This policy also resulted in a lawsuit against the Department of the Interior alleging mismanagement of the trust accounts controlling these lands in excess of \$100 billion. This lawsuit is 12 years old and still working its way through the courts. Such are the dangers of a Congress that is quick to intrude on tribal sovereignty and slow to realize it has only exacerbated the problem.

CONGRESS RUSHING TO JUDGMENT

Today, Congress is again rushing to judgment when it thinks it knows better than the tribe and the courts.

In this case, Congress's chosen method is particularly disturbing and destructive. The legislation being considered would punish the Cherokees for not extending citizenship to Freedman descendants by cutting off federal support for the tribe. Astonishingly, it would also harm the tribe's most vulnerable citizens – the old, the young, and the sick – who benefit from federal funds for essentials such as health care, housing and education services. In fact, this latest congressional action is, in my view, the constructive equivalent of the destructive termination policy of the 1950s.

Today's Indian tribes are the survivors of centuries of persecution, genocide and the destruction of their ways of life. I'm dumbfounded that Congress wants to reward that struggle by stripping tribes of the very sovereignty they fought so long to preserve.

– The author, a Northern Cheyenne Indian, was a senator from Colorado from 1993 to 2005 and a House member from 1987 to 1993. He was the first American Indian to serve as chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

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However, the shining light of Federal District Court Judge Robin Cauthron exorcised the demon of Humphreys and she ruled in favor of Cimarron Alliance and enjoined the City Council from interfering with Cimarron's banner display on the utility poles.

Hitherto the sacred utility poles had been the exclusive marketplace for hetero organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, rodeos, and other civic clubs.

Did I mention the earlier "Tin Drum" video law suit?

In 1997, a fundamentalist censorship group ponied up with an Oklahoma County judge willing to make an informal ruling that the "Tin Drum" was child pornography and that copies of it could be seized in Oklahoma County wherever it could be found whether in private homes or public libraries.

BEATING THE FUNDAMENTALIST DRUM

Despite the facts that the film had been released in 1979, received major film awards, and not anyone prior to Humphreys had made a legal claim of obscenity against the film, Humphreys again smelled blood and was hot on the trail of what he thought would surely be a victory for fundamentalist decency. Thinking that the cross of his religion would trump all blasphemers and dissolve the First and Fourth Amendments he encouraged the court case to proceed.

See WORRISOME Page 8

As Economy Sours, Tax Cuts Bloom Fully

By Edwin E. Vineyard

The failure of the Oklahoma Legislature to adequately fund government services has resulted in some bizarre happenings.

We have a state staff person about to be sentenced to jail because he did not do what a judge ordered, even though he could not do it because of the failure of the Legislature to provide money for facilities to do it.

Sound crazy? Absolutely! But this is the situation that our tax-cutting, program-starving Legislature has put us into.

The Office of Juvenile Affairs has repeatedly requested funds for the expansion of holding and treatment facilities. The Oklahoma county juvenile detention center is crowded 10% beyond bed capacity, because the state has no room to move juvenile inmates into treatment-oriented facilities.

HOW TO MEET THIS COURT ORDER?

An Oklahoma County judge ordered the director of juvenile justice to take them anyway – NOW.

The director has no place to put them, either, and says it would be unfair to the rest of the state to use all coming vacancies to take Oklahoma City offenders in front of others. So, the county judge is holding him in contempt of a court order.

That poor public administrator is indeed hoisted on the horns of a dilemma.

Oklahoma voters are demonstrating short-sightedness, if not plain ignorance, in voting time after time for those legislators who promise tax cuts. Legislators should be in a position to know that they cannot run adequate state services without sufficient tax money. This makes most of them into whatever name category that is the opposite of honest statespersons.

Oklahoma has one of the lowest tax burdens in the country. Anyone who says different is not truthful.

KEPT AFLOAT BY OIL AND GAS

Further, the only reason Oklahoma can even survive as a state with the current level of revenues generated by its individual and corporate taxpayers and highway users is because it has become flush with oil and gas severance [well-head] taxes. These have, of course, increased along with the prices of both oil and natural gas.

Our ordinary tax-paying citizens and corporations have had an easy ride – compared to those in most other states. As usual, Oklahoma is living off its minerals during a boom, and it is doing nothing for its infrastructure with that volatile splash of income.

Our Legislature has repeatedly cut taxes over the last few years. At the same time those same legislators have added billions to the state debt, to be paid from future revenue.

Future funds will be inadequate because of failure to enact taxes specific to

Tiring Of Religious Right, A Church Blooms

By John M. Wylie II

Rev. Melinda Foster's calling to plant a new United Church of Christ in Owasso is ending years of frustration about the area's growing religious rightward drift.

Imagine an inclusionary congregation devoted to the true teachings of God and Christ in the hometown of Sen. Randy Brogdon [who is welcome to join us for worship].

"Everyone is welcome," Rev. Foster explained. "No one is a stranger. Many people have been hurt by organized religion and find it difficult to trust coming back to a church.

"We want to help heal those wounds and invite you to help us feed people who are hungry in body, mind, or spirit. God gives you a second chance. Why not give God one and join us for worship?"

UCC Owasso meets at 5 p.m. Saturdays at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross, 9309 N. 129th E. Ave., Owasso [just east of Smith Marketplace.]

Our Christian fellowship includes weekly communion and a post-worship meal, either potluck or at a local restaurant.

The church will host an outdoor cookout, parking lot dance and who knows what other kinds of fellowship at 6 p.m. May 31. It will let people "dip their toes in the water."

Everyone is welcome and there's no charge to attend.

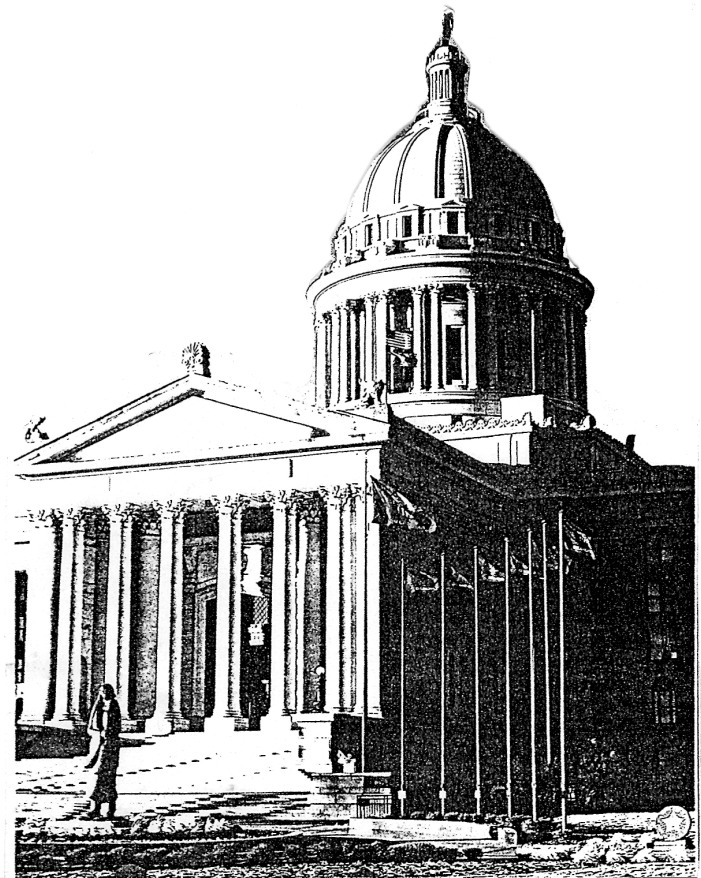
We believe that faith is a matter of mind as well as heart, and that taking the Bible seriously means it cannot always be taken literally. God's love embraces all persons equally, no matter their gender, race or sexual identity.

We believe that Christ calls us to be nothing less than global citizens, the social expression of love is justice, and spiritual concerns are inseparable from commitment to the natural world.

If you need but haven't found a more open and embracing community of faith to nurture your spirit and raise your children, we invite you to explore the many ways that God is still speaking at UCC Owasso.

No matter who, what or where you are on life's journey, you belong. UCC Owasso seeks to emulate Jesus through love, faith and by welcoming all into our emerging community.

Our mission is to serve all with love, act with compassion and strive for justice in our world.



the debt, as the constitution requires, and tax-cutting will produce insufficient general funds to maintain services – much less pay off past debt.

LOWEST TAX BURDEN IN NATION

Oklahoma has the lowest total tax burden of any state in the country – federal, state, and local. Ours is 27.8% compared with the national average of 32.7%. In state taxes, Oklahoma is 49th with sales 4.5%, gasoline 17 cents a gallon, and cigarettes \$1.03.

Only seven states do not have income taxes, but one would not know that by listening to politicians and news media. Only five states, all different from the seven just mentioned, do not have state sales tax. That is the reality. We don't have to eliminate or cut taxes to be competitive.

Oklahoma's gasoline taxes are 18.4 cents federal and 17 cents state, for a total of 35.4 cents. This is more than 10 cents below the national average.

If an old rule of thumb still applies, then Oklahoma could have about \$250 million in new funds for highways and bridges by charging the national average in gas taxes. Just charging a gas tax at the level of surrounding states should bring in \$125 million more a year. [Newer methods for estimates may show more.]

Instead of acting fiscally responsible, there is talk at the Capitol of issuing highway bonds and robbing schools to pay for them. No wonder those who are concerned about education funding are raising a fuss!

Heaven, save the state of Oklahoma from the tax-cutters!

– The author, AKA *The Militant Moderate*, lives in Enid

At UCC Owasso, every dollar spent on church operations is matched by a dollar spent on outreach. Our specific mission is to feed the large number of physically hungry residents of our community – which includes Owasso, Collinsville, Oologah, Pryor and everything in between – whose needs are not being met.

We stock food banks, provide basic needs for families facing crises and provide families with Christmas gifts of food, clothing and other basics. Every service includes a Shalom Circle, where all of us pray for God's guidance in the coming week. UCC Owasso would love to see you at 5 p.m. on any Saturday, or at our special event May 31. Want to know more? E-mail Pastor Melinda Foster at godisstillspeakingowasso@yahoo.com. Visit our website at <http://www.forministry.com/USOKUCOFUUUUU>. We're also on MySpace.

– The author is editor of the *Oologah Lake Leader*

WORRISOME

From Page 7

Federal District Court Judge Ralph Thompson, however, found that the film is not child pornography, and went on to criticize that the county judge, Richard Freeman, had made a serious error in judgment pertaining to what constitutes pornography and allowing the OKC police, *carte blanche*, to search homes and businesses without a warrant.

Both of the lost lawsuits backed by Kirk Humphreys cost hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars in expenses and attorney fees that resulted in higher property taxes. Though the "Tin Drum" adventure was publicly led by former District Attorney Bob Macy, as mayor and the boss of the OKC police chief, I feel that Humphreys was certainly in the loop and should have had more sense and better advice in calling off the figurative police dogs.

If the past is prologue, I think we can expect some more Humphreys hauntings at the expense of the Oklahoma City taxpayers. It's been shown that the Constitution, its Bill of Rights, and especially the First Amendment – if applied in time – can counter the poisonous vapors that waft from Humphreys.

