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2007 Legislative Performances Ten Best & Ten Worst

By Frosty Troy

"For when the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name, He marks – not how you won or lost – but how you played the game." – Grantland Rice

Despite an unexpected windfall of \$200 million, the 2007 Legislature didn't use the money to pay its bills or address some of the neediest of Oklahomans, it cut taxes another \$74 million a year.

That brings the grand total of cuts over three years to more than \$700 million, winning this session membership in the Legislative Hall of Shame. Oklahoma was already 50th in local, state and federal taxes combined.

Legislative leadership was often nonexistent. Thankfully, Gov. Brad Henry stepped up and salvaged most of his budget which had been declared DOA in the GOP House and the divided Senate.

They did manage at the last minute to adopt a pretty fair ethics bill but it lacks teeth in key places.

There were good legislators who stepped up to the plate and, yes, the usual members who turned in dismal performances. Herewith the Best 10 and Worst 10 performances of 2007:

Senate Best

Sen. Richard Lerblance, D-Hartshorne, is the fearless Democrat whose vigorous defense of the Constitution, the rule of law and his non-stop push for genuine prison reform is a model of what a legislator ought to be. He was not afraid to challenge members of either party when it came to good legislation – including calling out an underhanded Senate leadership.

Sen. Mike Mazzei, R-Tulsa, put his heart, soul and sweat into galvanizing the Legislature into addressing the dire condition of the Teachers' Retirement System – \$7.1 billion in unfunded liabilities. His legislation will result in 80% actuarial soundness. He worked with both party leaders and was responsible for bringing House Republicans on board.

Sen. Kenneth Corn, D-Poteau, pushed the amendment that keeps funding the Teachers' Retirement system even when budgets are being cut. He championed penal reform and was the most passionate speaker against

the GOP tax cut at a time when the state has serious unmet needs and unpaid bills. Corn cuts across the rural-urban split, battling for good legislation on either side.

Sen. Tom Adelson, D-Tulsa, is about as prickly as they come, but when you get past that, he's on the floor challenging legislation. He was the driving force behind Senate Bill 424, the All Kids Act, designed to cover 42,000 of the 140,000 uninsured children in Oklahoma. He's sensitive to any legislation that tends to ignore the poor or push more legislation for fat cats. May his number multiply – but not his personality.

Sen. Joe Sweeden, D-Pawhuska, a practicing Roman Catholic, showed true grit when he refused to vote for an anti-abortion bill for poor women unless it included exceptions for rape and incest. He voted no. Then the death threats began against him and his family. A picture of a man who threatened him was posted at each door of the Capitol. Security was unprecedented. His Bishop couldn't budge him. The bill was rewritten, but

its restrictions remained too onerous. He stood tall and voted no. Bravo!

Senate Worst

Sen. Kathleen Wilcoxson, R-OKC, never opens her mouth without subtracting from the sum of human knowledge. Being term-limited [thank you, God] she is obviously running for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, promoting vouchers and supporting a horribly flawed charter school bill. [It was rewritten by Democrats.] As co-chair of the Senate Education Committee, she killed superb appointments to the State Board because they didn't share her sorry "reform" point of view.

Sen. Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, Senate co-leader, turned into a clownish rubber stamp for the GOP [giggle, giggle]. He led Senate Democrats into passing the sorry GOP budget, vetoed by the governor. He then unfairly criticized the governor. He was sponsor of legislation to oust Executive Director K.C. Moon of the Criminal Justice Resource Center, a true public servant. The House killed that perversion of

justice.

Sen. Judy Eason McIntyre, D-Tulsa, has a brain of feathers. As co-chair of the Education Committee, she followed Wilcoxson around like a puppy, pushing a very sorry charter school bill that would have let any community or college start a charter school. No accountability. [It was thankfully rewritten.] Her relentless attacks on Tulsa public schools as a "failure" should be addressed to Tulsa's north-side parent(s), or the lack thereof.

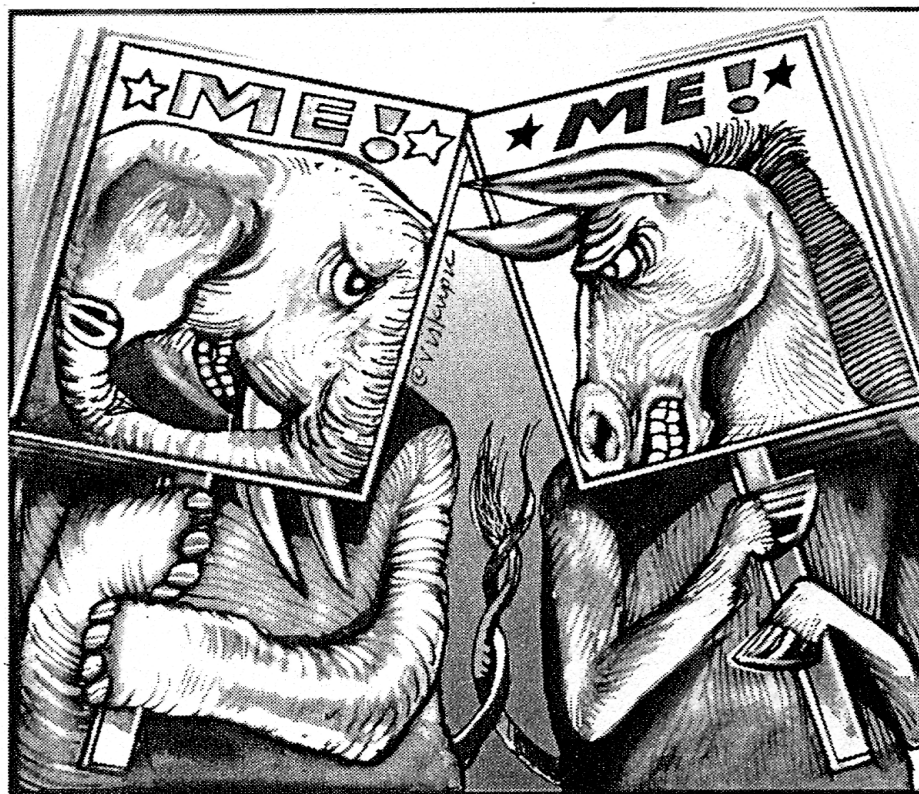
Sen. Susan Paddack, D-Ada, is the female equivalent of Congressman Dan Boren, a shiver looking for a spine to run up. She registers Democratic but supports key Republican issues, giving them a necessary vote for a sorry tort bill in a 24-24 Senate. Her conflict of interest is outrageous, not only in supporting a bogus tort reform bill, but pushing medical malpractice legislation to protect her husband, the doctor.

Sen. Randy Brogdon, R-Owasso, compresses the most words into the foul libertarian idea – government is your enemy. His constant fear is that government, somewhere, may be trying to do good. When he stands to address the Senate, there are people in the Chamber who swear they hear hovering black helicopters. His chronic "no" votes make him so predictable that other senators simply yawn when he speaks.

House Best

Rep. Danny Morgan, D-Prague, used his House minority leadership to bring 44 wildly disparate Democrats on board to win the single best performance in the Legislature in 2007. Even though he was outnumbered by House Republicans 57 to 44, it was Morgan whose minority caucus saved the governor's budget from an override. Democrats paid a price – venal House leadership then killed every Democratic bill in committee and stole Democratically authored bills.

Rep. Gus Blackwell, R-Goodwell, is the House Speaker Pro Tem but he's also a no-nonsense presiding officer, gaveling members of both parties. It has been Blackwell, above all other Re-



Observations

Who Won?

Speaker Lance Cargill has taken credit for everything but the Second Coming and we're sure that will happen in his second year as Republican leader of the Oklahoma House.

If you forget the lousy PR job the governor's office and legislative Democrats do, any fair minded reading of the major activities of the 2007 session show Brad Henry a clear victor.

He got his bioenergy center, teacher pay hike, health insurance for the uninsured, Medicaid funding, a big Teachers Retirement boost, health coverage for 42,000 poor kids, and expansion of the college scholarship program.

His veto of that sorry corporate tort "reform" bill stood. He made them rewrite the anti-abortion bill which tragically affects only poor women.

Henry lost his proposed education initiative for three year olds. It should be on hold until preschool and kindergarten are fully funded across this state.

As for the loss of his industrial funding proposals [the EDGE fund and the Opportunity Fund] those are Oklahoma's losses, thanks to venal Republicans.

The House GOP saw to it that except for the pay hike, public education was trashed, receiving the lowest percentage of the budget in state history.

Stay tuned. We plan to be on the scene in 2008 when Cargill ascends into heaven.

Pathetic

In all the years we have covered the state Capitol, we have seldom encountered a more mindless, partisan member in either party than Sen. Kathleen Wilcoxson, R-OKC.

It's pretty obvious she hopes to succeed State School Superintendent Sandy Garrett. That would be a disaster for public education since she's pro-voucher and pro-charter schools without accountability.

She trashes public education at every turn, even importing the pro-voucher, anti-public education U.S. Chamber for a "Public Forum" which excluded Garrett or any other knowledgeable educator.

The Chamber crap was a tissue of lies.

She invited PR mouthpiece Burns Hargis to zap OKC public schools. He's half of the Beavis and Butthead show on OKC Channel 4 - with probably the lowest rating in the history of TV talk shows.

If public education is a failure, he's a perfect example.

Wilcoxson showed her true colors when she blocked Gov. Brad Henry's appointments to the State Board of Education. Previously she had nixed ex-state Rep. Barbara Staggs, former teacher and Muskogee superintendent.

She then went after Gov. Henry's appointment to the state board, Larry Adair of Stilwell, former 12-year House Speaker, former teacher, former superintendent.

Her reason? They don't share her enmity toward public education - she calls it "reform." They are not bitter ex-teachers as she is. They wouldn't hand public school dollars to unregulated charter schools, vouchers or to unregulated homeschoolers.

Staggs and Adair have forgotten more about school law and operations than Wilcoxson will ever know. She's a test crazy, hard right, Birchite Republican who never met a Democrat she would support.

Thank goodness she's term limited after next year. Her departure will raise the public service standards of the state Senate.

Not Again!

You are probably as tired of reading about the Bush Administration corruption as we are in telling you about it - but we're about the only regular



source in Oklahoma.

Consider the latest never-ending push to turn federal agencies into favor-filled partisan operations: It has nailed the director of the General Services Administration, the government's main housekeeping agency.

Investigators found that Lurita Doan, the Bush appointee, violated the federal Hatch Act, which forbids federal workers from politicking on the job.

Last January, Doan summoned her assistants to a campaign strategy session run by Karl Rove's White House political operation.

Tax-paid employees were treated to a PowerPoint briefing and slide show identifying Democrats marked as "2008 House Targets: Top 20."

Witnesses said Doan asked the gathering of federal employees how they could "help our candidates" with GSA favors.

She will soon be out the door, another departed clone of what historians refer to as the sorriest president in American history.

Dare Them

Next time you hear one of those preening state "leaders" say they put public education first, tell the nitwit to prove it.

Not only is public education getting the lowest percentage of the state budget in history, the State Board of Education just received word that Oklahoma has fallen from 46th to 47th in what it spends per student - \$6,613 vs. a national average of \$8,701.

Utah, the first voucher state, dropped to dead last at \$5,257. Its Legislature wants to turn all students into good little Mormons in private schools funded by vouchers.

Oklahoma's Legislature provided a \$200 tax exemption for "stay at home moms" when in reality it is funding for unregulated homeschools.

Oklahoma is the only state that does not have some minimal kind of regulation on homeschooling.

Politicians consider it - along with consolidation - the third rail of politics.

Referring to the pathetic underfunding of public education, a State Board of Education member said it right:

"How long is this going to continue to be a joke?"

Nothing New

Here's a news flash: Women get paid less than men. OK, so that's not anything new. Even just a year out of college, women earn 20% less than male counterparts.

Ten years after graduation, the pay gap gets worse with women earning 69% of what men earn, according to a new study by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.

The group analyzed two surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Education.

The studies provide nationally representative information on the lives of two groups of college students.

One study followed about 9,000 bachelor's degree graduates from 1992 to 1993 for 10 years after college.

The second examined the 10,000 four-year degree recipients of the 1999-2000 class for one year.

These pay differences that appear early in female careers are so important because pay wages and job offers are based on previous earnings. Over time, they become cemented and the differences continue to grow.

The study found many women major in subjects that traditionally pay less, such as education.

But the pay gap exists among men and women who concentrate in the same area, though the size of the gap varies.

In education, for instance, women earn 5% less than their male colleagues in the first year after graduation.

Accounting for hours, occupation, parenthood and other factors, it was found that one-quarter of the wage disparity is unexplainable and may be due to discrimination.

The study suggests several ways to close the pay disparity, including:

- Encouraging women to enter careers in traditionally male-dominated and higher-paying occupations such as mathematics and science;
- Creating awareness among women to negotiate for better pay; and
- Promoting family-friendly policies in the workplace.

Female students must have such knowledge in order to deal with the issue.