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

Voter ID: Devil In Details Fixing A Problem That Doesn't Exist

By Jay Paul Gumm

I have written previously about "bumper sticker politics," where extremely complex issues are made to fit on a bumper sticker.

A measure I helped defeat recently is a perfect example of bumper sticker politics at its worst. The issue was euphemistically called "Voter ID." The perception of a "Voter ID" bill is positive; it simply requires anyone to show identification before voting. That sounds reasonable.

The devil, as they say, is in the details.

The bill would have allowed a photocopy of a current utility bill to be used as valid voter identification. Rather than protecting from voter fraud, that provision opens the door for illegal votes to be cast as unchallengeable legal ballots.

HOW TO GAME THE SYSTEM

My electric bill, like thousands of Oklahomans, arrives as a postcard. Say someone wanted to cast an illegal vote – such a person simply would have to get one of these electric bills long enough to make a photocopy of it.

The postcard then could be returned to the mailbox from which it was taken. The homeowner would have no idea their bill was taken. With the photocopy of the stolen bill, the thief would be allowed to vote unchallenged and counted as a legal vote.

A second scenario is just as frightening.

Say a senior citizen from a rural area is driven by a grandchild to the polls. This senior citizen has never driven and has no driver's license. They have never been challenged on their identity; as is often the case in rural Oklahoma, the poll worker might even know the voter.

Without the identification required by this bad bill, the poll worker would have

State Lawmakers Play Cynical Shell Game

By Edwin E. Vineyard

"Hang the tax-cutters!"

"Throw the rascals out!"

Such should be the election year slogans of all knowledgeable voting citizens who care about the quality of state and local government services.

While the most vigorous and mean tax-cutters are within the leadership group of one political party, there are those frightened sycophants in the other party who are afraid to stand up and be statesmanlike in the face of the evils of tax-cutting.

Too often they just go along.

OUT-OF-CONTROL CORPORATE WELFARE

"Nail the tax-dodgers!"

This, too, would be an appropriate election year slogan for those who are informed about how much and how many special interests are exempt from taxes – both state and local, or property and sales.

The unneeded give-away of \$30 million in state tax exemptions for the multi-millionaire owners of the new Oklahoma City basketball team is the latest example of squandering by legislators of both parties. The sales tax holiday is another. There are numerous other examples of such in the name of "quality jobs."

Tax breaks for oil and gas companies to encourage new or deeper drilling are a sham, suspected of being bought and paid for with campaign donations. Who's hurt? State services suffer.

UNDERMINING ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Millions of dollars are unavailable to schools, as well as financially strapped city and county governments, because of property tax exemptions for as much as 15 years for new or expanded business facilities. Again, this is in the name of jobs or economic development. Few even question these.

Jobs and economic development have become the sacred cows of state politics.

Cutting individual income tax rates, reducing corporate rates, and abolishing inheritance taxes on huge estates have hurt every consumer of state services. The benefits go to a relative few.

Unable to find "the fat in the state budget" as advertised in past campaigns, the Republicans at the state level appear to have adopted their national posture of "cut taxes, borrow, and spend."

Failure to enact gasoline and diesel taxes to keep up with surrounding states has caused Oklahoma to adopt a dangerous, and constitutionally questionable, practice of borrowing for highway dollars and paying them back with interest from regular income later.

Highway backers now want to take money away from schools, because we are way behind.

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN DEBT

Further, the Legislature has put the state into billions of dollars of debt by failure to fund state and college building bonds by enacting a special tax for payback as the Constitution requires.

They are now floating bonds for matching donated endowed chair funds, primarily for OU and OSU, by taking away dedicated funding for their own OHLAP student scholarship program benefiting all colleges.

The Legislature shucked its responsibility for student fees, letting regents raise these exorbitantly to compensate for their own failure to fund colleges. Thus, the

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, MAY 25, 2008, PAGE 9



no choice: the senior citizen could cast only a provisional vote, one not directly placed in the ballot box. Only when the voter has proven his or her identity would the vote be counted.

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

Two scenarios – one in which an illegal vote is counted as an unchallenged legal vote, and one in which a legal vote is given less credence than an illegal one – show the devil in the details of this bill.

It was a bad bill – and I am proud to have helped defeat it.

Come election time, you will only hear about how a good "Voter ID" bill was killed and how those who helped kill it should be defeated. That is all that will fit on a postcard or a bumper sticker.

The truth is the issue was considerably more complicated.

Also, voter fraud really is not a problem in Oklahoma. By solving a problem that does not exist, we would have created many others.

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

Legislature is secretly taxing families of college kids, albeit indirectly.

Debt obligations against future income are growing, removing and increasing amount of current income as a budget source.

The Legislature plays hypocritical games with the penal system – enacting strict laws and sentencing rules while ignoring the consequences in terms of numbers and costs of incarceration. Unfunded debt is used to expand the system, or more private contract prisons are brought into use at added budget expense.

STATE CREDIT RATING AT RISK

By failing to properly fund the state's education and other retirement funds on a pay as you go basis, the Legislature has allowed the state to accumulate liability that will take 20 years or more to pay off.

These, plus the unfunded bonds enacted upon legislative whim, will end up destroying the credit rating of the state and make borrowing more expensive.

Orphans and children from broken and hazardous homes are being warehoused in overflowing facilities because money has not been provided for more foster home care. Juvenile offender detention centers are over-populated and dangerous places. Basic home health care for the elderly is not being funded, causing removal of some elderly ill to nursing homes at more than twice the cost.

Our Legislature has performed with all the fiscal restraint of a drunken sailor on shore leave, or a college kid with no credit card limit. They run up debt without increasing income. [Perhaps this comparison denigrates the college kids and my former Navy shipmates.]

Surely voters can recognize that the major fiscal problems that Oklahoma state and local governments face result from: [1] the unwillingness of its own citizens, corporate and individual, to pay taxes to support quality, even necessary, public services; and [2] the willingness of spineless legislators to assertively do the bidding of their most selfish and least publicly responsible constituents.

On the other hand, it could be worse. What if it were just ignorance and stupidity?

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

AUTISM

From Page 6

accept a meeting to discuss the data, yet in a matter of a couple minutes, the staff can produce an unsubstantiated figure of \$6 million that the state will have to pay for the cost of covering state employees.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that there are now 18 states that have some form of insurance coverage for autism. Arizona just passed this legislation last month. Indiana was the first in the nation in 2001. The Insurance Commission established a study group to monitor the costs of mandates in 2002. They have reported as of last month, there has been no increase.

I am willing to have a personal meeting with you and the chairman to discuss this in greater detail. I look forward to having a meeting with you in the next couple of days and receiving a formal apology regarding the actions of the House Leadership and Chairman Peterson.

BOOKS

JFK's Echo Resounds In Obama's Campaign

By Katharine P. Jose

COUNSELOR

A Life At The Edge Of History

By Ted Sorensen

HarperCollins

556 pages, \$27.95

It's impossible to read Ted Sorensen's *Counselor* without thinking of Barack Obama.

Mr. Sorensen, who was more or less John F. Kennedy's closest aide for 11 years, worshipped his boss. His boss, some say, was the last president to break boundaries and set historic precedents, and he inspired people with words.

The echo of Kennedy in Obama has been much discussed, but what Sorensen adds is some perspective on what made America love these two men with greater fervor than they have any elected official in the last 50 years – except maybe Ronald Reagan.

Sorensen's description of the way Kennedy dealt with the issue of his religion necessarily calls to mind the way Obama dealt with race in his address two months ago.

Also, the author writes of JFK winning the nomination through the "grass roots" first, rather than political support from Washington. The theme of JFK's campaign, "We Can Do Better," finds its echo in "Yes We Can" – both slogans acknowledge the current climate, but add sheer optimism.

YOUTHFUL ENERGY, PERSONALITY

Kennedy was a president who thought Americans were smarter than many politicians do; ditto Obama. JFK's nonpartisanship, his youthful energy, the feeling that being around him was fun and yes, the cult of personality – all this comes through perfectly clearly in Sorensen's writing.

Weirdly, most of his book reads like a breezy memoir – albeit of someone who happened to intersect with history again and again. The author here is always the outsider, the kid from Nebraska, even when he's nearly single-handedly avoiding war with the USSR. Sorensen tells his story with a sense of detached awe, humility, even incredulity.

He declines to state an opinion on many issues and controversies surrounding the Kennedy Administration.

For example, when addressing Kennedy's assassination, Sorensen says that he finds the conspiracy theorists hard to believe, and also that he finds it hard to believe there wasn't some larger, more sinister actor involved. He is, in that sense, always the adviser, more accustomed to providing information than making decisions or rendering final judgment.

KENNEDY WHITE HOUSE WAS 'FUN'

In his unabashed sentimentality for the Kennedy era [which starts to seem merited if only because here is an era named for a man who was president for



COUNSELOR

A LIFE AT THE EDGE OF HISTORY

TED SORENSEN

From "We Can Do Better" To "Yes We Can," Kennedy And Obama Slogans Offer "Sheer Optimism"

not quite three years] there are some eye-rolling moments. Sorensen quotes one aide who transitioned from Kennedy to Johnson as noting, "'There was something more fun in the Kennedy White House.' How true," Sorensen croons, "improving the world should be fun."

But he doesn't refrain from rendering judgment where he thinks it's deserved: He makes no attempt, for example, to conceal his dislike for Lyndon Johnson's style or policies.

What Sorensen doesn't do – and this may come as a disappointment to some – is say anything the least bit sexy.

He confesses the answer to many small mysteries: Who contributed what to Kennedy's first inaugural; which senator Kennedy was referring to when he wrote in *Profiles in Courage* that a colleague "acknowledged to me one day during a roll call vote that he voted with the special interests on every issue."

But there are minor clarifications of interest mainly to readers who know the Kennedy history well. "[A]nyone who hopes that this book will set forth names, details or intimate secrets that have not previously appeared in print will be disappointed," Sorensen declares.

STILL KEEPING SECRETS

He admits, late in the book, that there are actually many secrets he's keeping. So this is really, then, an intellectual memoir. There are numerous pages devoted to how one speech or another was revised, how individual lines were substituted or modified. It's mostly a book for Kennedy nuts and political wonks – or sentimentalists. That, of course, includes a fairly large number of Americans.

It's also hard not to see in some places an inverse reflection of George W. Bush.

Sorensen quotes Charles de Gaulle, who, when offered satellite photos as proof of Soviet missile sites during the Cuban missile crisis, said, "No, the word of the President of the United States is good enough for me."

It's hard to imagine Nicolas Sarkozy saying the same thing about Bush.

Similarly, in a section devoted to the Bay of Pigs, Sorensen admits that the episode was a great failure of the administration, but also mentions that Kennedy took personal responsibility for what happened. Sorensen provides a list, bullet-pointed, of things Kennedy learned from the crisis – things that made him

See COUNSELOR Page 11

Adventure On The Green, Colorado Rivers

By Mike Nobles

THROUGH THE GRAND CANYON FROM WYOMING TO MEXICO

By Ellsworth L. Kolb

Grand Canyon Association/University of Arizona Press

456 pages, \$16.95

This is some good news for history fans interested in the Green and Colorado rivers, the Grand Canyon, and the lives of two remarkable brothers that forever are entwined with the history of the west.