They have to be more educated in what they can do, and professions that they are not going into as females.

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

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy
ftroy@fullnet.net
405.525.5582

PUBLISHER

Beverly Hamilton
405.478.8700

EDITOR

Arnold Hamilton
ahamilton@okobserver.net
405.478.8700

ART DIRECTOR/WEBMASTER

Kyle Williams
405.478.8700

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

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

- Adapted by Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

SKILL THE TIMES DICATUNG
© 2 * R 7

Under a new National Security directive signed by President Bush on May 9, he is given dictatorial power. Read it on the White House website. He is doing for America what Godzilla did for Japan.

Dart: To the governor and legislative leaders for a \$4 million cut in the budget for the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. No state entity has created more high tech jobs than OCAST.

Oklahoma is tied with the District of Columbia for the second highest percentage of the population having strokes – 3.4%. Factors include obesity, smoking and high blood pressure.

Laurel: To Boley Municipal Judge Henrietta Hicks, elected president of the National Judges Association.

An Oklahoma Poll reveals that 60% of Okies own guns compared to the national average of 32%. It's 50% in Tulsa, 58% in Oklahoma City and 60% in rural areas. Now if they could only shoot straight.

Dart: To the State Senate for continuing to tiptoe around the fact that the sitting OSU regents are serving illegally – read the Constitution and the subsequent statute. Follow the Constitution and the law or change it.

National Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean went out of his way to praise outgoing Oklahoma Chair Lisa Pryor for reducing the party debt from \$500,000 to \$54,000. A richly deserved compliment.

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for turning down that Republican tort bill – a lock on the courthouse door for ordinary folk and a pass for nursing home abuse. Eat your heart out, State Chamber.

Know why tobacco products will continue being smuggled into Oklahoma? The Oklahoma tax is 60% of the cost of the product versus 10% in Kansas. 'Nuff said?

Dart: To Oklahoman's Top Clown, U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, opposing a congressional honor for the late Rachel Carson because she preserved African wildlife by winning a ban on pesticides. Why can't Coburn have a Silent Spring?

Poor women are targeted in a new abortion law that prohibits public funds from being spent for the procedure. All other Oklahomans are still free to buy one, even a partial birth abortion.

Laurel: To 52% of Oklahomans who finally realize that Bush is doing a sorry job and the Iraq war is a disaster. Now if voters could explain it to what passes for our congressional delegation.

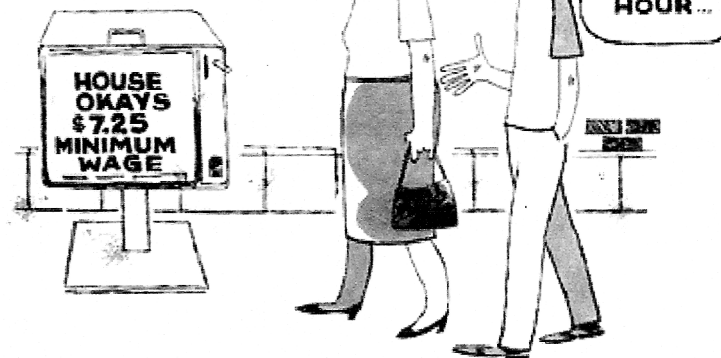
Latest Zogby national poll shows Barack Obama would defeat every Republican in a head-to-head contest. He trails Hillary Clinton but she loses to McCain and Giuliani in the same poll.

Dart: To Senate Co-Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, giving the 2007 legislative session a B+. It would be hard to come up with a "D" if it hadn't been for the leadership of House minority Democrats who repelled the outrageous GOP budget.

Egad! Former Republican State Rep. Forrest Claunch, a Keating clone, has announced in the race to replace Oklahoma County Commissioner Jim Roth. Heaven help the taxpayers.

Laurel: To OKC's Classen School of Advanced Studies and fabulous Tulsa Booker T. Washington High School, both named to the 100 best list in the nation, according to Newsweek magazine.

Warning to Muskogee area residents living in and about the former Camp Gruber. The feds hope to use it as a spent munitions dump – they are extremely hazardous.



Dart: To Chesapeake's Aubrey McClendon and Chaparral's Mark Fischer for trying to bum significant tax breaks for their private plans to redevelop Grand Lake's Shangri-La and Lake Texoma Lodge. Greed knows no bounds.

We think it is fitting that OKC's Oklahoma Heritage Center features busts of T. Boone Pickens and the late Eddie Gaylord paired together. Both prove you can buy respectability.

Laurel: To Rep. Bill Nations, D-Norman, for making an inroad on the horrible ATV deaths and accidents. His new law bans their use on public lands by anyone under 18 without a helmet.

Bless Sen. Brian Crain, R-Tulsa, for his bill prohibiting a proposal by Rep. Sue Tibbs, R-Tulsa, to implant microchips for one or more violent offenses. Where would Big Brother stop?

Dart: To the hypocritical House Republican leadership, failing to come up with \$3 million needed to fight domestic violence. A paltry \$500,000 won't dent the hundreds of cases involved.

Deportation of 140 illegal aliens from Oklahoma prisons [costing taxpayers \$22,000 per prisoner] was blocked by wimpy Gov. Brad Henry, who has the worst record in state history in signing paroles, feeding record overcrowding.

Laurel: To legislative Democrats for rewriting that sorry charter school bill that would have permitted any college and any community to start a charter school. Now it is sharply restricted to qualified four-year institutions.

We always chuckle when the Oklahoma Hall of Fame selectees are announced. We remember millionaire Midwest City developer Bill Atkinson telling us how he got in – a \$50,000 "donation." A few always deserve it, including Clara Luper.

Dart: To the State Chamber's potty mouth Mike Seney for referring to Gov. Henry's tort reform proposal as similar to a "condom" because it "offers no protection." [Quoted in the Journal Record]

AP is reporting that 42 Oklahoma ex-legislators from both parties were registered as lobbyists this year. It is partly a result of term limits.

Laurel: to Betsy Glad, teacher at Union School, and Norman teacher Stacy Darling, both given Presidential Awards of Excellence – among only 93 in the nation.

Dart: To the greedy insurance industry, raising Oklahomans' health premiums 60% so far this year – 13% above the national average.

Over 180,00 Oklahomans in 37,000 families earn less than needed for basic services. The Economic Policy Institute survey shows 15% of Oklahomans are poverty-stricken.

Laurel: To the Oklahoma House for giving Rep. Paul Wesselhoff, R-Moore, The Skunk Master Award for sponsoring "the stinkiest bill of the session." He was author of the \$150,000 pork barrel bill – yet claims to be a "conservative."

The Pew Research Center's poll of young people found that 80% of 18-25 year olds say their top goal in life is getting rich. That compares with 62.5% in 1980 and 42% in 1966.

Dart: For Congress just sitting there when health care is double the cost of living. The average American works 52 days to pay medical costs compared to 29 days in 1982.

Laurel: To congressional Democrats, fighting for \$5 billion in new education funding. That's two weeks of spending in Iraq.

The federal dairy program subsidizes milk production to the tune of \$4 billion a year. That costs consumers by keeping prices artificially high.

Laurel: To Rep. Ryan Kiesel, D-Seminole, for his fierce fight for decent funding of community colleges. He lost but vows to be back next session. Shame on Senate Co-Leader Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, for killing the effort.

Did you know that 640,000 Oklahomans have no health insurance – 18.4% of the population? That includes 140,000 children? Little wonder that emergency rooms are swamped.

Laurel: To State Treasurer Scott Meacham for continuing to shout about the \$11.6 billion in combined unfunded liability of state retirement funds. The state's Pension Oversight Commission is worried.

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Sixty percent of the American people agree with Congress's recent non-partisan vote to bring U.S. troops home and approve of their plan to fund the troops' redeployment and safe return.

Yet, President Bush has announced plans to veto the troops' funding as a strategy to keep the country at war in Iraq no matter what the cost.

Ironically, he is trying to make the American people believe Congress is to blame for taking the funding away, when it is his veto of the funding bill that is the real cause. President Bush has abused the language of patriotism for years to get his way and divide the country.

When Congress funds the troops with a plan to bring them home, they are supporting the troops. When Bush vetoes that funding, he and nobody else is responsible for blocking the money the troops depend on.

Jackie Gaston
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

Special Counsel Scott Bloch, appointed by President Bush in 2004, is overseeing the virtual elimination of federal whistle blower rights in the United States government. Bloch targets gay employees for removal while refusing to investigate cases involving discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The Department of Labor has also gotten on board in a behind-the-scenes maneuver to cancel whistleblower protections. If it succeeds, the Labor Department will dismiss claims by federal workers who report violations under the Clean Air Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

General Counsel for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility Richard Condit says federal workers in agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, function as the public's eyes and ears.

The Labor Department is moving to shut down one of the few legal avenues left to whistle blowers.

Each year, hundreds of civil servants who witness problems ranging from threats to public safety to waste of tax funds find that their reports of wrongdoing are stonewalled by the Office of Special Counsel.

Consequently, these firsthand accounts of malfeasance are not investigated and almost uniformly never reach the public's attention. Americans are less informed about their government and less able to be in connection with the people who actually work for them – the public servants.

Another Bush action heavily favoring corporations to the detriment of the public.

Frank P. Belcastro
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

I was aghast at Sandra Day O'Connor's comments that our constitutional liberties are at risk, judges should make "fair and impartial decisions," and shouldn't be "activists," saying "We still have a Bill of Rights ... " But it's certainly no thanks to her that we still have a Bill of Rights.

Of all of the Supreme Court justices in history, she singularly stands out as the one who personally is responsible for the current grave threat to our civil rights precisely because she became a political activist on the bench.

When the first Florida projections named Gore the winner in 2000, O'Connor said, "This is terrible." Gore would delay her retirement as she didn't want a Democrat naming her successor. A month later, she was one of the five conservative Supreme Court justices who stopped the vote recount in Florida, literally handing the election to George Bush.

Had she voted the other way, Al Gore would be our president. [A consortium of national newspapers found if all of the disqualified ballots statewide had been recounted using uniform standards, Gore would have won Florida.] Because of that disgraceful decision, George Bush came to office with his pre-planned war agenda, resulting in the sorry state of affairs we have today.

Hundreds of thousands have been slaughtered in Iraq. Billions have been handed to Bush-Cheney cronies in no-bid contracts. We are so weakened militarily and economically that we are sliding into a decline we will never recover from. America is finished as an economic and moral leader.

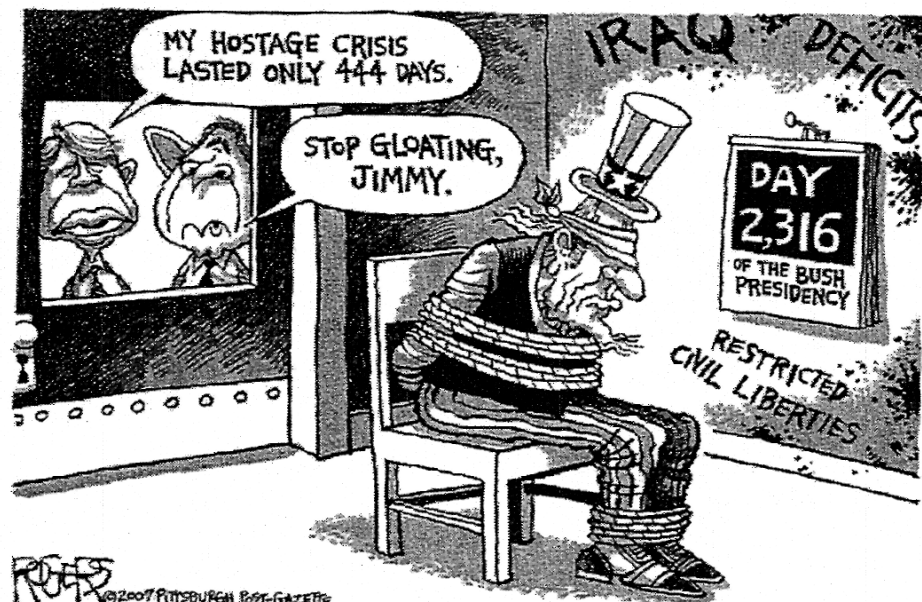
And that debacle is thanks to Sandra Day O'Connor whose personal motives and conservative politics single-handedly determined the outcome of one of the most important court decisions in the history of this country.

Her self-serving hypocrisy is enough to make a decent person gag.

Barbara Santee
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I would like to make a suggestion: If you are a poor woman and are forced by the Oklahoma Legislature to carry to term and give birth to a child with fatal birth defects, please call Rep. Rebecca Hamilton, Sen. Jay Paul Gumm



and others to come and watch your child suffer and die.

They like watching small children suffer because they believe that pain and agony are the height of existence. While you are at it make sure they get the bill for continuing the painful life of your infant until their lust for observing small children in pain along with their parents, who didn't have a choice thanks to Rebecca's belief that even a pain is a gift.