The Grand Canyon Association and the University of Arizona Press have issued a reprint of the original book published in 1914. The book remains true to the original in that the original text and photographs appear as they did in the 1914 edition.

This book is considered one of the classic adventure stories of the American West and is one of the most readable accounts of such a remarkable journey that I have ever read.

The original book was written by Ellsworth L. Kolb and is a wonderful account of his and brother Emery's experiences during their "Big Trip" down the Green and Colorado rivers beginning Sept. 8, 1911, in Green River, WY, and ending ultimately in late May or early June 1913, at the Gulf of Mexico.

The story of the Kolb brothers and their relationship with the Grand Canyon is well known and has been the subject of numerous books, videos, and scholarly research. In total the two Kolb brothers spent close to 76 years living and working in or around the Grand Canyon.

They began a career in photography after buying a small photo gallery in Williams, AZ, and became world famous for their pioneering photography of all things Grand Canyon.

They took a motion picture camera on the journey, the first time anyone had recorded such a feat with a movie camera. The footage formed the basis of a film

viewed by millions from 1915 to 1976 and showed daily at Emery Kolb's studio on the rim of the Grand Canyon.

The book is a vivid, exciting account of their amazing adventure while rowing the Green and Colorado Rivers, through some 1,400 miles of water in rowboats, through the Grand Canyon and beyond.

It's all here, from the preparations and delays in Green River, WY, to the myriad sights through Flaming Gorge, Lodore Canyon, Hell's Half Mile and numerous other obstacles on the Green River just south of Green River, WY – not to mention the incomparable Cataract Canyon and the forever lost beauty of Glen Canyon on the Colorado River.

In addition to having to portage or line numerous rapids the brothers experienced a potentially dangerous situation on Christmas Eve 1911, when Ellsworth was thrown from his boat in a rapid in Grand Canyon.

Emery attempted to assist his brother and managed to tear a hole in his boat during the recovery effort.

The story is exciting but just one of many in the book that illustrates the incredible skill, bravery, and endurance required for such a journey.

It was not the first time such a feat had been attempted and accomplished. Major Powell had that distinction, but in my opinion, it is the first time such a readable account was written.

Space does not permit a thorough review of this marvelous book. Suffice it to say that Kolb had the unusual ability to write in such a manner as to make the reader think he is sitting with him in his living room listening to the stories over a cup of coffee.

The publishers are to be commended for making this edition available at a reasonable price. It is truly a classic and a must read for anyone remotely interested in a true life adventure story of the American West.

– The author, cofounder of *A Gathering of Writers*, lives in Tulsa

Last Chance To Escape Bush, Cheney Madness

By Sheila Samples

Everybody knows that the dice are loaded.
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed.
Everybody knows the war is over.
Everybody knows the good guys lost.
Everybody knows the fight was fixed.
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich.
That's how it goes. Everybody knows.
- Leonard Cohen

The fate of millions was sealed the moment Dick Cheney selected himself as The Destroyer whose charge to keep for the next eight years would be – as Capitol Hill Blue's Doug Thompson so succinctly described George W. Bush – a “criminally insane, pill-popping dry drunk.”

I don't know about that. I've seen some drunks in my time – even dry ones – and George Bush appears to be more than a little moist.

Bush was the perfect foil for Cheney.

The Scalia-driven 2000 election coup catapulted Bush to the top of the political heap. For the first time in his worthless, impotent, cruelly indifferent life, Bush was suddenly important – the most powerful man on the face of the earth – and all because he had been told to scream, “Jesus! Jesus is my philosopher!” to the swooning masses.

Makes one wonder at the rigid consent of those same “believers” for the ensuing slaughter of so many innocents – when murdering even one in the name of Jesus should have sent a collective shriek reverberating throughout the religious universe. [See Matthew 18:14; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2]

CAN BUSH EVEN FIND TEXAS ON A MAP?

Everybody knows that Bush isn't remotely qualified to be at the helm of the world's superpower. He can neither think nor speak coherently, can recognize little other than Texas on a map, has completely torpedoed every business venture he attempted, and admittedly was a hard-partying sot until he was 40.

Cheney was another matter. He was a household word. He had been a public servant throughout his career. He served as President Gerald Ford's chief of staff, earned six terms in the House of Representatives where he ascended to the position of minority whip and, finally, was the elder Bush's Secretary of Defense.

We trusted Cheney to keep Bush from making rash decisions. Was it not Cheney who, at the conclusion of the 1991 Desert Storm assault, made the assessment that to expand the exercise to include regime change in Iraq was not morally sustainable because of the chaotic bloodletting – the needless toll on our uniformed military?

We were wrong. Had we bothered to check the “other priorities” that allowed Cheney to dodge the draft five times on his rise to power, his chilling congressional voting record, his efforts to enrich the military industrial complex by privatizing defense duties and granting massive contracts to Halliburton, we would have known that Cheney was consumed with lust for power and money.

THE WRONG BABYSITTER

We would have known Cheney had been chomping at the bit for more than a decade to impose a new order wherein the American Empire controls the world and its resources.

Had we checked, we would have known Dick Cheney was the wrong babysitter for a kid who gets his jollies by blowing things up.

In 1991, Cheney was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But the upheaval of the following decade, the 1994 Republican takeover of Congress, and the expanding manipulative power of the corporate media created the axis of corruption necessary for a Cheney reign of terror.

Cheney was ready, as were the militant warmongers of the Project for the New American Century who had been demanding Saddam Hussein's head for years. At least 12 of the 18 co-signers of the January 1998 letter to President Bill Clinton, and another letter four months later to then House Speaker Newt Gingrich, demanding the overthrow of Saddam were given key positions on Cheney's destructive team.

The fix was in. Four days before the 2001 inauguration, PNAC's deputy director, Thomas Donnelly, wrote a memorandum to “Opinion Leaders,” reminding them that “the task of removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power still remains ... Many in the incoming Bush Administration understand this challenge ...”

CHENEY'S TAKEOVER

Four months after the inauguration, the White House issued a press release warning that the threat of terrorist-nations using weapons of mass destruction against the American “homeland” was very real.

To counter this danger, Cheney put himself in charge of the entire government – departments of Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, FEMA, and “other federal agencies,” which would naturally include both FAA and NORAD.

A new department – the Office of National Preparedness – was created so Cheney could protect us from catastrophic harm and deal with “consequence” management.

The next four months were busy ones. With malicious indifference, Cheney set about screwing the American people, destroying 225-year Constitutional protections, passing secret laws to seize unlimited executive power, and locking both



Congress and the public out of the legislative process.

FROM BENNY HINN TO CALIGULA

Bush provided cover by regaling us with hilarious “Benny Hill” bits of linguistic derring-do, strutting from one presidential photo-op to another, falling off couches and bicycles, choking on pretzels, and attacking brush with a chainsaw at his Crawford ranch.

Then it was 9-11. Suddenly Bush was no longer a spoiled, bumbling, schizophrenic little president. In an instant, he was transformed into a loaded codpiece – The Commander in Chief, The Decider of life and death – a modern-day Caligula towering above mankind with lighted depleted uranium firecrackers gripped in both fists.

Cheney could not have picked a more willing accomplice to export death and violence to the four corners of the earth.

With smoke still rising from the ashes of Afghanistan, the drive to topple Saddam, who was demanding Euro for his oil, quickly turned into a crusade. It was Cheney-orchestrated and Cheney-driven.

NEOCON PROPAGANDA MACHINE

Under the deepening shadows of mushroom clouds, administration neoconservatives teamed up with ecstatic corporate media co-conspirators to terrify an already traumatized public. Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith launched a separate intelligence unit, the Office of Special Plans, to create the propaganda needed to invade Iraq.

Since Bush can't be trusted to maintain a single train of thought in one-on-one interviews, he hit the campaign trail with a prepared speech he delivered over and over – is now delivering about Iran – frantically catapulting the propaganda that Saddam was “threatening America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons.”

Bush convinced a majority of Americans that the Iraqi dictator was allied with al-Qaeda and provided a “safe haven” for terrorists, and if we didn't wipe him out, he would “strike us again without leaving any fingerprints.”

Cheney's fingerprints are all over every aspect of the drive for war.

DARTH BULLIED INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

For a year and a half, Cheney bullied the entire intelligence apparatus, especially the CIA, into making a false case that Saddam was an immediate nuclear threat. He denigrated the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] report that there was no evidence, sneering that the intelligence was faulty, and IAEA Director-General Mohammed El-Baradei had no credibility where Iraq was concerned.

But it was Secretary of State Colin Powell who rolled the loaded dice at the U.N. Security Council on Feb. 8, 2003, in a presentation even he admitted was “bulls---.”

Powell, who is adept at leaving no fingerprints, but whose shadow lingers over decades of slaughtered innocents, carried the water for his masters one last time.

When Powell completed his somber charges that al-Qaeda was in Iraq running “poison camps” full bore, that Saddam was obtaining magnets for uranium enrichment – charges backed up with photos and vials of poison – we were sold.

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COUNSELOR

From Page 10

a better president.

This is essentially a bible for the worship of JFK – which isn't to say it isn't useful, or fascinating at times. It's by a consummate insider, and in many ways it will be of most interest to other insiders looking for an intimate assessment of the Kennedy legacy – at a time when a presidential candidate seems eager to don the Kennedy mantle.

If Sorensen seems occasionally fawning, or nostalgic in a rote sense, it's hard to fault him for it, just as it's hard to fault him for reprinting numerous letters in which he himself is lavishly praised.

One is entirely convinced by *Counselor* that JFK was a great man and a great president. And who better to burnish his legacy and cherish memories of him as a leader than his loyal servant, Ted Sorensen?

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How Cindy McCain Flaunts Her Privilege

By Joe Conason

Double standards are endemic in American journalism. But Cindy McCain, wife of the Republican presidential candidate, displayed poor taste in flaunting her family's special immunity from press scrutiny.

Declaring on NBC's Today that she would "never" release her income tax returns even if she becomes first lady, the Arizona beer heiress showed no concern that she and her husband will have to meet the same tests as other would-be White House occupants – ever.

Unfortunately, Mrs. McCain's arrogance is probably well founded.

While her personal net worth is estimated somewhere north of \$50 million, she can surely rely upon the discretion of right-wing media organizations and commentators, which so far have given her and her husband a free pass on the income tax question.

In contrast to their unrelenting demands for absolutely complete disclosure by Bill and Hillary Clinton over alleged or suspected conflicts of interest, the so-called conservative media have remained mum about Mrs. McCain.

RIGHTWING MEDIA DOUBLE STANDARDS

That silence similarly contrasts with the hell raised four years ago over Teresa Heinz Kerry's reluctance to reveal her tax returns alongside those of her spouse, the Democratic presidential nominee and senator, John Kerry.