By the way, if Rebecca is pro-life it is political, period, and she proved it. Ordering the painful existence of 25 or 2 is too many. She likes watching small children suffer so please invite her come and take care.

Also, if your daughter later commits suicide or even kills the baby, just thank Rebecca for saying the mental illness isn't an illness and emotional stress is just a picnic in the park.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

The Oklahoma Democratic Party recently concluded its 2007 statewide convention in Oklahoma City. After electing new state officers, the delegates passed a set of resolutions that advances by a generation the attitudes and perspectives of what it means to be a LGBT taxpaying citizen in Oklahoma.

These resolutions are remarkable for Oklahoma in that they were passed at the Convention by overwhelming approval of the delegates. The previous 2005 Convention was unable to pass any form of progressive resolutions, in fact none at all, deadlocked as it was in successful parliamentary procedures to squelch our nascent progressive movement.

As with any large assembly of people there were still some dissemblers who would have preferred an outlook that reflects the era of the 1930s wherein our gay minority was kept under lock-and-key in the closet of shame. These people of the time capsule were quickly put in their place and the Resolutions Report was passed just as it was presented from the Resolutions Committee with not a single word changed.

Much credit must be given to former state Sen. Cal Hobson, this year's Resolutions Committee chair, who kept the committee on track in its deliberations and gave a rousing introduction to the Convention as to what it means to be a Democrat in the 21st century which is to demonstrate fairness and concern for others, repuls-

ing the greed and corruption of the current Republican party.

Our Oklahoma Stonewall Democrats was very involved in the Convention process with 8-10 members serving on the standing committees and even more of us on the floor, lobbying and buttonholing for votes.

In small advances, in incremental improvements, LGBT equality is gaining ground in Oklahoma.

James Nimmo
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

The Legislature, rushing to adjourn, expressed contempt for an entire class of people – poor women. While piously preaching "pro life" and "no abortions as state expense" a few legislators slammed Senate Bill 139 into law as the session ended. The language in SB-139 had previously been vetoed by the Governor – a veto twice upheld in the Senate.

The bill's message to poor women was: "You must carry to term a fetus without a brain or spinal chord, in need of major organ replacements, without a skull or limbs, etc. Goodbye and good luck after you birth your child needing major, life-long medical care to survive."

In my opinion, SB 139 was about defeating Democrats in 2008 who had the courage to vote "no" on this insidious bill.

And who cares about abandoning a few kids and throwing poor women from the train headed toward the next election – delegates at the State Democratic Convention, that's who!

That body came within 50 votes of reprimanding Rep. Rebecca Hamilton and Sen. Jay Paul Gumm for "thoughtlessly abandoning the best interest of fellow Democratic legislators."

These two Democrats had quietly provided Republicans with SB 139, originally authored by Gumm and Hamilton to establish a cord-blood bank. In preparation for the "deal," Republicans had already placed the cord-blood language in Senate Bill 486.

About 100 delegates at the Democratic Convention, although angry about the underhanded tactics, abstained from voting; that's all that saved Gumm and Hamilton from unprecedented censure.

SB 139 became law without the governor's signature.

Wanda Jo Stapleton
Oklahoma City

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Frosty's Notebook

CareerTech

Politicians give lip service to the idea that retraining can give laid-off workers a second, better chance in a global economy.

Too often, the government treats vocational courses like arbitrary hoops for the unemployed to jump through if they expect to receive unemployment benefits.

President Bush showed his true colors when he sought to eliminate CareerTech funding. Even some Republicans joined Democrats in killing that Bush budget proposal. Still, the funding is meager.

America needs to find better ways to target skills training to the very best jobs available where some real shortages exist.

The labor market is full of contradictions. Manufacturers have let millions of skilled laborers go, yet they whine about personnel shortages or too many unskilled applicants.

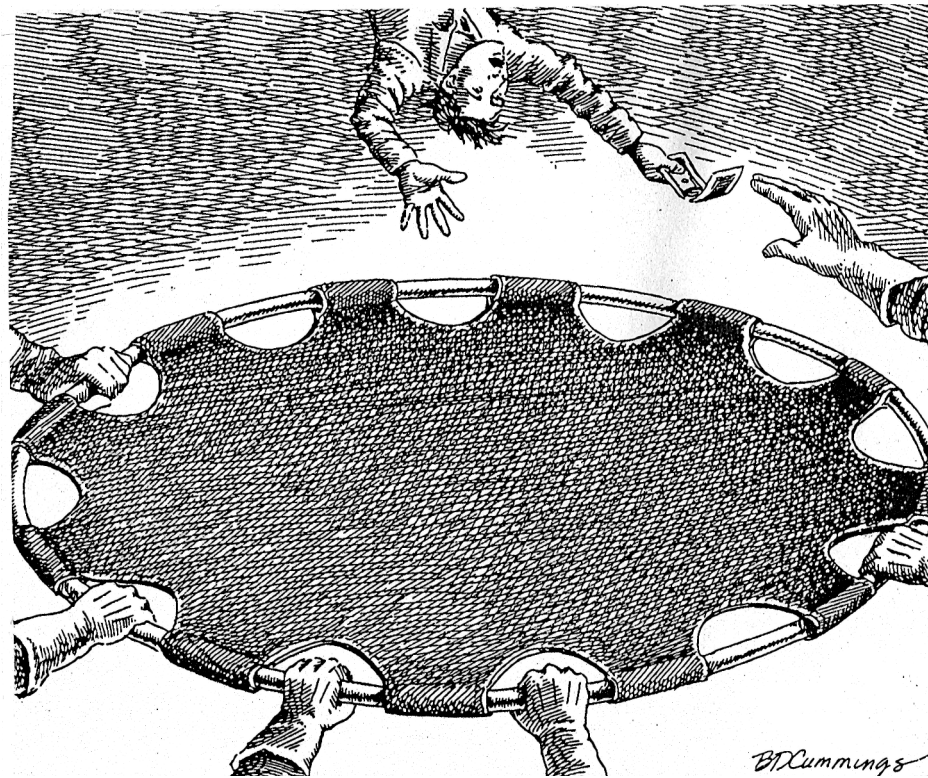
The problem is that someone laid off by a car maker won't necessarily have the skills to work at a semiconductor factory, or even at a more advanced auto plant.

The majority of federal money for training dislocated workers goes to job search help – writing resumes, preparing for interviews.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance program pays for serious vocational education to help some shift occupations, but last year only 36,000 people began such training.

One program that might be a model for a larger national effort is Oklahoma's fabulous program that trains low-income residents to be computer-repair technicians and other skills.

What makes the program so successful is consulting closely with area businesses when it puts together its curriculum, to ensure that its graduates have



the skills they need to get hired.

Unfortunately, a Republican dominated Legislature has put the skids on desperately needed funding. As a result, more than 9,000 are on CareerTech waiting lists and 42 high schools can't provide on-site training. Yet the loopy Legislature lowered taxes by \$700 million over the past three years.

Ask a Republican legislative leader why the GOP animosity toward CareerTech and you usually get this answer: "Those kids ought to go to college."

Someone who can talk slow enough needs to tell GOP legislators that college isn't for every kid. Sooner voters need to chlorinate the Republican gene pool.

The Green Gavel

"This is the worst environment we've ever had in American history," according to environmental lawyer Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. in a Tulsa speech.

Kennedy cited more than 400 pieces of environmental legislation that have been rolled back by the Bush White House, as part of a deliberate concerted effort to eviscerate 30 years of environmental laws.

When it comes to the environment, Bush has constantly sided with corporate interests.

"The Bush Administration has been gutting key sections of the Clean Water and Clean Air acts, laws that have traditionally had bipartisan support and have done more to protect the health of Americans than any other environmental legislation."

Courts are increasingly siding with environmentalists, who have for the past six years been suing to block the changes President Bush has implemented. The Supreme Court gave the Bush Administration two recent rebukes for its global warming and air pollution policies.

These rulings were just the most recent examples of the administration's losing streak in court on environmental issues, as two other federal courts recently ruled against Bush's environmental policies.

Nonetheless, Bush has indicated an unwillingness to change his administration's approach.

As Rep. Ed Markey, D-MA, noted, "All the institutions of government are now moving towards recognition of the dangers of global warming, except the Bush Administration."

Bush, Cheney Taxes

Did you believe the propaganda Oklahoma's congressional delegation was spreading about the Bush tax cuts? They voted for them – including lone Democrat Dan Boren – claiming they would help Joe Sixpack.

Bush's tax cuts reduced his taxes 14% and Cheney's 21%, according to Citizens For Tax Justice

Bush and wife Laura received a \$31,037 income tax reduction for 2006, due to the President's tax cut program. Vice-President Dick Cheney and his wife Lynne, whose income was much higher, saved \$110,932.

For 2006, the Bushes reported total income of \$765,801 and paid 24.4% of that in income taxes. That was down by 14% from the 28.4% they would have owed without the President's tax cuts.

The Cheneys reported \$1.8 million in total income, and paid a 23.4% effective tax rate. That was 21% below the 29.5% rate they would have paid without the Bush tax cuts.

About three-quarters of the Bushes' tax cut stemmed from his reductions in the regular income tax rates. A sixth of the Bushes' tax cut came from the reduction in the top tax rate on capital gains and dividends to 15%.

The remainder came from the first step of the Bush's gradual elimination of the itemized deduction disallowance and the personal exemption phase-out.

Just under half of the Cheneys' tax savings came from the sharply lower tax rate on their \$579,500 in capital gains and "qualified" dividends. The rest of their tax reduction was mostly from the reductions in the regular tax rates.

"The Bush and Cheney tax returns illustrate the kind of wealthy people that the President most intended to help with his tax cut program," noted Robert S. McIntyre, director of Citizens for Tax Justice.

The most crippling hit to the Bush Administration's environmental policies came from the U.S. Supreme Court in its first examination of the phenomenon of global warming.

The court ruled 5 to 4 that the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] violated the Clean Air Act by improperly declining to regulate new vehicle emissions standards to control the pollutants that scientists say contribute to global warming.

Environmentalists have hailed the ruling as "a momentous victory in one of the most important environmental cases ever decided by the Supreme Court."

Under Bush, the EPA held that it lacked authority to regulate greenhouse gases and that even if it did, it might not choose to because of numerous areas of scientific uncertainty about the causes and effects of global warming.

In the decision, the high court ruled that the federal government does indeed have authority to regulate greenhouse gases linked to global warming.

The Supreme Court's decision was also a huge victory for states such as California and nearly a dozen others that have adopted their own regulations requiring lower greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks.

These rules, however, require federal approval, which seemed unlikely as long as the agency could claim that carbon dioxide was not a pollutant – a claim it can no longer make. Reacting to the Court's ruling, Bush made clear that he will oppose any changes.

Do you get the feeling that the little gerbil in his head constantly falls off the flywheel of his brain? This is the guy who rushed his wife out of the theater because the program said: "Act 2: Two Weeks Later."

Busybodies

Brace yourself for a political media blitz in next year's presidential race – but not by any candidate.

Eli Broad and Bill Gates, two billionaire philanthropists, have pumped more than \$2 billion into their version of education reform and they are ready to take on the political arena.

Now, dissatisfied with the pace of change, they are joining forces in a \$60 million political media blitz in an effort to make education high on the agenda of the 2008 presidential race. Or so they claim.

Experts on campaign spending said the project would rank as the most expensive single-issue initiatives ever in a presidential race, dwarfing, for example, the \$22.4 million that the Swift Boat Vets and POWs for Truth group spent against Sen. John Kerry in 2004, and the \$7.8 million spent on advocacy that year by AARP, the lobby for older Americans.

Under the slogan "ED in '08," the project, called Strong American Schools, will include television and radio advertising in battleground states, an Internet-driven appeal for volunteers and a national network of operatives in both parties.

Gates, a college dropout who founded Microsoft, wrote, "The lack of political and public will is a significant barrier to making dramatic improvements in school and student performance."

The project will not endorse candidates – it is illegal to do so as a charitable group – but will focus on three areas: a call for stronger, more consistent curriculum standards nationwide; lengthening the school day and year; and improving teacher quality through merit pay and other measures.

The effort will ignore the hottest topics in education, such as vouchers, charter schools and racial integration.

Missed Opportunities On Ethics Reform

The year of openness and accountability in state government didn't extend to at least one key area: ethics.

Legislative leaders balked at real reform, thwarting a proposed ban on PAC-to-PAC contributions.

An in-session ban on campaign contributions – creating distance between legislating and electioneering – never was seriously considered, either.

But lawmakers did endorse a series of new rules – baby steps, really – aimed at restricting the influence of money in politics.

Among the changes that take effect July 1: A ban on making or accepting contributions on Capitol grounds, limits on honorariums and new reporting requirements for out-of-state contributors.

CAPITOL BAN MOSTLY SYMBOLIC

First-year House Speaker Lance Cargill made the Capitol-donation ban a cornerstone of his ethics reform package. But his pledge to reduce the sometimes- pernicious influence of money in politics rang hollow.

He simply moved his campaign finance efforts down the street, inviting special interests – most with business pending at the Legislature – to private, one-on-one fund-raising sessions.

At the same time, neither Republican nor Democratic lawmakers were inclined to endorse Tulsa Democratic Rep. Jeannie McDaniel's proposed ban on contributions during the legislative session.

The fear: Challengers would gain a fund-raising advantage. The reality: The in-session ban could apply to incumbents and would-be challengers alike.

BACKING DOWN ON KEY REFORM

The major casualty of ethics "reform" was the demise – at least for now – of the Oklahoma Ethics Commission's proposed ban on PAC-to-PAC contributions.

Legislative leaders didn't want the restriction, but they didn't want to be put in a position where they would have to formally repudiate the proposed rule through a floor vote.

They bluffed the Ethics Commission into withdrawing the rule on the session's final day by claiming the ban was problematic constitutionally.

In fact, a House Republican-commissioned legal brief contends a U.S. Supreme Court ruling – from about three decades ago – held that such bans violate free speech.

PAC-TO-PAC BAN COULD BE REVIVED

Ethics Commission members opted to keep their powder dry while they study the issue further. If they're not convinced their hands are tied constitutionally, they could reintroduce the rule next year.

The PAC-to-PAC ban is especially important because it allows special interests and candidates to skirt campaign limits – and disguise who's giving how much to whom.

How? Political action committees currently are prohibited from contributing more than \$5,000 to each candidate. But they also can give up to \$5,000 each to other PACs – which can then distribute more money to the same candidate.

In the 2006 campaign year, PAC-to-PAC contributions are believed to have exceeded \$700,000 in Oklahoma.

STARVING THE ETHICS COMMISSION

Another sign lawmakers aren't serious about ethics reform: They once again deliberately underfunded the Ethics Commission, which still has only one investigator and very limited funds to get their job done.

Even so, the ethics reforms in House Bill 2110 are better than what prevails.

An Open Letter To Gov. Brad Henry

Governor Was Wrong On Immigration Bill

By Colin T. Bent

Dear Governor:

Sometimes we make horrible mistakes in our daily lives and your action in signing HB 1804 is one of those times in your life. You have just turned a large segment of the population into criminals.

By one stroke of your pen you have turned citizen against citizen and raised the specter of possible violence, something that you could have avoided by a simple veto of a terribly racist bill.

Our immigration system is antiquated and racist at its very foundation.

The argument against Affirmative Action is that it is a quota system so it must be bad even though this is far from being factual.

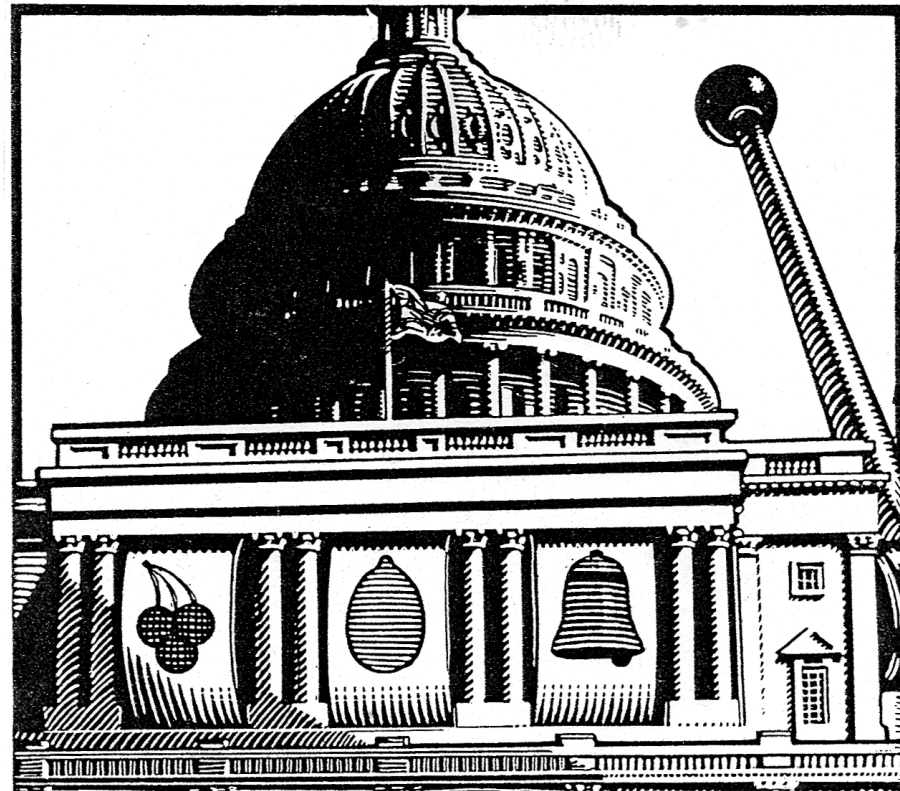
Our immigration system IS a quota system. There are quotas given to all countries with the majority Caucasian countries having the larger quotas. I dare you to prove otherwise.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU

It is with great tepidity that I mention this example. Almost 10 years ago my aging mother, a U.S. citizen, requested permanent residency for my brother, a Jamaican. To date he has not been called by the embassy in Kingston.

Had he been a citizen of England or Germany or France or Canada he would have been here many years ago. A system that keeps families apart that long is indeed depraved.

In a meeting, Curtis Zuniga, former chief of the Delaware Tribe, reminded the



The new ethics rules will:

- Limit the exemption for gratuities provided at conferences to items available to all registrants; exempt items under \$10 [up to one per year] from the definition of "anything of value; and define "out of state."
- Require contributor statements to note that the contribution is for a campaign in Oklahoma.
- Prohibit making or accepting contributions in the State Capitol Building, and provide for return of contributions delivered in the mail to an address in the Capitol.
- Allow candidates to have only one active candidate committee at any time.
- Require out-of-state committees and persons to make independent expenditures and electioneering communications from a segregated account which contains only contributions made in compliance with Oklahoma law.
- Correct references to non-applicability of contributor statement requirements until a \$500 threshold is reached.
- Provide that contributor statements are not required for funds accepted by out-of-state committees or persons or advocacy corporations which make independent expenditures or electioneering communications if the committee, person or corporation does not coordinate with a candidate, committee or agent.
- Require campaign depository information for out-of-state committees to reflect the segregated accounts required.
- Require out-of-state committees to report contributions on a last-in-first-out basis and all Oklahoma contributions.
- Require itemization of contributors making contributions over \$200 [rather than \$50] for out-of-state and federal committees.
- Require registered committees to report last-minute independent expenditures, and require other persons to file the same report for all independent expenditures.
- Limit honoraria in the form of cash, checks or cash equivalents for elective officers to those not related to holding public office.
- Require the Ethics Commission to conduct annual ethics training for members of the Legislature.

audience of President Reagan's visit to West Germany when he called for Gorbachev to "tear down that wall!"

WE ARE BUILDING OUR OWN WALL

How things have changed; we are now getting ready to build one of our own to keep out the Mexicans.

As governor, one of your responsibilities should have been to prevent this debate from becoming so racially cloaked. So what are we to do whenever we are confronted with a Latino-looking person?

Do we arrest them and bring them to you? Do we refuse to rent our property to them or to do business with them if we just have some feeling that they might be illegal?

Just what does an illegal person look like? And how do we tell a Mexican from a Native American? Do you understand what I mean, Governor?

HB 1804 is not a just law, it is not even a smart law. It will make problems for citizens who do not happen to have a Caucasian look and this will cause havoc in our communities.

This is not good governing and it is not why you were elected to the highest office in this state. This is weak-minded governance, one built on abject fear.

Your action has provided the bigots among us with fodder for violence for which you will be held responsible. May God help you.

– The author lives in Tulsa

Scholarship Reform Wins By Big Margin

Legislation that ensures continued funding of a state scholarship program will benefit Oklahoma for years, state Rep. Joe Dorman, D-Rush Springs, says.

"Education is a right that every American should enjoy and the Oklahoma Legislature took a huge step forward by guaranteeing access to even the poorest of our state," said Dorman, co-author of the bill.

Senate Bill 820 provides a permanent funding source for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program [also known as "Oklahoma's Promise"] and implements new accountability and performance standards for the scholarship program.

The bill passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives on a 98-0 vote.

OHLAP pays the college tuition of students from families earning less than \$50,000 per year who take a rigorous college curriculum, maintain a 2.5 grade point average and exhibit good behavior during their high school years.

However, the program has been under-financed in recent years. SB 820 corrects that situation by taking the money needed for scholarships "off the top" of general revenue collections each year.

IT CONTAINS MAJOR REFORMS

The bill also contains several major reforms. One of the most contentious reforms is the implementation of a grade-point-average requirement for recipients. Currently, scholarship recipients continue receiving state aid even if they are failing most classes.

The new law will require OHLAP students to maintain the minimum GPA required by the State Regents for Higher Education during their freshman year, with a 2.0 minimum imposed during the sophomore year and at least a 2.5 GPA required for classes taken during the junior and senior years.

"Students should not lose their only chance at a college education because of one bad semester," Dorman said. "The compromise plan included in SB 820 provides a safety net. OHLAP was established to help low-income students whose high school grades aren't high enough to secure an academic scholarship. Those students will continue to have that opportunity under SB 820 even if they have an 'off' semester."

Dorman noted that he had experienced "one bad semester" in his junior year of college when he became too active in student groups and associations and let his grades slip.

DORMAN WOULD HAVE LOST HIS FUNDING

"I was on OTAG and if there had been a grade requirement, I would have lost

Pension Problems Finally Addressed

State lawmakers voted to take a major step to stabilize all major state retirement systems this year by eliminating unfunded mandates.

The total unfunded liability is \$11 billion, with Teachers Retirement System at \$7.1 billion – third worst in the nation.

House Bill 2070, by state Rep. Chris Bengé and state Sen. Mike Mazzei, both R-Tulsa, makes it illegal for the Legislature to approve any new benefits for three state retirement systems – the Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System, the Oklahoma Police Pension and Retirement System, and the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Retirement System – unless funding for the new benefits is also provided.

THE HOPE IS TO STOP THE BLEEDING

"HB 2070 will stop the bleeding in our pension systems," said Bengé, chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee.

"This is a major step toward fiscal responsibility and sound footing for our pension funds. The health of all our pension systems is extremely important to state retirees that depend on them for income. We can't risk leaving those people empty handed as they begin their golden years."

"By taking action now, we can eventually improve our state's bond ratings and save money," Mazzei said.

"Additionally, we can guarantee our promise to thousands of Oklahoma state employees by taking steps to shore up our public retirement systems."

In 2006, lawmakers enacted the Oklahoma Pension Legislation Actuarial Analysis Act to ensure several state pension funds would not be forced to provide new benefits without also receiving new funding to cover those expenses.

The law originally applied only to the Teachers Retirement System of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System, and the Uniform Retirement System for Justices and Judges. Three other systems are now included.

THREE OTHER PENSION SYSTEMS IN DECLINE

As recently as 2001, the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Retirement System was more than fully funded – 105% funded. But the system was just 84% funded by 2006.

The Oklahoma Police Pension and Retirement System has fallen from 94% funded in 1999 to just 78% in 2006.

The Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System, which was 82.9% funded in 2001, was only 58% funded by 2006.

Under the legislation, no retirement bills with a fiscal impact can be enacted during odd-numbered years, giving the Legislature a full year to ensure that proper funding is provided during even-number years if a proposal is voted into law.

"The one-year delay allows us to run a thorough fiscal analysis and determine exactly how much money is needed to pay for any new benefits," Bengé said.



my access to funding," Dorman said. "I lost my priorities for one year and placed student government and other events above my classes.

"I fixed that after the sharp realization of seeing my grades, but this happens too often when students get away from home for the first time. They need the chance to succeed if they mess up once and this bill allows that now."

The legislation contains other reforms, including limiting scholarship eligibility to U.S. citizens or other individuals who are legally present in the country.

Children who are home schooled would be eligible for the program for the first time under the bill but only if they meet all other requirements and score a 22 or higher on the ACT test.

SB 820 also extends the "good conduct" requirements throughout a student's college years and includes an "anti-windfall" provision barring scholarships to students with family income greater than \$100,000 at the time they start college.

"This program allows students to live their dream to go to college without facing enormous debt upon graduation," Dorman said. "SB 820 will help create a higher-educated workforce in Oklahoma and allow the state to attract more employers.

"This bill will do more good than any of the previous laws passed over the last decade to increase economic development. This was a true bipartisan effort to advance Oklahoma's promise to the next generation for a well-educated citizenry."

"The OPLAAA slows the train down. In the past, it was easy for legislators to vote to increase benefits during election years without actually paying for it. That hurts all our retirees in the long run."

HB 2070 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives on a 99-1 vote and cleared the Senate 47-0.

Big Tax Cuts Could Backfire

Gov. Brad Henry and a majority of legislators in both parties responded to a short-term revenue surge in 2005 and 2006 by enacting deep and permanent cuts [\$700 million] to the state income tax, leaving the state's budget in a precarious situation.