Back then The Weekly Standard ran a smirking headline calling her Kerry's "sugar mommy" for a column that salivated over the "lavish lifestyle" and "vacation homes" to which her tax returns would draw attention. The Standard editors didn't even pretend to any substantive concern. They just wanted to play the politics of envy and elitism.

But the National Review's editors cited weightier reasons for curiosity, including the very size of the Heinz Kerry holdings and the use of her money to finance her husband's presidential campaign, "at least in its bleaker moments," as well as the "potential ... for conflicts [or the perception of conflicts] of interest."

So did The Wall Street Journal, in an editorial that said the Kerrys would be "the richest couple ever to live in the White House ... Their assets should be disclosed to the voters so that they can assess whether there are any potential conflicts of interest."

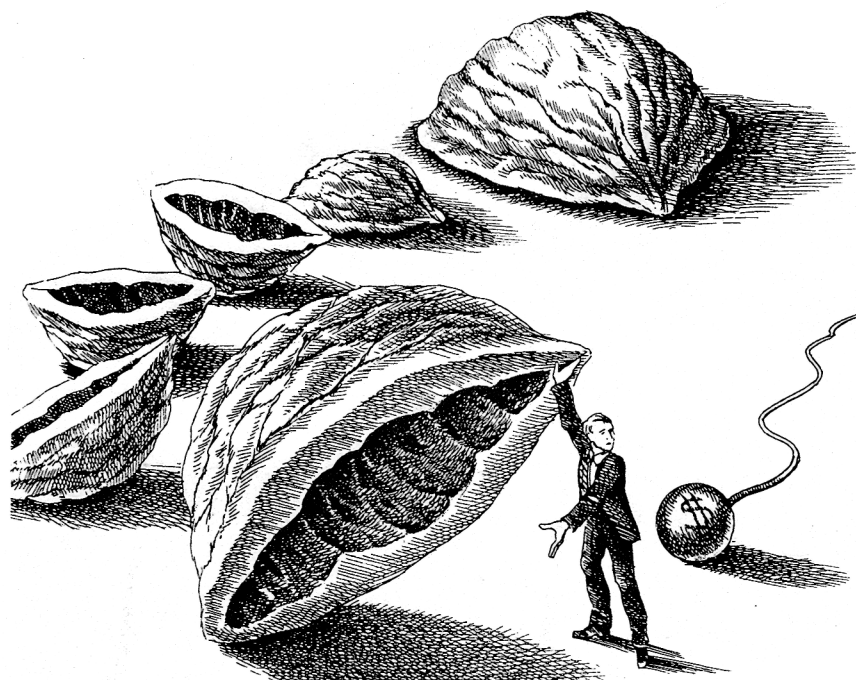
The same editorial noted that since Sen. Kerry was proposing to raise taxes on higher income brackets, "most people would probably like to know whether the Kerry household uses tax-avoidance techniques to avoid paying its 'fair share.'"

OUTRAGE OVER KERRY

These partisan sleuths could scarcely contain their outrage when Mrs. Kerry, who had inherited the ketchup fortune of her late husband, John Heinz, cited the privacy of her children as an excuse to resist disclosure.

"Privacy? Oh, come off it," scoffed the Review. "How can disclosure of any part of Mrs. Kerry's personal 1040 relate to her children, all of whom are now in their 30s?"

Now comes Mrs. McCain, whose case suspiciously resembles that of Mrs. Ker-



ry.

Although she and her straight-talking husband keep their finances separate for tax purposes, her company plane has been flying him and his entourage of lobbyists around the country at bargain rates, a particular boon during the many months when his campaign was out of cash.

As for conflicts of interest, the patina of reform has long rubbed off of Sen. McCain, whose penchant for using his office to assist donors with federal land swaps and other sweetheart deals should surprise no one paying close attention to his career.

MCCAIN'S TANTALIZING TAX RETURNS

Is there further revealing information to be found in Mrs. McCain's tax returns? Nobody knows except Cindy, but the clues provided in her husband's returns would certainly tantalize those busybodies on the right, if only the McCains were Democrats.

For instance, they appear to have used their charitable foundation, in part, to ensure that their children attended elite schools, by strategically donating very large sums to those institutions.

They also appear likely to have benefited very handsomely from the Bush tax cuts, which Sen. McCain formerly opposed but whose extension he now supports in perpetuity.

Yet Mrs. McCain is getting away with stonewalling on her taxes.

"This is a privacy issue," she said, and nobody has responded with the mockery directed at Mrs. Kerry. [Imagine the gale-force media uproar if the Clintons had refused to release their returns because they claimed to be protecting Chelsea.] Indeed, the deputy editorial page editor of The Journal, who oversaw those august columns when they howled for disclosure from Mrs. Kerry in 2004, dismissed any concern over Mrs. McCain's tax returns as "a fairly marginal issue."

The question that remains is whether other major media outlets will challenge the McCains to meet the same standard of disclosure demanded from Democratic political families. So far the record is not encouraging.

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MADNESS

From Page 11

Because we trusted him.

MORALITY, ETHOS RUNNING ON EMPTY

I don't want to go off on an Aristotelian rant here, but thanks to Cheney and those around him obsessed with world government, this nation appears to be running on empty where morality, or ethos, is concerned.

Values such as compassion, sympathy, prudence, virtue, decency, ethics cannot thrive in a nation controlled by war criminals who force its citizens into submission through fear, violence and propaganda.

How can a society be "just" when natural laws have fallen by the wayside and nobody is held accountable for crimes against God and humanity?

We are under the control of the criminally insane.

Cheney has turned the greatest democratic republic ever conceived into a world corporation and anointed himself its Chief Executive Officer. He has supplanted two centuries of protections afforded by the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights with executive orders and secret laws.

WE LET IT HAPPEN

In their lust for power and riches, Cheney and Bush have managed in just seven grueling, sadistic, morally corrupt years to destroy entire nations, including their own.

And they accomplished this in the only way possible. Because we permitted it. Because we lost our moral compass.

So we stand here in the blood-sodden mess of two lost wars. Millions – millions – have been displaced, destroyed, dishonored in Cheney's quest for oil. Tens of thousands of our own citizens are injured, maimed – 4,077 dead – an entire generation of Americans lost in a depleted uranium wasteland.

"So?" Cheney says. "They were all volunteers."

He admitted that losing sons or daughters could "be a burden" on families, but reminded us sternly that "the biggest burden" is on the President, who has to send even more to their deaths.

We're at the crossroads. We can no longer remain neutral nor mill around in

confused acceptance of the genocidal madness into which we have been swept.

Thomas Jefferson said, "When once a republic is corrupted, there is no possibility of remedying any of the growing evils but by removing the corruption and restoring its lost principles; every other correction is either useless or a new evil."

REMEMBER IRAN-CONTRA?

Everybody knows the folly of the treasonous "corrections" made to counter the Iran-Contra evil in the 1980's and early '90's – the flurry of Presidential Christmas-Eve pardons allowing convicted criminals to recede into the shadows only to return and metastasize throughout the current Cheney/Bush administration.

Cheney, Bush and their co-conspirators throughout the three branches of government must be removed.

Indicted. Convicted. Imprisoned.

Voting records of the 435 members of Congress and 33 Senators up for re-election in 2008 must be vetted, and those who do not reflect the will of the people must go. No exceptions.

The remaining 17 Senators must either stand or fall on their voting records. If those who are guilty of the same breach of trust as their cohorts refuse to budge, they must be impeached and removed from office.

ONLY ONE CHOICE, CHANCE LEFT

They have left us with but one choice, and one last chance to make that choice.

We have reached a point in the "course of human events" where it is not only our "right but our duty" to throw off this destructive government and institute one which remembers it "derives its just powers from the consent of the governed."

The time has come for Americans to blink.

Because the Abyss is staring back at us.

– The author is an Oklahoma writer and former civilian U.S. Army Public Information Officer. She may be contacted rsamples@wichtaonline.net

Consumers, Vets Both Getting The Shaft

By Jim Hightower

At Exxon headquarters in Houston, management refers to the executive suite as "The god pod."

But while the honchos of the world's biggest and richest oil corporation might think of themselves as holy omnipotents, most Americans have more demonic thoughts about them – and they definitely consider today's gas prices ungodly.

So I was not totally surprised to learn recently that a group of church folks have been holding a series of "pray-ins" at gas stations across the country. They gather in front of the pumps, clasp hands and reverently beseech God to deliver us from these high prices.

"God is the only one we can turn to at this point," says pray-in organizer Rocky Twyman. "Our leaders don't seem to be able to do anything about it. The prices keep soaring and soaring."

PRAYER AS GOOD AN OPTION AS ANY

A public interest group called Consumer Watchdog says it sympathizes with the prayerful. "Given the complete inertia and silence of this White House on a crisis that has people feeling just hopeless, prayer is probably as good as anything," one member of the group says.

Actually, Twyman and other pray-in participants are not simply hoping for a miracle.

They believe that God helps those who help themselves, so they're calling for people to do more walking, biking, carpooling and other actions to cut back on gasoline use.

They also hope that praying at the pumps will finally cause politicians of all stripes to take notice of the public's desperation, perhaps even prompting them to do something about the rip-off prices that are squeezing so many working families.

To learn about some concrete steps that Washington could be taking on both price gouging and oil dependency, contact Consumer Watchdog at 310.392.0522 [ext.305] or www.consumerwatchdog.org.

SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS?

Politicians should not be allowed to utter the phrase "Support Our Troops" – unless they actually do.

None have shouted this phrase more insistently than the Bushites, yet they've been caught again and again shortchanging our troops on everything from protective gear to family benefits. Most damning has been the abysmal failure of Bush & Co. to honor war veterans with adequate treatment here at home, and two recent cases show how empty their words really are.

First is the important, bipartisan proposal made by Sen. Jim Webb to establish

Hannity's Insanity Traced To Falwell

By Don Wilkey

Surfing through the channels, my cable at times passes through Fox News. To me Fox News is like Grape Nuts – it ain't grape and it ain't nuts.

I have noted the few times I browsed that there is an ongoing infatuation with Rev. Jeremiah Wright. I doubt you could go 20 minutes without some film clip on Barack Obama's former pastor and his ranting.

Sean Hannity seems stuck on the story and, though I am certainly no fan of Rev. Wright, enough is enough.

What about someone looking into who the spiritual adviser for Hannity is?

Hannity apparently has little formal education and got started in radio by hosting controversial programs that caused him to lose his first radio job.

OBSSESSED WITH GAYS, HIV

Apparently Hannity was claiming excessive links between homosexuals and secret HIV plots that needed to be exposed. He was quoting a book that greatly overstated the issue and construction worker Hannity was asked to cease from promoting his viewpoint.

Not to be discouraged, Hannity went on to promote what he considered "conservative" views and today makes \$5 million a year on his radio programs. These programs, aired locally, make Hannity a famous person.

Fox News got in on the bandwagon and hired the "journalist." His biased position on Democrats fits the program well and it is little shock that Hannity attacks Obama every chance he gets.

I was reflecting on these things and recalled the spiritual adviser Hannity admires and thought it would be interesting for someone to ask Hannity about some of the controversial views his spiritual mentor held.