These cuts began to take effect in 2006 and 2007 and are scheduled to mushroom over the next few years.

The emerging fiscal outlook of minimal or no revenue growth on the horizon calls into question the state's capacity to meet current and future spending commitments.

The funding of basic public services in Oklahoma depends on the continued annual growth of tax revenues.

Recent projections suggest that tax cuts passed during the previous two legislative sessions may be leaving Oklahoma without adequate revenues to meet its spending obligations.

Facts to consider about the impact of tax cuts:

- Personal income tax collections are dropping. Usually Oklahoma's fastest-growing revenue source, personal income tax collections are projected to be 9.2% lower in FY '08 than in FY '06.

- Revenues are faltering even as the economy is performing well. Over the past quarter-century year-to-year revenue growth has fallen below 2% only during times of recession. Yet revenues are forecast to stagnate even as Oklahoma continues to enjoy a healthy economy over the coming months.

- The state has left large bills to be paid in FY '08. Between the normal rising costs of services [e.g. Medicaid, corrections] and commitments made by previous legislatures that must be fully funded [e.g. pay raises, benefit costs] the available growth revenue for FY '08 is mostly accounted for without any additional investments in areas of priority.

Significant long-term spending pressures are mounting. Even without the tax cut of recent sessions, Oklahoma would be facing mounting fiscal challenges and a structural budget deficit due to such factors as an aging population, declining federal support and an archaic tax structure.

www.OKBUDGETALLIANCE.org

Strong And Healthy Initiative Launched

To help Oklahomans overcome the barriers to improving their health, Gov. Brad Henry has launched the Strong and Healthy Oklahoma initiative.

This statewide effort to improve the health and wellness of Oklahomans encourages all Oklahomans to eat better, move more and be tobacco-free where they live, work and learn.

The initiative, which includes a statewide plan, a pocket-sized guidebook and a web site, was developed to address Oklahoma's urgent health problems that result mostly from obesity, lack of physical fitness, and tobacco use.

"Our state faces significant challenges to good health, including a fast-paced lifestyle that prevents us from making the right health choices," Henry said. "As a result, we have developed poor health habits that include neglecting exercise and opting for the convenience of fast food over healthier food selections. However, there are easy and sensible steps we can take to improve our health and quality of life where we live, work and learn."

GUIDE POINTS TO HEALTHY CHOICES

The "Guide to a Strong and Healthy Oklahoma" provides simple, fun and creative ways to make healthy choices every day. The guide also includes a list of health improvement resources that citizens can access in their communities. The guide is available at the Oklahoma State Department of Health, local county health departments, CareerTechs, and numerous other organizations throughout the state.

The guide also can be accessed online at the Strong and Healthy Oklahoma Web site, www.strongandhealthy.ok.gov. It has the latest resources, calendar of events, and tips for eating better, moving more and being tobacco free.

Among the ideas designed to help Oklahomans "Eat Better," Strong and Healthy Oklahoma suggests these tips:

- Look for the words "whole grain" before you buy breads and cereals.
- Watch portion sizes when eating to help control calories.
- Read food labels to make sure you are getting the nutrients your body needs.
- Make your plate a rainbow of colors with the different fruits and vegetables.

Tulsa's Watershed Will Be Protected

Poultry feeding operations, waste utilization businesses and nutrient management units in northeast Oklahoma would be legally required to adhere to the terms of a 2003 agreement between the city of Tulsa and the poultry industry.

House Bill 1490 creates the Eucha-Spavinaw Nutrient Management Act.

The bill incorporates the provisions of the settlement agreement [between the poultry industry and the city of Tulsa] into state law.

It requires the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture to approve rules implementing the Eucha-Spavinaw Phosphorous Index order by the federal court as the result of litigation filed by the city of Tulsa against the poultry industry.

The phosphorous index will impact only the Eucha-Spavinaw watershed and apply to any person applying poultry waste in the watershed.

The legislation was the result of an agreement reached between representatives of the Tulsa Municipal Utility Authority, Farm Bureau, Farmer's Union, State Department of Agriculture, Cattleman's Association, Feed and Grain Association and the Poultry Federation.

ALL PARTIES COME TO THE TABLE

The agreement marks the first time all the groups have come together to create a framework protecting both the Eucha-Spavinaw watershed and local agriculture interests.

Tulsa sued the poultry industry in December 2001 claiming the defendants were responsible for 170 million pounds of phosphorus and nitrogen-rich chicken waste that goes into the city watershed each year through creeks and streams that flow into Lake Eucha, which in turn feeds Lake Spavinaw.

Movie Incentives For Filming In Oklahoma

With \$5 million in rebates sitting untouched since 2005, the Legislature took action to make the rebates more accessible to filmmakers and further boost the state's surging film industry, thanks in part to Rep. Susan Winchester, R-Chickasha.

Senate Bill 623 modifies the "Compete with Canada Film Act" to lower the minimum budget required for a film from \$2 million to \$500,000 in order to be eligible for a 15% rebate from the Oklahoma Film Enhancement Rebate fund.

"We have worked diligently for many years to make Oklahoma a strong player in the film industry," said Winchester, who co-authored the measure. "Hopefully this continued effort will attract even more business to Oklahoma and increase the impact the film industry has on our state's economy."

In 2001, the Legislature created the "Compete with Canada Film Act," which provides 15% rebates on documented production expenditures made in Oklahoma. Until 2005, the rebate fund was funded to only \$329,000. In 2005, the Legislature allocated funding of \$5 million each year to the program.

In order to qualify for the rebate, a film company must have a total budget of \$2 million with at least \$1.25 million of that spent in Oklahoma.

Officials from the Oklahoma Film and Music Office have said that figure is too high because most films made in Oklahoma are smaller budget projects that fall



Oklahomans are encouraged to move more each day, but it is important to know that being active doesn't have to be painful or boring. Instead, imagine doing fun activities you enjoy. Some ideas to help you "Move More" include:

FOUR WAYS TO MOVE AROUND MORE

- Skip the drive thru and walk in.
- Pay inside instead of paying at the pump.
- Take an extra lap around the grocery store before checking out.
- Join a dance class or a softball league.

Tobacco use causes the death of nearly 6,000 Oklahomans each year, or about 16 people each day. In Oklahoma, more than \$2 billion is spent each year for smoking related medical care and lost productivity. This burden stunts business growth and prevents the state from reaching its fullest potential.

While tobacco harms the user, secondhand tobacco smoke also threatens the health of nonsmokers. Some suggestions to help "Be Tobacco Free" include:

- Get support from the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW [784-8669].
- Support businesses that choose to Breathe Easy [www.breatheeasyok.com].
- Encourage your worksite to go tobacco free for the health of the employees.
- Be a role model for your children and others around you. Be Tobacco Free!

Lake Spavinaw is one of two drinking water sources for Tulsa; the other is Lake Oologah.

The sides agreed to settle the case on the day the trial was scheduled to begin.

The resulting court-ordered agreement requires those businesses to implement a nutrient management plan for reducing poultry litter accumulating in Oklahoma watersheds.

The poultry defendants and their growers cannot apply poultry litter to land in the watershed until they receive their nutrient management plans.

ANIMAL WASTE WILL BE LIMITED

The settlement called for a phosphorus-risk index to govern the conditions under which animal waste or fertilizer may be applied to land in the watershed.

The Eucha-Spavinaw Phosphorus Index [ESPI] was developed by a team from Oklahoma State University and the University of Arkansas and adopted by the court in February 2004.

A permanent rule would be submitted to the Legislature next year for review and approval.

Federal court's jurisdiction could end as early as February 2008 and if the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture does not have a rule in place by that time, no state agency would have the ability to monitor application of poultry waste in the watershed.

HB 1490 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives 94-2 and the state Senate 46-0.

well below the minimum threshold.

The measure would change the minimum total budget to \$500,000, of which \$300,000 must be spent in Oklahoma, a far more attainable figure, according to Winchester.

"Our state's film and commercial industry is really going strong right now," said Winchester, one of the earliest champions in the Legislature for statewide film industry incentives. "We have seen a big increase in the number of projects made in Oklahoma in the last two years. Unfortunately, none of these projects qualified for the rebates."

The Oklahoma Film and Music Commission has reported that the total economic impact on the state from movies and commercials shot in Oklahoma was \$18.9 million in 2006 - up from just \$11.2 million in 2005.

The biggest impact comes through jobs created and services utilized, such as lodging, catering, equipment rental and hiring local cast and crew.

The bill also modifies the law to include Oklahoma producers, directors, writers and cast who don't currently qualify for the current definition of "crew." This change would allow their salaries to be counted toward the \$300,000 Oklahoma expenditure.

SB 623 passed the Senate 38-6 and the House 95-3.

Kim Holland's Expose

Medicare Applicants Are Being Swindled

The insurance industry may not have known who Kim Holland was in April, but by May she was the national prime mover in exposing insurers preying on Medicare applicants nationwide.

In the first major investigation of Medicare marketing, Holland, the Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner, documented widespread misconduct by agents working for Humana and has ordered the company to take corrective action to protect consumers against high-pressure sales tactics.

The commissioner unloaded on a congressional committee concerning agents who had enrolled Medicare recipients in Humana products that "they did not understand and did not want."

At least 68 agents did not have the licenses needed to sell insurance in Oklahoma, Holland said.

"Humana took advantage of a new market, but did not adequately supervise its agents," said Ms. Holland, who was an insurance agent for 25 years before becoming the state's top insurance regulator in 2005.

HUMANA IS NOW SECOND NATIONALLY

Humana has made a big push to expand its Medicare business and is now the second-largest participant in the Medicare market, after the UnitedHealth Group.

Thomas T. Noland Jr., senior vice president of Humana, said people who chose its products were overwhelmingly satisfied.

"As the guardian of the company's reputation, I would know if there were any problems," Noland said.

In its latest financial report, Humana said its "increased sales and marketing efforts" had been effective. Enrollment in its Medicare Advantage plans totaled 1.1 million on March 31, up 50% from a year earlier.

The number of people in its free-standing drug plans shot up 77% to 3.5 million. The drug plans provide pharmacy benefits, but do not pay for doctors or hospitals.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN 41 STATES

Of the 41 states responding to a recent survey by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, 39 said they had received complaints about misrepresentations by insurance agents or companies in marketing Medicare-related products.

Twenty-two states reported complaints of fraudulent activity like falsifying signatures on applications.

Many state insurance commissioners say some insurers have used improper hard-sell tactics to persuade Medicare recipients to sign up for private health plans.

Oklahoma is the first state to conduct a formal "market conduct examination," visiting a company's offices and reviewing its files to assess sales practices.

Karen M. Ignagni, president of America's Health Insurance Plans, a trade group, said her organization would adopt stricter standards to ensure that agents provided "clear, complete and accurate information."

NEW COMPLIANCE MEASURES ADOPTED

After being reprimanded by federal auditors, WellCare Health Plans recently announced new compliance measures.

Janet S. Trautwein, executive vice president of the National Association of Health Underwriters, which represents insurance agents and brokers, said: "A few bad apples have been behaving unethically. I make no excuses for them. They do not reflect the behavior of the majority of agents who work with seniors."

CareerTech Is Into New 'Greenbuild' Technology

By Lauren Merryman

Oklahoma CareerTech construction programs will be training with a new "greenbuild" technology donated by Greenblock Worldwide. It not only saves money while helping the environment, it may help save homes from a variety of disasters.

Greenblock Worldwide, a manufacturer of insulating concrete form blocks, has announced its donation of more than \$25,000 worth of forms and associated tools and materials throughout the state's technology center construction programs.

Supplies and curriculum delivered in May will be used in programs kicking off across the state this fall.

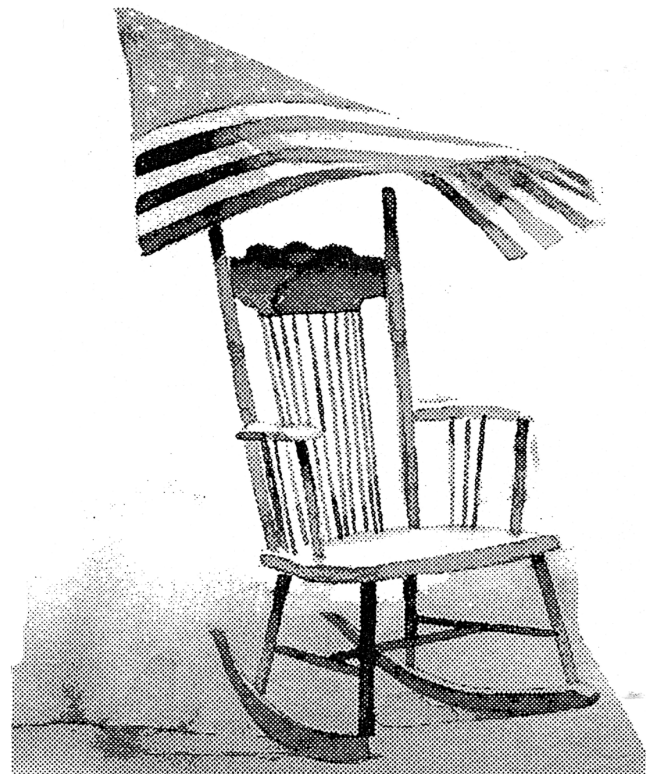
CareerTech Construction Technology Instructor Keith Parks at Ft. Supply Skills Center is the first to implement training with the donated Greenblock material. CareerTech Skills Centers are located behind prison walls in 23 correctional facilities in Oklahoma.

PRODUCTS ARE USER FRIENDLY

"Greenblock products are user friendly," Parks said. "We have used other systems that require a complicated installation of more cumbersome materials. With this, construction time of typical wall installations is reduced by 50% or better with fewer braces required."

The Greenblock material weighs only one pound per square foot, is easy to handle, and has a locking system that is far greater than other products that are used in the industry.

Parks believes exposure to and education about Greenblock's benefits is im-



The Oklahoma Insurance Department said it had found many cases in which agents enrolled Medicare beneficiaries in Humana plans that were not in their best interests.

In some cases, the regulators said, consumers were confused because they had dementia or other mental impairments.

Oklahoma investigators found that some people who wanted to buy just drug coverage from Humana were instead enrolled in "an unwanted plan," a comprehensive Medicare Advantage plan.

The investigators' report said it appeared that some agents had used "bait-and-switch tactics to secure the initial invitation" into the homes of Medicare beneficiaries.

INSURED LOST HIS EXTRA BENEFITS

In one case in the report, a man was switched to a Humana plan from traditional Medicare. As a result, he lost the extra benefits that he had under a Medicare supplement policy from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma, and he incurred additional costs when he became ill.

The Oklahoma Insurance Department said: "The member had to borrow against his house to pay for these uninsured hospital and medical expenses.

"This was solely due to the failure of the agent to properly explain his existing coverage and the impact of purchasing a Medicare Advantage plan."

Humana investigated numerous complaints. But, the report said, in many cases "the investigation was conducted more to mitigate, justify and defend the actions of the agent and the company" than to help consumers.

In its report, the Oklahoma Insurance Department also made these findings:

- Humana gave agents a strong incentive to sell Medicare Advantage plans, typically paying a commission of \$250 for each sale, five times as much as the commission for selling a prescription drug plan.
- Humana did not maintain a complete record of complaints from Medicare beneficiaries, as required under Oklahoma law.
- Independent agents had to complete a 16-hour training course that included three hours of "self-study" and four hours of telephone conference calls.

"This training program," the report said, "did not appear to be sufficiently comprehensive to fully cover a topic as complex as Medicare and the products which these agents would be selling."

© Truthout

portant.

"Greenblock has better heat distribution and lower noise infiltration, is fire resistant and termite and tornado proof," Parks said. "Consumers and building contractors need to be aware of this vital information."

While thousands of Greenblock structures have been successfully completed across Europe and North America, they are new in Oklahoma. Parks plans to train, teach and educate many young students about the construction methods of insulated concrete forms.

FANTASTIC SAVINGS ON UTILITIES

"People who live in Greenblock homes have utility bills that are as much as 70% lower, which will save money for the future while saving trees," said Larry Bullock, state CareerTech trade and industrial education program specialist.

"The importance of training students in the installation of this system is that the 'greenbuild' concept is moving quickly into the construction industry," Bullock said.

"We are in a good position to add this construction concept to our programs and begin preparing workers for this new and coming industry."

The bottom line for CareerTech and its graduates is the assurance that they find well paying jobs after completing their programs.

"Industry contacts are so important. I have already placed students with an insulating concrete form contractor in Oklahoma City," Parks said. "We are committed to placing our students in training-related jobs as they leave our programs at the skills centers."

Coburn's Strange Parallel Universe

By Richard L. Fricker

To understand how the United States got itself into its current fix, it's helpful to understand that the American Right and its powerful media apparatus have created a kind of parallel universe that has its own internal logic that sort of makes sense even if the "reality" isn't exactly real.

So, on the Iraq War, everything is going pretty well except, as Fox News reminds its viewers, the "liberal media" keeps hiding all the positive developments from the American people. Plus, the only way to explain hostility toward George W. Bush is to postulate that his critics are consumed by irrational hatreds. The Right's reality-divergent narrative exists on domestic policy, too.

For instance, Sen. Tom Coburn, an Oklahoma Republican and a medical doctor, explained in an April 23 speech at the Tulsa Press Club why a single-payer health insurance system like Canada's is a sure failure and why the U.S. system of private insurance, often paid by employers, works so much better.

Coburn noted that the auto industry and many other old-line U.S. companies want a national health insurance program to get medical costs off the backs of employers and help them compete with foreign rivals that don't pay for employee health insurance. But the senator offered anecdotes why that wouldn't be a good idea.

DR. TOM'S MISSTATEMENTS ON CANADA, U.K.

"I talked to the head of General Mills," the giant food manufacturer, Coburn said. "They have lots of employees in Canada. ... I said what do you do when one of your Canadian employees gets really sick? They said they bring them to America because the Canadian system isn't working well for acutely ill people."

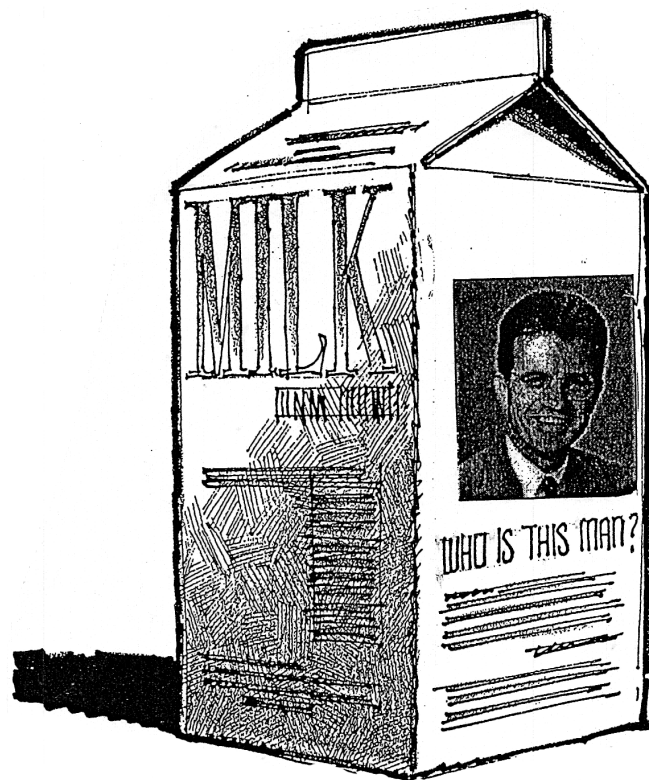
Commenting on the British medical system, the senator said, "When you look at England, the average length of time from the diagnosis of cancer to the onset of chemotherapy in England now is eight months. How many of you would be satisfied with that?"

However, like much of Fox's happy talk about Iraq, Coburn's scary comments about the health programs in Canada and the United Kingdom don't square with the facts.

General Mills denies it has a program to send Canadians to the United States for treatment of serious illnesses and the U.K. cancer treatment program operates well within acceptable medical standards.

"It is true that, in certain circumstances, a General Mills employee in Canada could visit a doctor in the U.S.," General Mills spokesman Tom Forsythe told me. "It would likely involve a U.S.-based employee on assignment in Canada. It does not happen often, and it could not be described as routine."

"However, there could be and have been cases where routine surgery, for example, [hernia, knee arthroscopy, some scans] could be done more quickly in the



U.S., and an employee may visit a doctor in the U.S. for that procedure. I do not know the number, but it would be small."

NO CANADIAN SURGE TO U.S. TREATMENT

David Jensen of the government-run Health Canada said the health care budget for fiscal year 2005-06 was \$37.9 billion, of which only \$55.6 million was paid to U.S. doctors and healthcare facilities. That included care or treatment for Canadians vacationing in the U.S., students, and persons assigned to the U.S. by Canadian companies.

In short, there was no stream of Canadians surging into the United States for medical treatment as suggested by the senator from Oklahoma.

When I sought comment from the Kings Fund, the health care oversight organization for the United Kingdom, I was directed to a 2006 study on cancer treatment.

According to the study, "Patients who visit their GP with symptoms that suggest cancer must be given urgent referral to secondary care under the two-week target established by the Cancer Plan. In June 2006, 98.9% of people with suspected cancer were seen by a specialist within the target time."

The report continued, "The plan also set a target of a maximum one-month wait from diagnosis to first treatment for all cancers, which was meant to be achieved by the end of 2005. Some 99% of patients diagnosed with cancer start treatment within 31 days."

Kings Fund senior associate Tony Harrison said Coburn's information was "not correct, assuming that chemotherapy is the first line of treatment, which of

See COBURN Page 12

Congress Schemes To Skirt Constitution

By Danny M. Adkison

Enron tried an end-run. You saw what happened to them. Some in our government today are also seeking end-runs. Two such instances were in the news recently.

First, let's consider the case of Washington, DC. The car tags in the nation's capital have the slogan "No taxation without representation" printed on them. This refers to the fact that while residents of the District pay taxes [like the rest of Americans] they do not have anyone fully representing them in either the House of Representative or the Senate.

Oh sure, they have congressional "delegates" that are allowed to serve on committees and participate, generally, in congressional proceedings. Are they full or "real" members? Can they, for example, vote on the floor? Well, yes and no.

They used to be allowed to vote on the floor of the House but only when the House was operating under the rules of the Committee of the Whole [a parliamentary device that allows the House to conduct business in a more relaxed atmosphere]. Here's the catch. If the DC delegate's vote would change the outcome then there is a second vote with the DC delegate's vote removed. So, if you were a delegate in the House representing DC and you were asked if you could actually vote, how would you answer?

CAN HOUSE OPT TO INCREASE ITS MEMBERSHIP?

In any event, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and a few other influential House members have endorsed an end-run around the lack of a full-fledged House member representing Washington, DC. It would increase the size of the House and give DC a "real" voting member.

Can they do this? They may. Still, the question is, do they have the authority to do this? The answer is no.

The Constitution stipulates, "The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several states." End of constitutional story. Washington, DC is not a state and it is not in any state. They only way the residents of the District can have a real representative in the House is to amend the Constitution.

[This was done in 1961 to give them electoral votes, but a proposed amendment in the 1980s granting them genuine representation in congress failed after seven years expired without enough states ratifying.]

IS THE ERA STILL ALIVE?

Our second end-run involves the case of the Equal Rights Amendment [guar-

anteeing legal equality between the sexes]. Congress proposed it in March of 1972. Seven years later when it was due to expire [lacking the three-fourths of states necessary for ratification], Congress extended its ratification for three more years. This didn't help as not a single additional state ratified during the extension. Thus, the amendment died. Or did it?

Some have argued that actions since then would provide justification for advancing the old ERA by picking up where we left off in 1982 with 35 states having ratified and needing only three more states to add the proposed amendment to the Constitution. [This ignores the additional problem of the fact that when the number 35 states is reported, it is including three states that rescinded their ratification; no one knows if this is constitutional.]

Every year since its failure to be ratified, the ERA has been introduced in Congress [mostly out of symbolism to the cause], but the latest version has 204 co-sponsors in that body [that's serious support] and they are going to argue that 35 states have already ratified the proposal. This argument is based on the 27th Amendment to the Constitution.

That amendment was proposed by the first Congress, which proposed 12 amendments. But only 10 of the Bill of Rights were ratified. In 1992 enough states ratified one of those [dealing with congressional pay raises] to add it to the Constitution! It is a great story, but unfortunately, it does not apply to the ERA situation.

CONSTITUTION IS SILENT

That's because the Constitution is silent about how long a proposed amendment stays proposed. Beginning with the 18th Amendment [prohibition] Congress started attaching a seven-year clause to proposed amendment specifying that if the amendment is not ratified within seven years it is no longer considered approved.

The Supreme Court has upheld this clause and all recent proposed amendments have had it.

The ERA had such a clause; the proposal that ended up becoming the 27th Amendment did not. Constitutionally, there is no case for comparing what happened with the 27th Amendment with the ERA.

So what do two end-runs make? Maybe an Enron. One thing is for sure, they don't make constitutional sense.

- The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

PUBLIC FORUM

To Bush, Constitution Is Considered Dead

*The gutters are clogged with the dead
The ones who couldn't join in
The others refusing to sing
The ones who are losing their voice
The ones who've forgotten the tune.*
– Excerpt “God Bless America,”
Harold Painter, January 2003

By Sheila Samples

Preceding generations had every reason to believe those following them would step into the breach and continue the vigil over this nation's Constitutional freedoms and, if necessary, fight to preserve them.