A WACKY WORLD VIEW

His spiritual guide has a history of being fined by the Federal Election Commission for violations. This pastor said there are almost as many alcoholics as Negroes. He also predicted that the Brown vs. Topeka civil rights ruling was a satanic plot.

Hannity was given an honorary B.A. degree from this spiritual leader's school. Hannity has openly stated that if he is ever kicked out of the Catholic Church he will gladly join the church of this spiritual prophet.

Hannity likes to mention the connection between Wright and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, but he seldom mentions that his spiritual hero worked closely with Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Hannity's friend once published a video associating the Clinton family with various sorts of criminal acts and even hired an actor to pretend to be a reporter



a new GI Bill for veterans of Bush's war.

The original version, signed in 1944 by FDR, was an enormous success, not only moving millions of vets into the middle class, but also democratizing America's college system. Just in financial terms, the investment paid for itself sevenfold.

Webb now wants those who are sacrificing so much in Iraq and Afghanistan to make the same gains.

BUSH'S TRAITOROUS ACTIONS

But guess who says no? Bush, the Pentagon and even John McCain. Why? It would cost too much, say these Washington warmongers, who have already thrown trillions of our tax dollars into the debacle of Iraq.

The second case is the shameful inaction by the top mental health official in Bush's veterans department.

Ira Katz has not only gone along with Bush budgeteers who've been short-changing vets on mental treatment, but he's also tried to cover up the startling suicide rate among veterans who have been victims of this failure.

Katz has now been exposed as the author of an agency e-mail that he titled: "Shh!" The e-mail conceded that there are some 35 suicide attempts each day by veterans – half of them successful.

Katz's message, however, was not to call for more help for our soldiers, but instead to stonewall disclosure of the problem.

Abandoning those you've sent to war is traitorous behavior by the commander in chief.

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in the film.

Wright implied the Jews had something to do with 9/11. Hannity's pastor-friend said it was not the Jews but God allowed this to happen to the nation because the nation believed in separation of church and state.

CRACKPOT THEORY OF Y2K

While Rev. Wright was telling his congregation that the government created the HIV virus to kill off black folks, Hannity's friend was telling people that Bill Clinton was seeking to use the computer glitch at the turning of the century to declare martial law.

Hannity's friend was selling a kit to followers at this time to survive the onslaught.

Hannity likes to remind folks about Wright's visit to Libya, which is an enemy of the nation. He will fail to remind us that his mentor once published magazines with the hit-list deck of cards for liberals, depicting Hillary Clinton as the ace of spades. Hannity's friend apparently viewed Hillary as one of the enemies of the nation.

Speaking of radical connections, Hannity has failed to mention that his leader stacks his school with Bob Jones University professors and at least one open Reconstructionist. Reconstructionists believe in stoning people to death for violating Old Testament codes of conduct.

It appears no one is asking Hannity about his own connection to Liberty University and its recently deceased president, Jerry Falwell.

– The author is pastor of First Baptist Church, Onalaska, TX

Revenge Of The Computer Nerd

I was having trouble with my computer. So I called Eric, the 11-year-old next door, whose bedroom looks like Mission Control, and asked him to come over. Eric clicked a couple of buttons and solved the problem.

As he was walking away, I called after him, "So, what was wrong?" He replied, "It was an ID ten T error." I didn't want to appear stupid, but nonetheless inquired, "An ID ten T error? What's that? In case I need to fix it again."

Eric grinned. "Haven't you ever heard of an ID ten T error before?" "No," I replied. "Write it down," he said, "and I think you'll figure it out."

So I wrote down: I D 1 0 T

I used to like Eric ...

McCain Far Off The Mark On Iraqi's Oil

Editor's Note: John McCain's chronic twisting of the facts and his worship of George W. Bush questions his fitness for the presidency. Here is Part III of our wrap-up of his positions.

McCain Said Iraqi Oil Reserves Would Cover The Cost of War. During an interview with the National Journal, McCain said, "Everybody now is talking of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. I look on it with optimism and hope. As far as the cost is concerned, Iraqis have vast oil reserves and they, I'm sure, would shoulder the cost of the transition." – National Journal, 2.15.03

McCain Expressed Explicit Faith In Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's Strategic Plans For Iraq. "I have no qualms about our strategic plans," McCain told the Hartford Courant, just before the invasion. "I thought we were very successful in Afghanistan." – Hartford Courant, 3.5.03

McCain Told Rumsfeld That Americans Held Him "In The Highest Regard and Esteem." During a Senate hearing on the war in Iraq, McCain told Rumsfeld, "So, what you need to do, in my view, is give, not just this committee, but the American people – who hold you in the highest regard and esteem and have the greatest confidence in the president of the United States and his leadership in this conflict – a concrete plan as much as you can." – Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, 7.9.03; U.S. Department of Defense Speeches, 7.10.03

MCCAIN DEFENDED RUMSFELD

McCain Defended Rumsfeld Amongst Early Criticism. McCain defended Rumsfeld after critics criticized the number of troops deployed. The Associated Press wrote, "Another Republican, Sen. John McCain of Arizona, called the Pentagon's strategy appropriate and noted that Americans still strongly support what clearly turned into a longer war than some expected." – Associated Press, 3.30.03

McCain Said Rumsfeld Did A Fine Job. "In the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal, McCain was asked on Hannity & Colmes whether Rumsfeld could still be effective in his job. "Yes, today I do and I believe he's done a fine job," McCain responded. "He's an honorable man." – Fox News Channel, Hannity & Colmes, 5.12.04

McCain Refused To Call For Rumsfeld's Resignation. In 2004, McCain would not call for Rumsfeld's resignation, saying that the President "can have the team that he wants around him."

HE BACKED KEEPING RUMSFELD

McCain said that he respected Bush's decision to keep Rumsfeld around. McCain said, "I respect the president. The president of the United States was re-elected by a majority of the American people, and I respect his right. And I will work with the president obviously and with the secretary of defense." – MSNBC.com, 12.15.04; CNN.com, 12.5.04

McCain Said "I'm Confident We're On the Right Course." During an interview on ABC News' This Week, McCain was asked if we were on the right course in Iraq. McCain responded, "I'm confident we're on the right course. I'm confident that this is a very difficult and imperfect process, bringing democracy to countries that have never known democracy, fraught with secular differences as well as ethnic differences. It's very, very difficult.

"But I am confident that an imperfect democracy is what we'll get out of Iraq will be vastly superior to what the people of Iraq had prior to this." – ABC News, This Week, 3.07.04

HE REFUSED CALL FOR RESIGNATION

In 2006, McCain Refused To Join Calls For Rumsfeld's Resignation, Said He Would Work With Rumsfeld. McCain said, "But the president has the right and earned the right as the president of the United States to appoint his team," and he had confidence in Rumsfeld.

"I will continue to work with Secretary Rumsfeld as much as I can as long as he is secretary of defense. We have to, because we need to win this war." – East Valley Tribune, 4.15.2006

McCain Focused On The "Bright Side" Of The Iraq War; Said "We're On The Right Track." In 2006, McCain played down the increasing civil violence in Iraq. When host Don Imus remarked that Iraq "already looks like a civil war," McCain responded, "I keep trying to look at the bright side of this because we have to because the consequences of failure are catastrophic." McCain added, "I think, at least we're on the right track here." – MSNBC, 3.1.06; ABC News, 2.26.06

HE DENIED THERE WAS A CIVIL WAR

McCain Denied That There Was A Civil War In Iraq Despite Increasing Sectarian Violence. After returning from Iraq, McCain was asked if he saw "evidence of civil war," to which he responded, "No."

According to a report by the New York Times, published just a few days before, "In the last month, hundreds of men have been kidnapped, tortured and executed in Baghdad. As Iraqi and American leaders struggle to avert a civil war, the bodies keep piling up." – White House Press Conference, 3.28.06; New York Times, 3.26.06

McCain Claimed He Could Safely Walk Around Certain Baghdad Neighborhoods. Newsweek reported, "McCain's latest problem began before he left for the region, when he told Bill Bennett on the radio that "there are neighborhoods in Baghdad where you and I could walk today."

After Michael Ware of CNN's Baghdad bureau accused the senator of living in "Neverland," McCain charged that it's reporters who are living in a "time warp of three months ago." – Newsweek, 4.16.07

HE MISREPRESENTED SECURITY

McCain Misrepresented Security On The Ground In Iraq. In 2007, McCain claimed there were neighborhoods safe enough for him to walk through in Bagh-



dad, but then toured a Baghdad market wearing a bulletproof vest while accompanied by "100 American soldiers, with three Blackhawk helicopters, and two Apache gunships overhead." – NBC Nightly News, 4.1.2007

McCain Said The Troop Surge In Iraq Was Working. Appearing on Fox News Channel, McCain said, "Today is the day that the president of the United States announced the change in strategy, the so-called surge. I supported that, I argued for it. I'm the only one on this stage that did. I condemned the Rumsfeld strategy before that I'm telling you, it's succeeding." – Fox News, 1.10.08

PETRAEUS CONTRADICTS BUSH, MCCAIN

Petraeus: "No One Feels There Has Been Sufficient Progress" Politically. Gen. David Petraeus said, "No one feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation." The Washington Post reported, "Iraqi leaders have failed to take advantage of a reduction in violence to make adequate progress toward resolving their political differences, Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said." – Washington Post, 3.14.08

McCain Said The Troop Escalation In Iraq "Has Been Effective," There Is "Significant Political Progress" And "Real Results" In Iraq. When asked in October 2007 by an undecided voter if he would "follow President Bush's path and stay in the war, or reduce the number of U.S. troops" in Iraq, McCain answered by stating "that he believes the troop escalation over the past year has been effective."

WHERE WAS THE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS?

In August 2007, Sen. McCain said, "There is significant political progress at the local areas and on the ground" and that "the success will then breed political, economic, and social progress, in my view." In October 2007, on the Senate floor, McCain said, "It is inconceivable that we ... would end this strategy just as it is beginning to show real results." – Associated Press, 10.22.07; ABC News, This Week, 9.19.07; Washington Post, 9.22.07

Even Petraeus Says Iraq Lawmakers Have Not Made Progress Toward Political Reconciliation. Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, who is preparing to testify to Congress next month on the Iraq war, said in an interview that "no one" in the U.S. and Iraqi governments "feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation," or in the provision of basic public services.

In direct contrast, McCain recently said there IS political progress. Speaking at a town hall in Texas the Republican presidential nominee and supporter of the Bush troop surge said, "... In fact we are succeeding in Iraq ... we are succeeding militarily and we are succeeding, uh, politically." – Town Hall in Houston, 2.28.08; Washington Post 3.14.08

CONDITIONS UTTERLY TRANSFORMED?

McCain Said Conditions In Iraq Have Been "Utterly Transformed" As A Consequence Of Surge. In an opinion editorial he co-wrote with Joe Lieberman for the Wall Street Journal, McCain and Lieberman said, "... Conditions in [Iraq] have been utterly transformed from those of a year ago, as a consequence of the surge."

They continued, "Whereas, a year ago, al-Qaeda in Iraq was entrenched in Anbar province and Baghdad, now the forces of Islamist extremism are facing their single greatest and most humiliating defeat since the loss of Afghanistan in 2001.

"Thanks to the surge, the Sunni Arabs who once constituted the insurgency's core of support in Iraq have been empowered to rise up against the suicide bombers and fanatics in their midst – prompting Osama bin Laden to call them 'traitors.'" – Wall Street Journal, 1.10.08

HE FAVORS STAYING THERE FOREVER

McCain: "I Don't Think Americans Are Concerned If We're There For 100 Years Or 1,000 Years Or 10,000 Years." In an interview on Face the Nation, host Bob Schieffer asked McCain about staying in Iraq for 100 years.

McCain responded, "We've got to get Americans off the front line, have the Iraqis as part of the strategy, take over more and more of the responsibilities. And then I don't think Americans are concerned if we're there for 100 years or 1,000 years or 10,000 years.

"What they care about is a sacrifice of our most precious treasure, and that's American blood. So what I'm saying is look, if Americans are there in a support role, but they're not taking casualties, that's fine. We're in Kuwait now.

"As you well recall, we had a war, we stayed in Kuwait. We didn't stay in Saudi Arabia. So it's going to be up to the relationship between the Iraqi government and the United States of America." – CBS, Face the Nation, 1.06.08

TO BE CONTINUED

Look-Alike Lawyers Don't Make Grade

By Adam Liptak

Some law students at Stanford have started assigning letter grades to their prospective employers, which pretty much tells you who holds the power in the market for new associates.

It's not easy to persuade new lawyers from the top schools to accept starting salaries of only \$160,000.

The students are handing out "diversity report cards" to the big law firms, ranking them by how many female, minority and gay lawyers they have.

"Many of the firms have atrocious, appalling records on diversity," said Michele Landis Dauber, a law professor at Stanford and the adviser for the project, called Building a Better Legal Profession. The rankings are at www.betterlegalprofession.org.

In New York, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton got the top grade, an A-minus. At Cleary, the project says, 48.8% of the associates are women, 8.7% are black, 8.3% are Hispanic and 4.5% are openly gay.

Herrick, Feinstein, by contrast, got an F. Its numbers: 37.7% women, 4.9% black, 1.6% Hispanics, and no openly gay people.

WASHINGTON FIRMS RATED

In Washington, no firm got an A. But seven scored in the D range, including Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher; Kelley Drye Collier Shannon; Baker Botts; and Mayer Brown.

The numbers were provided to a central clearinghouse by the firms themselves.

"Our process is simple," the student group said in explaining its methodology. "Cut, paste and rank."

Firms in the top fifth received A's, in the second fifth B's, and so on. Overall grades were arrived at by averaging grades for partners and associates in five categories: Women, blacks, Hispanics, Asians and gay people.

The firms with low rankings did not dispute the basic numbers, with one exception. Herrick Feinstein said it reported that it had no openly gay lawyers "because, at the time of the filing, we did not ask for that information."

THE FIRM SAYS IT HAS OPENLY GAY ATTORNEYS

There are, the firm said in a statement, openly gay lawyers working there, "including one on the diversity committee."

The students have ambitious plans, including asking elite schools to restrict recruiting by firms at the bottom of their rankings.

They also plan to send the rankings to the general counsels of the Fortune 500 companies with the suggestion that they be used in selecting lawyers.

"Firms that want the best students will be forced to respond to the market pressures that we're creating," said Andrew Bruck, a law student at Stanford and a leader of the project.

Roger Clegg, the president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a research group that supports colorblind policies, said the whole thing was pernicious.

"Diversity is all too frequently a code word," he said, "for preferential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity or sex, or lower standards, or being opposed to assimilation."

MAY BE IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW

Vikram Amar, a professor at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, added that law firms might well be violating employment discrimination laws in the process of trying to improve their rankings.

Corrupt 'Military Analysts' Dominate TV News

By Gareth Porter

Investigative reporter David Barstow exposed television's "military analysts" on the Iraq War as sock puppets of the Pentagon in a documented story in the New York Times.

While consciously peddling the Bush Administration's talking points on Iraq they were hiding their own vested economic interest in selling the public on the Bush Administration's happy talk about the war.

This very long and well-documented story lays bare the most blatantly obnoxious feature of the "Military-Industrial-Media Complex" which ensures that the airwaves convey the administration's major messages on the war day in a day out.

For starters, the networks should be forced to fire every "military analyst" who has been recruited and accepted all-expenses-paid trips to Iraq, uncritically mouthed the administration talking points while concealing their special relationship or maintained vested financial interests in Pentagon contracts through business relationships with contractors.

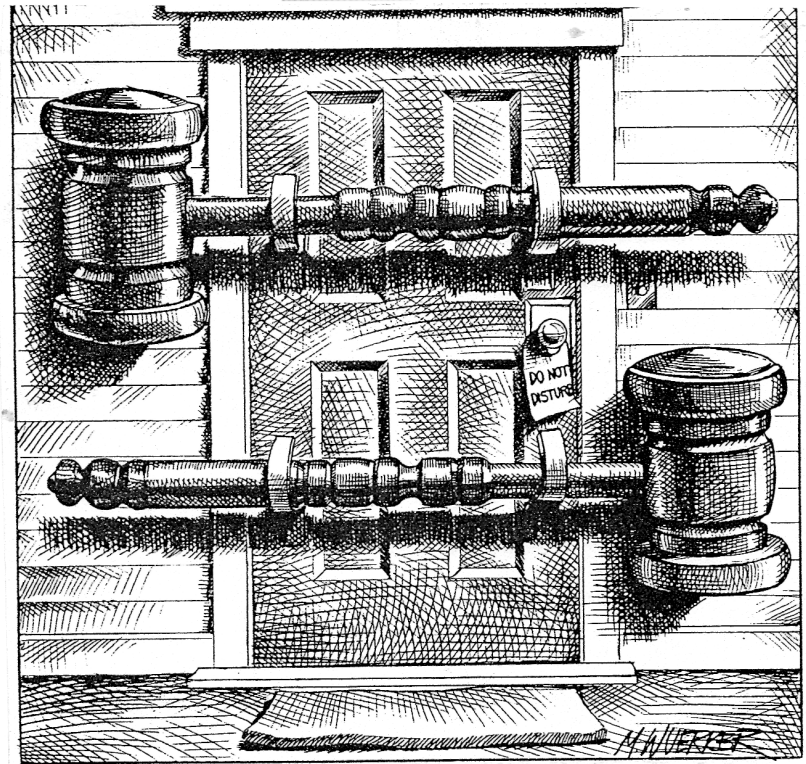
RUMSFELD'S TROJAN HORSES

Based on 8,000 pages of e-mail messages, transcripts and records, Barstow recounts a successful effort by Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon to use retired military officers to create a "media Trojan horse" on the Iraq War.

The "military analysts" routinely violated basic ethical standards of journalism by accepting trips completely arranged and paid for the administration.

They were consciously participating in its strategy to manipulate public opinion by regurgitating the pro-war arguments they were given in top-level official briefings - which they had to promise to keep secret.

But even worse, Barstow shows how they had a personal financial stake in



"As bad as their numbers are," Professor Amar said of the firms, "the relevant applicant pool of law students with top grades is more white and Asian still."

Whatever their consequences, the numbers the students have collected offer a fascinating snapshot of the profession.

In New York, a third of the big firms had no black partners, and an overlapping third no Hispanic ones. Half the firms in Boston had no black partners, and three-quarters no Hispanic ones.

"This is 2007," Professor Dauber said. "If you can't find a single black or Hispanic partner, that's not an accident."

The students also found relatively few female partners in New York, ranging from 7% at Fulbright & Jaworski to 23% at Morrison & Foerster. Those numbers are "a bit of a canary in the coal mine," said Deborah L. Rhode, another Stanford law professor.

"The absence of women as partners often says something about how firms deal with work-family issues."

MOST FIRMS WERE WILLING TO RESPOND

I asked the firms with particularly poor rankings for comments, and most of them responded, generally with quite similar statements. The issues are serious and difficult ones, they said, but they are working hard to make progress.

Some questioned the grading system. Paul C. Rosenthal, a partner at Kelley Drye, called it "totally ridiculous," for instance, because the firm's Washington office received an A for the number of black associates and yet a D overall.

Others pointed to offices at their firms with better numbers, to particular partners of color, to expanded recruiting efforts and to "affinity groups" and "diversity coordinators" and a "diversity protocol." None questioned the essential premise of the report, which is that numbers matter.

The report cards seem to be having an impact. Bruck said a second-year student at Stanford had recently turned down an offer from one firm "as soon as he saw that it got an F on our diversity report card." Professor Dauber said the student, who is white and male, "is the poster boy for our effort."

But the student did not get into Stanford by being stupid enough to pick a fight with a prominent law firm at the start of his career. He would not discuss the matter.

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parroting the administration's war propaganda. He reports that several dozen military analysts who appear constantly on Fox, CNN and other networks and invariably support the administration's line "represent more than 150 military contractors either as lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants."

In the most egregious cases, such as retired Air Force General Thomas G. McInerney of Fox News, "analysts" operated just like employees of the Pentagon.

McInerney assured the Pentagon in an e-mail in late 2006 that he would use in his on-air appearances the latest talking points that he had just been given.

It's How You Play The Game

A young boy enters a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer, "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it to you."

The barber puts a dollar bill in one hand and two quarters in the other, then calls the boy over and asks, "Which do you want, son?"

The boy takes the quarters and leaves.

"What did I tell you?" said the barber. "That kid never learns!"

Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of the ice cream store. "Hey, son! May I ask you a question? Why did you take the quarters instead of the dollar bill?"

The boy licked his cone and replied, "Because the day I take the dollar, the game's over!"

U.S. 'Borders' On Insanity

Want To Stimulate Economy? Try This

By Jim Hightower

I'm totally excited that our tax rebate checks are coming! Washington has turned into Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy, all rolled into one, now delivering \$300 to \$600 checks to nearly every one of us.

The idea is that we'll all rush out and buy, buy, buy – thus stimulating the economy, creating jobs and causing bluebirds of happiness to trill with delight. Wal-Mart is ready for you, offering to cash your government checks for free and tempting you with special price promotions. Indeed, every big retailer is running shopper specials in May.

But, wait, most of the stuff sold in those stores isn't made in America. So those sounds of economic stimulation we're hearing – from factory machinery to bluebirds – are coming from China, Singapore and other low-wage nations where U.S. corporations have moved production.

Spending at the Wal-Marts won't create new production or new jobs in your town or mine.

HIGHTOWER'S SPENDING BLUEPRINT

That's why I have a different plan for my \$600 check. I'm setting \$400 of it aside to spend at farmers markets, artisan shops and hometown businesses that sell goods produced locally, or at least produced in America.

This way, our tax dollars can circulate here at home, genuinely benefiting our grassroots economy.

Then, I'm going to donate the other \$200 to public interest groups or progressive candidates who are pushing for real economic reform, not made-in-China consumerism.