They believed, like George Washington warned – “Government is a force like fire, a troublesome servant and a fearful master. Never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action.” And they remembered, from generation to generation. Unfortunately, those following our generation will have no such luxury.

We blew it.

We forgot to remember when history goes around, it inevitably comes back around. We forgot to remember that the U.S. Constitution is the beating heart of the United States and was, from its inception, designed to protect the freedoms and liberties of “we the people.”

JUSTICE ANTONIN SCALIA ‘CRINGES’

However, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia maintains that the Constitution is a “dead” document, and says he “cringes” when it is referred to as a “living” document.

Vice President Dick Cheney, the duck-hunting buddy Scalia unconstitutionally installed in the White House in the 2000 election coup, must agree since he refuses to abide by even one of its strictures.

Nobody is more adept at forgetting to remember than Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, or “Fredo,” as Bush calls him.

Remember Fredo – Michael Corleone's dumb-as-dirt, totally controlled brother in the “Godfather” series? The nickname is a perfect fit for Gonzales, who cannot recall what he had for breakfast this morning.

TRICKLE-DOWN FASCISM

The one thing he knows for certain, the Constitution is “an outdated document” – quaint and old-fashioned, but of no use in Fredo's world of abuse and torture and trickle-down fascism.

President George Bush, who flies into a rage when he feels his will – his God-given right to rule – is being tested, holds this living document of American liberty in utmost contempt.

In December 2005, when Bush was determined to renew and expand the destructive USA Patriot Act, an aide reminded him that invasion into citizens' private lives undermined the Constitution.

Bush immediately exploded – “Stop throwing the Constitution in my face,” he screamed, “it's just a goddamned piece of paper.”

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BOOTED FROM OFFICE

At that moment, Bush should have been removed from office.

Can anyone make the case that Bush deserved to remain at the helm of this nation for even 10 seconds after spewing such treasonous hate and filth?

Lest we forget, not once, but twice, Bush stood before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, his hand on the Bible, and parroted, “I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

Lest we forget, that 35-word oath is required of all elected presidents and can be found in Article II, Section 1, Clause 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

Old Glory's Beauty Belies Sad Memorial Day

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Looking out my front window on a dismal Memorial Day, I saw a beautiful sight. It was my flag, blowing freely in the morning breeze.

Placed there by the gentle hands of a Civitan volunteer, and provided by a gift from a loving son, my flag was indeed a beautiful sight to behold.

My flag is not the symbol for any one political party. It signifies the unity of all parties in loyalty to one nation.

My flag is not to be abused in political imagery, and certainly it is not to be a part of political chicanery.

IT SHOULDN'T BE A POLITICAL TOOL

Honorably carried by honorable men into honorable and just wars, it is not to be employed emotionally to elicit misplaced support of military conflicts which are less than necessary.

Through childhood, a world war, and until age 34, the Militant Moderate pledged allegiance to the flag he served without the phrase “under God” in that oath. That was added by Congress to the pledge of our childhood about 1960.

My allegiance remains the same, with or without the added phraseology. But I resent anyone making those words sacred to the flag, or a matter of religious



The Constitution is so vital for keeping this republic on track that those who work for the government – all three branches – to include the vice president, each member of both houses of Congress, un-elected Supreme Court justices, and military personnel must take similar oaths. Supporting the Constitution – defending it against all enemies, both foreign and domestic – is literally their job description. All else is political folly.

UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS IS UNDERWAY

Surely Americans must know that a crisis without precedent is underway in this country. The first target in the Straussian neocon's war of terror was the Constitution and, by extension, the American people.

We are hurtling headlong into tyranny and, as Harold Pinter so aptly put it – those whom we elected to protect both us and the Constitution have either lost their voices or seem to have forgotten the tune.

It's all politics all the time. Those on the right champion the suppression of free speech and assembly. Those on the left are equally to blame, complicit in their silence, although they know Bush's war is but another “option on the table” to keep the populace cowering in irrational fear for political gain.

Neither side seems willing to admit there's a big difference, both legal and ethical, between asking citizens to die for their country – and demanding they “kill” for their country.

ONE BAD TANTRUM AFTER ANOTHER

Bush's “reign” since 9/11 has been one bad-tempered tantrum after another. Bush has executed the office of the president every single day over the past six years, just as he promised – faithfully, relentlessly. As we stare dazedly over the blood-sodden landscapes of two continents, we remember – too late – the only thing Bush ever did in his entire life with any enthusiasm was “execute.”

Bush can label any legal U.S. citizen as an “enemy combatant.”

This destructive act places the “Commander Guy” at the helm of the executive pantheon where he is bound only by his imagination when it comes to detaining, torturing and murdering other human beings.

Continued compliance with such venal madness is no longer an option on the people's table. Elected officials must do more than jerk the Constitution out of their pockets and wave it in the faces of their opponents as they rip off some really neat sound bites and posture for the media.

Perhaps if they actually read the Constitution, they would discover what they forgot to remember – they have no choice but to impeach the entire cabal for their absolute despotism, illegal actions, lies and filthy war crimes.

It's in their job description.

And then we should revive the Declaration of Independence so we can get on with restoring this once great republic to its former grandeur – an ethical and political entity that derives its powers from the consent of the governed.

– The author is an Oklahoma writer and a former civilian U.S. Army Public Information Officer

contentiousness.

This was a sad Memorial Day.

The recounting of the personal and family tragedies caused by the war in Iraq, as a way of memorializing these, has taken its toll on all of us who are sensitive to human suffering.

TERRIBLE EFFECTS OF WAR

What an utter, terrible tragedy this war has been!

Having suffered through the death of my only brother in World War II, and having observed the endless grieving of my mother through the years until her death, I understand fully the effects of war on families.

Having lost a son tragically at age 25 in 1982, I have learned that grieving never, ever ends.

Yes, indeed, my flag flies beautifully on my front lawn. I love it. I have served under it in war. Many have died in allegiance to it.

It is for us, the living, to see that our young people die, and families suffer, only in necessary and honorable national conflicts.

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

BOOKS

Let's Just Call It 'Democratic Action'

By Alvena Bieri

DISSENT IN AMERICA

The Voices That Shaped A Nation

By Ralph F. Young

Longman Publishing Co.

792 pages, \$35

Reading Ralph Young's book of "400 Years of Speech, Sermons, Arguments, Articles, Letters, and Songs That Made a Difference" is like taking a lively course in American history.

When we pick it up, we immediately know it's going to be good because Howard Zinn recommends it on the front cover.

Young is so popular at Temple University where he teaches history that he often speaks all over the campus on the power of dissent.

He says all of us have dissented about something at one time or another. We write letters to the editor, sign petitions, or join a protest march, thereby exercising our fundamental right to free speech.

The encouraging and positive thing is that many times the ideas of the dissenters become part of the mainstream and produce real results. Think of the abolition of slavery, racial desegregation, the vote for women, and the final end of the Vietnam conflict.

FROM ROGER WILLIAMS TO CINDY SHEEHAN

So Young takes us all the way from Roger Williams to Cindy Sheehan. And he even includes some anti-democratic voices, too, like Huey Long of Louisiana and Father Charles Coughlin, who turned out to be prejudiced against Jews. He is mentioned, by the way, in one of Woody Guthrie's songs, two of which are in this book.

Long before the American Revolution, John Peter Zenger [1697-1746] showed that freedom of the press was worth standing up for.

As editor of the New York Weekly Journal, he was arrested and tried for criticizing the royal governor. But he was acquitted when the jury found him innocent because he had simply told the truth.

Our revolutionary days were full of dissenters. I keep waiting for someone to write a little satire on those wild patriot insurgents at Lexington and Concord. Maybe it could be the journalist who recently described the Queen's trip to America as "a visit to the colonies."

'COMMON SENSE' STILL POWERFUL

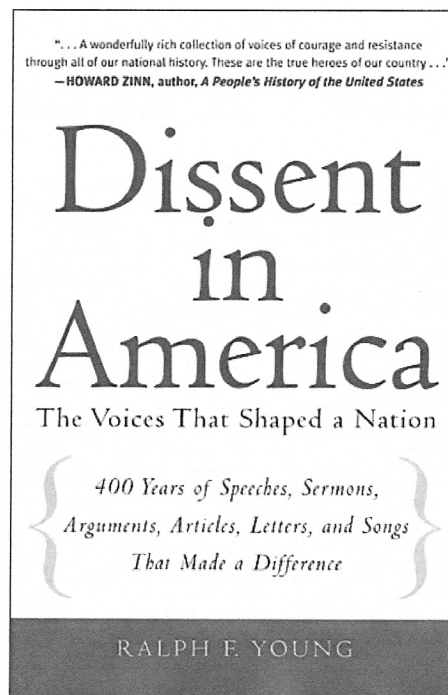
Patriot Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" is still meaningful.

One of my all-time favorite essays, Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self Reliance," a dissent from our accepting authority without question, is as trenchant today as it was in 1841.

The period after the Civil War was a time of much social and economic reform. All the reformers spoke and wrote widely, so we have selections from many well-known, respected Americans like Jane Addams, Booker T. Washington, and William Jennings Bryan.

The People's Party, or Populist, platform from 1892 when they met in Omaha and nominated James B. Weaver for president is quoted in full.

Among other things the Populists called for was a graduated income tax, strong support of labor unions, government regulation or ownership of railroads, tele-



During World War I, Republican Robert La Follette and socialist Eugene Debs were strong voices for peace. In fact, Debs was sent to prison during the Wilson administration and served nearly three years before pardoned by President Harding.

graph and telephone companies, and direct election of U.S. senators.

20TH CENTURY ANTI-WAR FERVOR

The section on the 20th Century has many civil rights statements by people like Martin Luther King Jr., and there is also a wide array of anti-war expressions.

At the time of World War I, Wisconsin Republican Robert La Follette and socialist Eugene Debs were among the strongest voices for waging peace. Debs really suffered for his stand. He was sent to prison during the Wilson administration, and he did not get out until President Harding pardoned him in late 1921 after he had served nearly three years.

Cindy Sheehan signed her piece "Mother of Needlessly Slain Soldier, Casey Sheehan." She makes a very direct anti-Bush argument against the Iraq War.

Ralph Nader and Michael Moore, as well as people for Amnesty International and MoveOn.org, are quoted in the same chapter.

The amazing power of dissent as shown in this volume strikes me as so great that I started wondering if we could find a better term to describe it. "Dissent" may have a slightly negative tone.

Professor Young, could we just call it Democratic Action?

- The author lives in Stillwater

COBURN

From Page 10

course it may not be." In reference to the 2006 study, Harrison said, "You will see that targets that have been set for referral to start of treatment are now largely met."

COBURN'S CANCER ASSERTION MISLEADING

As for Coburn's claim about an eight-month wait for chemotherapy, Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, deputy director of the American Cancer Society, said the point could be misleading since any treatment plan depends on a patient's condition when the cancer is discovered.

"We do not have a single standard of care," Lichtenfeld said. "We really don't have good studies from diagnosis to cure."

In other words, Coburn's assertion about an eight-month window has no real point of reference in treatment plans since other strategies might be employed besides chemotherapy.

Still, Coburn's horror stories about medical care in Canada and the U.K. have been part of the Republican mantra in the ongoing fight to prevent a universal health care system from being established in the United States.

REMEMBER COALGATE'S 'RAMPANT LESBIANISM'?

The Oklahoma senator has become notorious for making extreme statements that are later revealed as bizarre urban myths.

During his 2004 race for the Senate, for instance, Coburn was taped saying a campaign worker from Coalgate told him "lesbianism is so rampant in some of the schools in southeast Oklahoma that they'll only let one girl go to the bathroom."

The Coalgate superintendent of schools expressed outrage at the ludicrous claim, which was met with ridicule by many other Oklahomans. Nevertheless, Coburn was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Coburn also has argued that condoms promote sexually transmitted disease, THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, JUNE 10, 2007, PAGE 12

that abstinence education prevents teenagers from having sex, and that silicone breast implants are good for women's health.

All these positions have been challenged by government studies and expert medical opinion.

COBURN'S STRANGE SCIENCE ON SILICONE IMPLANTS

Coburn, as a new member of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2005, opined while pondering a bill restricting class-action suits, "You know I immediately thought about silicone breast implants and the legal wrangling and the class-action suits off that.

"And I thought I would just share with you what science says today about silicone breast implants. If you have them, you're healthier than if you don't. That is what the ultimate science shows ... In fact, there's no science that shows that silicone breast implants are detrimental and, in fact, they make you healthier."

At the time Coburn made that statement, silicone breast implants had been banned in the United States for more than a decade because of cases of implant leakage and other health complaints from women.

In 2006, the Food and Drug Administration did approve the implants return to the U.S. market, although a subsequent European study and many doctors have continued to raise questions about possible protein buildup around the implants and other safety issues.

Other medical experts, including the scientists cited by the FDA, argue that the preponderance of studies fail to show that silicone implants are detrimental to a woman's health, but they don't claim the implants make women healthier.