In particular, my small donations will support those working for a massive public investment in repairing and extending America's deteriorating infrastructure – including water systems, bridges, schools, parks, public transportation and a state-of-the-art Internet system.

Instead of a shopping stimulus, we should be employing millions of Americans at good wages to do the good grassroots work that needs to be done.

GAPS IN THE FENCE

If good fences make good neighbors, what about bad fences?

You could ask local officials and residents along the U.S.-Mexican border about that. They hate the monstrous wall that Bush and the Congress have decreed be erected to separate our countries.

Not only is the wall a repugnant blemish on their landscape, severing the everyday cross-border flow of life, but the darned thing doesn't work. The claim of



the fence-builders is that it will keep workers from the south from crossing into the United States illegally.

Local folks know, however, that that's a bad joke.

ONE-THIRD OF BORDER COVERED

First of all, Washington's wall covers only 700 of our 2,000-mile border, and long experience shows many migrants will simply flow through the gaps. Others are already making gaps of their own. On one completed stretch of the fence near Columbus, NM, human ingenuity is winning out over bullheaded barricade builders.

Border agents report that they started seeing cuts in the towering wall "almost immediately" after it was constructed. From simple hacksaws to plasma torches that can slice quickly through steel, immigrants have found their way through. Others have used ladders, trucks and other devices to scale the wall, while a least one group has bungee jumped into the country!

Also, the fence itself is creating convenient gaps, for the heavy structure is settling into the unstable ground. As it settles, the parts split – so much so that agents say determined migrants can wedge themselves through.

Meanwhile, this multibillion-dollar monument to political stupidity does nothing to deter the 40% of immigrants who make a legal visit to the United States for business, vacation or other purposes, then don't go home.

Walling off Mexico might make some politicians feel good, but it's not going to stop human ingenuity and determination.

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Dynasties Transform America Into Plutocracy

By Hiram K. Myers

The April 25 issue of the Observer, relying on a study conducted by the Boston College Social Research Institute, quoted that the value of wealth to be transferred by inheritance or gift over the next four and a half decades is estimated to be in excess of \$40 trillion.

Whether these transfers become a boon or a blight on our social, economic and political systems will depend on how our federal government taxes the transfers.

Boston College professors Havens and Schervish frankly conceded that their \$40 trillion estimate was purposely conservative.

Therefore, we may fairly assume that at least \$10 trillion in wealth will be passed to succeeding generations in each of the decades between 2008 and 2052.

KEYS TO SERIOUS NATIONAL DEBATE

A national discussion of the consequences of these transfers should include the following factors:

1. When President Ronald Reagan took office, the national debt was approximately \$750 billion. At the conclusion of Reagan's second term, the debt had nearly tripled to over \$2 trillion.

George W. Bush, touted as a Reagan fiscal conservative, will leave his successor a whopping \$10 trillion national debt.

2. The tax cuts for the rich during both the Reagan and Bush administrations materially increased the wealth of those who will pass the \$40 trillion to their heirs.

Nothing could be more fair than taxing the transfers of those mega estates and applying the proceeds to pay off the debt incurred to create them.

3. Although the privileged class bemoan "death taxes" as a cover for obscene accumulations of dynastic wealth, at present there are no significant taxes imposed on transfers at death nor on inter-vivos gifts [between living people].

Armed with trusts and dozens of legislative exemptions and loop-holes, lawyers and accountants who work for the super-rich are able to accommodate the transfer of wealth from one generation to the next virtually intact.

ONLY RICHEST 2% IMPACTED

4. If a significant federal transfer tax was imposed on estates in excess of \$2 million dollars, 2% of the population would be impacted. The 2%, which constitute the propertied class of the population, own in excess of 40% of everything.

5. Inter-generational transfers of wealth are contrary to the democratic theories of fair play and the free enterprise work ethic. A basic and much promoted tenet of capitalism demands that all members of society support themselves without depending on the largess of others. Work, innovation and invention are held to be the basis for the amount of reward derived in a free market environment.

"Workfare" is a popular expression employed by the propertied class when lobbying for reduction or elimination of the social safety net of the poor and for increases in tax benefits for the wealthiest of the propertied class. The principle of "workfare" is not, but should be, applied to those who inherit large estates.

6. Transfers of wealth sufficient to allow a recipient to do nothing deprives him or her of the motivation to contribute to the society from which he has derived benefits.

Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie maintained that passing huge amounts of wealth to one's heirs robs them of the incentive to work and create. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Marshall are but three of the founders of the republic who believed that excessive accumulations of wealth should be returned to the national treasury.

Contemporaries who embrace the same basic beliefs are Bill Gates and his father, and Warren Buffet.

LEVEL ECONOMIC PLAYING FIELD

7. There can never be a level economic playing field when, by accident of birth, a few players start with every advantage and most players start with nothing. During the last decade, the Bush tax cuts, soaring stock prices and increases in ownership by the upper class of oil equities has concentrated unimaginable riches on the upper 2% while the working class has lost real wages and purchasing power.

8. Wealth transferred is power transferred. Examples of the abuse of inherited wealth abound. Bribery, in the guise of donations, motivates legislators to pass state and federal laws that protect and enhance the size of inherited fortunes.

Consider that much legislative bribery, dirty trick politics, unethical lobbying, and numerous other mischievousness are funded by second and third generational inherited wealth holders. An example of the abuse of inherited wealth is the mischief created by America's richest family, the Walton heirs. They devote large amounts of their father's largess to preventing their employees [many of

See WEALTHY Page 19

Long-Term Consequences

Parents Going To War Hurts Children

By Alison Williams

Child abuse and neglect, overwhelmingly by female spouses left at home, increase when one parent goes to war.

The stress of having an Army spouse in a combat zone leads to a 60% increase in the rate of moderate to severe maltreatment of children by the spouse left behind, researchers said.

The researchers found that the increased abuse and neglect was overwhelmingly committed by female spouses. They found no significant increase by male spouses left behind, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The maltreatment could have long-term consequences because abused children are more likely to suffer from depression and other health problems well into adulthood, the North Carolina researchers said.

CHIEF CAUSE IS PARENTAL STRESS

Parental stress is one of the most common causes of such maltreatment, which includes neglect and physical, emotional and sexual abuse, the team said, adding that deployment of a spouse to a combat zone is likely to increase stress substantially.

In a statement, the Army said it already had begun to bolster its family support services through increased funding and personnel.

The Army Medical Command also has called for more aggressive screening of spouses for signs of depression, the statement said.

Lead author Deborah Gibbs, a health analyst at RTI International in Research Triangle Park, NC, said the researchers had been working with the Army for several years to look at "child maltreatment in the context of other family problems."

THE AFTERMATH OF SEPT. 11 ATTACKS

A study just released, of which Gibbs was a coauthor, found that the rate of child maltreatment among military families in Texas increased sharply following deployments after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Gibbs said the new study, which was funded by the Army, expanded on that work by providing more information on the different kinds of abuse and the characteristics of the families involved.

In active-duty Army families in which the soldier was deployed to combat at least once between September 2001 and December 2004, there were 1,985 recorded incidents of child maltreatment. After excluding unmarried parents, of-



ficers and two-soldier families, 1,771 incidents were analyzed.

FEMALE CIVILIAN SPOUSES CITED

During deployment the rate of maltreatment by female civilian spouses was three times higher than when their Army spouse was home.

The most common form of mistreatment was neglect, which the researchers defined as failure to provide adequate care, supervision and, in some cases, abandonment.

The rate of neglect by female spouses was four times higher during their spouse's deployment. The rate of physical abuse by female spouses doubled during those times.

Overall, the rate of maltreatment – mild, moderate and severe – for males and females increased 40% when one spouse was deployed.

The only areas that decreased were the rates for emotional and physical abuse.

That decline was largely because of the deployment of male soldiers, who were responsible for most of the abuse when they were home.

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Iraq War Inspires Ten New Commandments

By Gary Kamiya

In honor of the passing of Charlton Heston, here are 10 lessons we should engrave on our foreign policy tablets as we prepare to leave Iraq.

COMMANDMENT I Thou shalt not launch preventive wars.

... It is immoral and illegal to attack a state that has not attacked you.

COMMANDMENT II Do not exaggerate the threat posed by terrorism.

... Bush's excessive response to al-Qaeda's successful terrorist strike only increased the danger of terrorism.

COMMANDMENT III Dry up the terrorist swamp.

... The only effective way to reduce the threat of terrorism is to work to end the conditions that give rise to it. In the case of Islamist terrorism, this means a comprehensive and enlightened political, economic and diplomatic strategy for dealing with the Arab/Muslim world. Only a tiny minority of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims support radical jihadis, but catastrophic errors like invading Iraq make violent fundamentalism more attractive. Follow the physician's credo: First, do no harm.

COMMANDMENT IV Recognize that not all terrorists are the same.

... By treating them all as if they were the same enemy, we create unnecessary enemies.

COMMANDMENT V Reject the idea of "a clash of civilizations."

... Attempting to violently implant democracy or Western values in traditional Middle Eastern societies is like having a plumber do a heart transplant.

COMMANDMENT VI Do not allow neoconservatives anywhere near Middle East policy.

... Neoconservative ideology, the pea-size brain that drove the Bush Administration Stegosaurus, is a weird amalgam of Wilsonian idealism, historical ignorance, American triumphalism and an Israeli-centric worldview. In practice, what these ideas amounted to was "America must hit the Arabs in the face to teach them a lesson." This was not a good idea.

Special Bill Kristol Sub-Commandment VI Stop giving these buffoons prestigious jobs on newspaper-of-record Op-Ed pages, top magazines and television shows. They have been completely and consistently wrong about everything. Must we continue to be subjected to their pontifications?

COMMANDMENT VII Talk to Iran.

... Iran is inescapable – it's at the center of everything in the Middle East. And thanks to our invasion of Iraq, its bitterest enemy, Iran is now in a much stronger strategic position. Bush is again making threatening noises, but attacking Iran would be insane. Pursuing a diplomatic détente is essential.

COMMANDMENT VIII Make resolving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis our top foreign-policy priority.

... The next president needs to go in, mentally bust heads on both sides and broker the deal everyone knows is needed: A land-for-peace deal along the lines of the 2002 Saudi Peace Plan or the Geneva Initiative.

COMMANDMENT IX Get the media to grow a spine.

... The media, which should have acted as the brains of the outfit, abandoned their post and joined in the orgy of uncritical flag-waving. In a contemporary democracy, such a failure has catastrophic consequences. It cannot happen again.

COMMANDMENT X Grow up and join the world.

... More than anything else, it was arrogance that led us into this mess. The U.S. National Security strategy, released on Sept. 17, 2002, summed up the Bush Administration's hegemonic worldview, insisting that the United States must maintain military supremacy and had the right to attack anyone we wanted.

This is the exceptionalist attitude that led Vice President Dick Cheney to cavalierly say, "It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence. It's about our response." This chest-beating, uber-patriotic approach, befitting an angry teenager more than a mature adult, has utterly failed.

A little more humility and diplomacy, and a lot less stupid self-righteousness, would go a long way to restoring America's sadly tarnished standing in the world community.

Nunsense

Sitting behind a couple of nuns at a hockey game [whose habits partially blocked their view], three men decided to badger the nuns in an effort to get them to move.

In a very loud voice, the first guy said, "I think I'm going to move to Utah. There are only 100 nuns living there."

The second guy spoke up and said, "I want to go to Montana. There are only 50 nuns living there."

The third guy said, "I want to go to Idaho. There are only 25 nuns living there."

One of the nuns turned around, looked at the men, and in a very sweet, calm voice said, "Why don't you go to hell. There aren't any nuns there."

Homeschoolers

Science Not Learned? No Diploma Earned

By Steve Shives

There are many, many things I find dubious about the practice of parents homeschooling their children. I wonder how a mother or father who has not been educated as a teacher, who in many cases has not even been to college her/himself, can possibly provide their child with as good an education as students receive in our much-maligned public schools.

I can't help but think that these homeschool students, of whom there are several million in the United States, are being robbed of a crucial formative experience by not attending school with other people their age and being forced to interact with a diverse group of peers.

Most disturbing is the virulent strain of religious fundamentalism that is found in the lessons being taught homeschooled children, especially in the United States.

MOST ARE FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS

Not all American homeschooling is religious – that's not what I'm saying. I've known people personally who were homeschooled from a secular curriculum, and there are many others like them throughout the country.

I think I'm safe in saying, however, that the majority of homeschooling in the U.S. is religious – specifically, fundamentalist Christian – in nature. This is no big secret.

The area of study most affected by the Christian bent of homeschooling is science. The religion of the guy who wrote the textbook might not matter a whole lot when you're studying geometry or reading Romeo and Juliet, but it comes into play in a big way when you hit high school-level biology.

IT SHOULD NEVER BE TAUGHT AS SCIENCE

Whatever its proponents choose to call it, regardless of the intellectual contortions it performs to make the Biblical creation account plausible, it isn't science and it should never be taught as such.

But it is taught as science to millions of children and teenagers all over the country. Worse yet, many overtly religious homeschool organizations are empowered by their state governments to grant high school diplomas to students who have completed the required courses, with more attention paid to the title of a given course rather than the content.

How can the education of a student instructed in creationism possibly be considered equivalent to that of one taught legitimate science?

CHECK THEIR CURRICULUM

One such diploma-granting homeschool organization is the Mason Dixon Homeschoolers Association [MDHSA], in Waynesboro, PA, not far from where I live.

The MDHSA is an overtly fundamentalist Christian organization that uses the creationist Apologia Biology curriculum in its science courses.

Its website contains a "Statement of Purpose" and excerpts from its bylaws, with which all members must agree if they wish to have full voting and office-holding privileges within the group. Among the bylaws excerpted on the website:

The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God and constitutes completed and final revelation. The Bible, in its original autograph, is without error in whole and in part, including theological concepts as well as geographical and historical details.

God has existed from all eternity in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is God come in human flesh, being

When Teachers Are The Dropouts

By Paul Cummins

Why is there such an enormous dropout rate in the teaching profession? We read of students dropping out [more than 50% in the Los Angeles Unified School District] and we read of the host of theories attempting to explain the problem.

Why do so many teachers leave the field within three years of joining it? [Fifty percent of new teachers leave within five years.]

The most common explanation is that the pay is too low and they are forced to seek higher paying jobs in order to raise a family, secure housing, etc.

Certainly this is true for some, perhaps for a high percentage. But there are three other main reasons: heartbreak, frustration and depression.

YOUNG TEACHERS ON THE ISSUES

I talk to young teachers frequently – some who come to me for advice, some seeking a better teaching opportunity, some wanting to be re-inspired or talked out of leaving the field, and some just to gain an empathetic ear.

What are their common concerns, complaints and issues? Mostly they have to do with external forces which prevent them from doing what they were hired to do and what deep down they wish to do: To teach, to educate and maybe even inspire their students.

Most teachers do not enter the field for money and certainly not for a comfortable, secure work environment. No, they become teachers out of a dream of making a difference, of communicating their passion for their subject matter to emerging young minds and spirits.

TEACHERS ARE IDEALISTS

At the most fundamental level, teachers are idealists who dream of improving
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fully God and fully man except without sin.

Knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Bible is essential to proper spiritual, mental, social, and physical growth.

Moral standards and a value system consistent with the Bible best prepare a student for fulfilling his responsibilities as a citizen of our nation.

BIBLICAL LITERALIST PUTS IT MILDLY

Also on the website, as a downloadable pdf file, is a list of course descriptions for MDHSA's Assisted Learning Program Service, which provides lesson plans for high school-level homeschool students.

Other materials offered by Apologia include the book *Unlocking the Mysteries of Creation: The Explorer's Guide to the Awesome Works of God*, and the DVD *Icons of Evolution*, described as "a hard-hitting examination of the major errors and omissions in evolutionary theory that are presented as 'facts in today's high school and college textbooks.'"

There is also an ALPS course entitled *Physical Science*, again using an Apologia textbook, whose course description promises to "especially concentrate on the myths generated by the hysterical environmentalist movement."

The description of the *Physical Science* course also claims "it is an excellent course for preparing the student to take a college prep high school science curriculum."

NO INFRINGEMENT ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Parents who homeschool their children in this way might respond by invoking their constitutionally guaranteed religious liberties. I'm not suggesting their right to worship be infringed upon in the slightest.

Freedom of religion is an elementary human right, as much as freedom of speech or the right to due process of law, and it must always be protected.

I'm not nuts about homeschooling, be it religious or secular, but as long as it's legal, I say parents should be allowed to teach their children whatever they see fit to teach them.

To give this a bit more proportion, imagine that you have a student attending

See SCIENCE Page 19

society. Gradually, however, and sometimes rapidly, they are confronted with a host of problems few citizens truly understand.

In fact, you cannot fully appreciate what many teachers confront until you visit their classrooms, their schools, walk the halls, listen to their "combat" stories, and see them in action in conditions that are often mind-boggling.

Watch them trying to teach undernourished, frightened, angry, depressed, sometimes semi-literate, often several-grades-behind young people – students afraid to go to the restroom.

JUST TRYING TO GET HOME AFTER SCHOOL

There are students who are not given books to take home [not enough books] and who must journey home through unsafe, gang-dominated neighborhoods, only to arrive at overcrowded apartments.

Teachers trying to teach ninth-grade biology [as a young teacher recently told me] to students whose reading skills ranged from pre-primer to fourth grade.

Teachers trying to teach courses where continuity is crucial to students who show up intermittently and whose excuses for their absences include the murder of a family member, pregnancy, arrests, beatings and hospitalizations, having to get a job, depression, STDs, drug overdoses and the like.

It takes, in many cases, real courage just to keep battling these odds day after day, and, of course, after a while, frustration leads to depression and heartbreak.

You, the teacher, begin to feel impotent, hopeless and helpless. So, finally, in despair, you leave the field.

Vet Can't Get Any Help For Physical

By H.H. Hyde

I am a 75-year-old married, retired member of over 25 years of military service. Throughout my military career I was told that if I served honorably and retired from that service, I, and eligible members of my family, would be given lifetime medical care. This was a recruiting and reenlistment enticement tool.

After I retired in 1970, the U.S. Congress determined that the government had not made those promises, and I had to buy a supplemental health care policy for myself, my wife and four children.

I was supposed to be eligible for treatment at military hospitals and Veterans Administration hospitals since I was medically retired.

When we became eligible, my wife and I enrolled in Part A Medicare and purchased a Medicare supplemental policy through the Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. I am eligible for the government sponsored TriCare for Life program for retired personnel and their dependents.

SEVERE BACK AND LEG INJURIES

I am a lifetime smoker and a renal cancer [1974] survivor with severe back and leg injuries caused by my military service.

On my 74th birthday we decided that since I had not seen a doctor in over 10 years that I should have a complete physical examination.

I contacted the Denver Veterans Administration Regional Hospital and was told they no longer give routine physicals because they are understaffed because of a flood of newly injured veterans seeking care.



Hospitals at the United States Air Force Academy and Fort Carson are understaffed since many of their medical staff are in the overseas war zones and they no longer give routine appointments.

I contacted a local physician and was told that she could not give me an appointment since Medicare does not pay for routine physicals.

Since Medicare will not pay for routine physicals, my secondary provider [Physicians Mutual Insurance Co.] will not pay; nor will the military TriCare for Life program.

Our Medical Insurance expenses each year are: Part B Medicare \$2,244 and Physicians Mutual, \$4,806.

Add in the 25 years of military service and it gets a little expensive!

I am writing in support of more health care and less health insurance.

11 Important Rules Not Learned In School

Charles Sykes volunteers the following rules for high school and college graduates. A list of things they did not learn in school.

Rule 1: Life is not fair; get used to it.

Rule 2: The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will NOT make \$40,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with a cell phone until you earn or inherit both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't answer to your parents.

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping; they called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you screw up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes. Learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now.

They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes, and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the blood-sucking parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades; they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off, and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

Rule 10: Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds, chances are you'll end up working for one.

WEALTH

From Page 16

whom earn poverty level wages and benefits] from organizing into unions.

Sam Walton's estate is used to promote private school vouchers that would, if adopted, destroy our public school system. Such activities undermine our democratic republic.

9. Many authorities contend that massive bribery, in the form of campaign contributions, is evidence that conversion of our political system from a democratic republic to a plutocracy is in an advanced stage.

10. Dead people cannot own, nor should they control property from the grave. If one-half of the \$10 trillion in wealth transferred in each of the next four and one-half decade was returned to the public treasury earmarked for retirement of the national debt, in 30 years there would be zero debt and therefore no interest to pay on the debt. Income taxes could be reduced or eliminated.

All of this could be accomplished and still maintain the marital estate tax deduction, and the \$2 million exemption.

In conclusion, if we are to implement an economic system where competitors in the market place of labor, management and ideas do so without gross inequities favoring those born by chance into privilege, we must tax the trillions of dollars in dynastic wealth that has been hoarded and which will be transferred between now and 2052, and apply the proceeds to the national debt.

- The author lives in Edmond

SCIENCE

From Page 18

public school and you learn that he or she is being taught in history class that American Indians are the descendants of a lost tribe of Israelites migrating to the continent thousands of years ago, or that the Holocaust is a Zionist myth.

The education of children is essential to the survival and positive progress of human society. Children should be taught [ideally by qualified, credentialed instructors] to read and write, to understand the basic principles of mathematics, and to understand and appreciate the beauty and complexity of the natural world through science.

TEACH RELIGION BUT IT IS NOT EDUCATION

If you also want to teach your child about salvation through Jesus Christ, or the flood of Noah, go for it. You have, and should always have, that freedom. It's the birthright of every human being.

A high school diploma, on the other hand, isn't a birthright. It's something that must be earned. The states have the right and the responsibility to award those diplomas only to students who have adequately completed their education.

That group should not include anyone whose science studies omit evolutionary biology and include a credulous literal reading of the Bible. Those students - be they homeschoolers or attendees of religious private schools - have been cheated, and before they get to graduate, their misguided teachers should have to make good.

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