- The author is a Tulsa-based freelance reporter/writer and two-time winner of the American Business Press Editors Award for Investigative Journalism. He writes regularly for the Swiss newsweekly *Sonntags Blick* and *Consortium-news.com*. He can be reached at rlfricker@hotmail.com.

65% Of Americans Most Supporting Stem Cell Research

By Nico Pitney

In 1995, actor Christopher Reeve was paralyzed from the neck down in a horse riding accident. He then became a tireless advocate for spinal cord injury treatment and embryonic stem cell research.

"If anything is immoral," he said, "it is to deny scientists access to unwanted embryos that could be used for potential treatment."

Today, the Congress has a chance to provide hope to those suffering from similar ailments, as they reconsider the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which was vetoed last year when President Bush caved in to the religious right.

Currently, 65% of Americans approve of "medical research using embryonic stem cells" and nearly 60% support "increasing federal funding for embryonic stem cell research."

Stem cell research offers great potential for a cure for diabetes and other debilitating diseases.

In contrast, conservatives have attempted to stall embryonic stem cell research on so-called "moral" grounds, propagating lies in order to counter support for stem cell research.

MYTH #1 - NO POTENTIAL FOR CURES

The right often argues that embryonic stem cell research is in its nascent stages and provides only "false hope" for patients. White House spokesperson Tony Snow said, "The vast majority of breakthroughs right now, virtually all, have involved those other than embryonic stem cells."

Far from the truth. Researchers have already used embryonic stem cells to treat spinal cord injury in laboratory animals. Embryonic stem cells have also been shown in studies to slow vision loss, and reverse some of the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Scientists have used human embryonic stem cells to create cardiovascular precursor cells that could lead to treatments for heart diseases, T-cells that could lead to a cure for AIDS, and insulin-secreting cells that could lead to a cure for diabetes, according to Center for American Progress fellow Jonathan Moreno.

"Embryonic stem cells are still the most medically promising type of stem cells because of their ability to differentiate into any cell in the human body," Moreno said.

MYTH #2 - 'ETHICAL' ALTERNATIVES

In January, the White House released a document titled "Advancing Stem Cell Science Without Destroying Human Life," exaggerating that there are plenty of "ethical" and equal alternatives to embryonic stem cell research, a cause that has been consistently picked up by the rightwing.

For example, Karl Rove said last year that "recent studies" show researchers "have far more promise from adult stem cells than from embryonic stem cells." Subsequently, the White House "could not provide the name of a stem cell researcher who shares Rove's views on the superior promise of adult stem cells."

But the scientific establishment has long known that "adult stem cells have markedly restricted differentiation potential" than their embryonic counterparts.

Pro-life scientist David Prentice argued that adult stem cell research has yielded some 65 therapies for current ailments.

Stem cell researcher Steven Teitelbaum refuted Prentice's assertions, finding that adult stem cell research has only yielded treatment for all diseases.

"Prentice not only misrepresents existing adult stem cell treatments but also frequently distorts the nature and content of the references he cites," Teitelbaum said.

Another announcement that scientists have discovered the use of stem cells

Doctor's Moral Belief May Affect Patient

A significant number of doctors say they do not feel obligated to tell patients about medical options they oppose morally, such as abortion and teen birth control, and believe they have no duty to refer people elsewhere for such treatments, researchers say.

The survey of 1,144 doctors around the country is the first major look at how physicians' religious or moral beliefs might affect patient care.

The study, conducted by University of Chicago researchers, found that 86% of those responding believe doctors are obligated to present all treatment options.

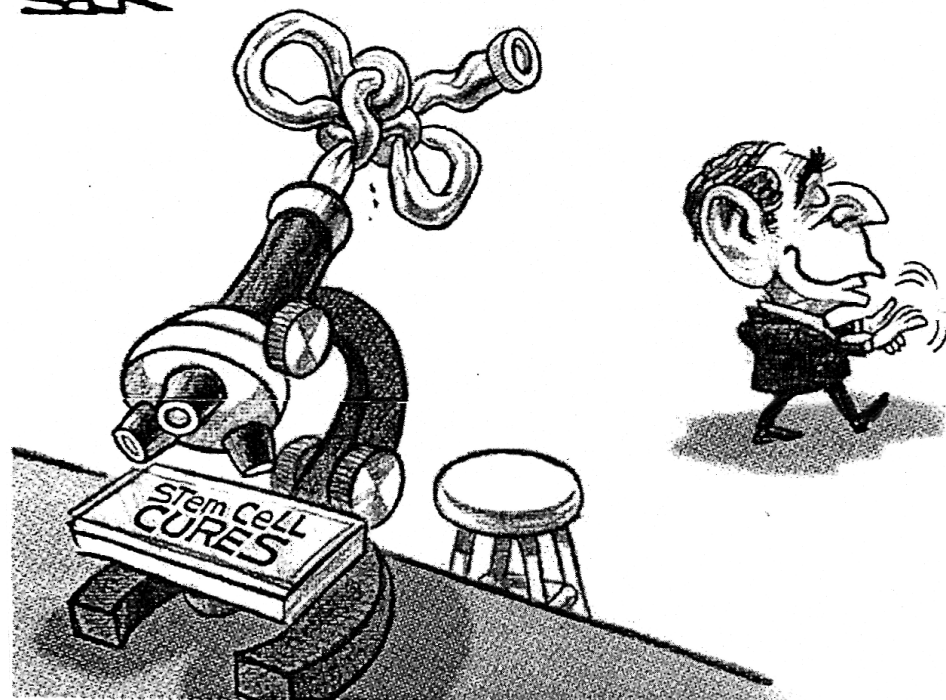
More than 71% believe they must refer patients to another doctor for treatments they oppose. Slightly more than half the rest said they had no such obligation; the others were undecided.

"That means that there are a lot of physicians out there who are not, in fact, doing the right thing," said David Magnus, director of Stanford University's Center for Biomedical Ethics.

AMA HAS A WRITTEN POLICY

An American Medical Association policy statement says doctors can decline to give a treatment sought by an individual that is "incompatible with the physician's personal, religious, or moral beliefs." But the physician should try to ensure the patient has "access to adequate healthcare."

The survey did not examine whether these doctors act on their beliefs - that is, whether they actually withhold information or refuse to refer patients. But the researchers calculated that tens of millions of Americans might be going to



in amniotic fluid shows promise, but "the [new stem cells] can clearly generate a broad range of important cell types, but they may not do as many tricks as embryonic stem cells."

"The discovery of new sources of stem cells is great news. It's not a reason to neglect the funding of embryonic stem cell research," states Moreno.

MYTH #3 - DEAD EMBRYOS GOOD ALTERNATIVE

Bush offered his support to legislation introduced by Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-GA, to "expand" existing federal funding of embryonic stem cell research to so-called "dead embryos," those which naturally cease developing in a laboratory setting.

Scientists are already questioning the viability of these embryos for scientific research. Harvard Medical School professor George Daley wrote, "I am left to wonder why we would choose to allow only poor quality embryos for medical research when many thousands of normal embryos are otherwise destined to be discarded as medical waste."

Dr. Robin Lovell-Badge of the National Institute for Medical Research in London said, "There is no way to prove that an arrested embryo would have stopped growing if it had been put into a woman's womb rather than a lab dish."

MYTH #4 - RELIGIOUS GROUPS OPPOSED

A central myth of the right-wing's opposition to stem cell research is that there is a monolithic moral or religious view that an embryo should be treated as a human being.

Some religious communities believe that embryonic stem cell research destroys innocent life and should not be allowed, but others believe that while the embryo has moral worth, a group of a hundred cells no bigger than the head of a pin is not the same as a person.

For example, the Presbyterian Church [USA] stated, "With careful regulation, we affirm the use of human stem cell tissue for research that may result in the restoring of health to those suffering from serious illness."

The Union for Reformed Judaism supports embryonic stem cell research, asserting that the "Jewish tradition teaches us that preserving life and promoting health are among the most precious of values."

The United Church of Christ is fully supportive of federal funding for embryonic stem cell research within "ethically sound guidelines ... and the limitations set forth by the National Institutes of Health."

Even Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Bush's appointee as director of the National Institutes of Health, told a Senate subcommittee that "it is clear today that American science will be better-served, and the nation will be better-served, if we let our scientists do their work."

such doctors.

"Conscientious objection is fine ... as long as it doesn't conflict with the rights of the patient," Magnus said. "You can't abandon the patient or essentially coerce the patient by saying you won't do the procedure or refer them to someone else."

The study, which was partially funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation of Plainsboro, NJ, was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

BACKGROUND ON THE SURVEY

It was led by Dr. Farr Curlin, a University of Chicago ethicist and internist. The findings were based on a survey mailed to 1,820 practicing U.S. family doctors and specialists, chosen randomly from a national database; 63% responded.

Doctors who described themselves as very religious, particularly Protestants and Catholics, were much less likely than others to feel obligated to tell patients about controversial treatments or refer them to other doctors, and were far more likely to tell patients if they had moral objections.

Overall, 52% of those responding said they oppose abortion, 42% oppose prescribing birth control to 14-16 year-olds without parental approval, and 17% object to sedating patients near death.

Female doctors were much more likely than males to feel obligated to refer patients for treatments they personally oppose, far less likely to present their own objections to a patient, and slightly more likely to disclose all treatment options.

Mother's Work Is Finally Calculated

By Janine DeFao

Angie Jacobson finds her job a mix of exasperation and elation, strict routines and uncertainty, laughter and tears.

"It's pretty much all day and all night," said the stay-at-home mom of 3-year-old Cody Levine. "This is something you can never walk away from."

So the Berkeley resident and former technical editor wasn't surprised that Salary.com, a compensation software and data company, put the annual market value of stay-at-home mothers' work at \$138,095 – or \$166,483 in San Francisco.

The web site, which surveyed more than 40,000 mothers, reported that stay-at-home moms work an average of 91.8 hours a week doing 10 jobs that resemble those of housekeepers and day care center teachers, as well as psychologists and chief executive officers.

BASE SALARY IS FIGURED

Accounting for the hours worked in each category, the Waltham, MA, firm calculated that these mothers – who care for 28% of the nation's children under 15 – would earn a base annual salary of \$46,931 for a 40-hour workweek [the national median is \$40,988]. Adding nearly 52 hours of overtime, paid at time and a half, they easily passed the six-figure mark.

"I definitely think moms are undervalued, and I think moms often undervalue themselves," said Lena Bottos, Salary.com's director of compensation. The company has been calculating the stay-at-home mom salary since 2001, when it was \$104,696.

While it may be a nice pat on the back, you can't take it to the bank.

"That's the bitter pill. I'm doing it for free," said Mindy Wellington of Los Gatos, CA, who left her job in sales 11 years ago and now cares for three children, ages 5 to 11.

TELLS HER HUSBAND SHE NEEDS A WIFE

"I always tell my husband I want a wife," said Wellington, who said she works from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, making meals, running errands, buying groceries, doing laundry and dishes, shuttling her children around and helping with homework.

"Everyone I know who stays home says this is the hardest job," she said.

"You can't even go the bathroom without someone following you."

Not everyone agrees, though.

Former lawyer Michelle Koskella said she didn't earn \$138,095 even working 50 to 60 hours a week and finds staying at home with her 6-year-old daughter a lot more flexible.

"That's not to belittle what stay-at-home mothers do. I don't think it can be quantified in any dollar amount," she said. "I don't need anyone to validate me and what I do by putting a monetary value on it."

IT RECOGNIZES IMPORTANCE OF MOTHERS

Stephanie Coontz, research director at the Council on Contemporary Families,



said the salary figure is of little use, though the survey has value in recognizing the importance of the work at-home mothers do.

"It obscures the reality of most lower- or even middle-income families," she said. "What about in families where the man is making \$35,000? Does that mean her work is worth four times his salary?"

In addition to its Mom Salary Wizard, Salary.com has a less-celebrated Dad Salary Wizard that places the value of stay-at-home dads nearly \$13,000 lower than those of their female counterparts, at \$125,340. According to the U.S. Census, stay-at-home fathers care for 0.69% of children younger than 15, compared with 0.28% a decade ago.

At-home dads surveyed by Salary.com said they work 81 hours a week, more than 10 hours less than at-home moms. Bottos said that may be because working moms take over when they come home.

The firm calculated that full-time working mothers put in 49 hours at home, worth \$85,939.

HOURS AT-HOME MOMS PUT IN PER WEEK

Housekeeper 18.9; day care teacher 16.8; cook 12.1; computer operator 8.2; laundry machine operator 7.5; facilities manager 6.4; janitor 6.1; van driver 5.9; psychologist 5.8; chief executive officer 4.1.

Total: 91.8 hours.

Calculate your "salary" with the Mom Salary Wizard at http://swz.salary.com/momsalarywizard/htmls/mswl_momcenter.html.

Editor's note: The 2007 Legislature passed a bill to grant stay at home moms a \$200 tax deduction per year.

Women's Progress Is Up To Women

By Jill Treanor

Women are unlikely to thrive in organizations where fewer than 30% of the senior executives are not already females, according to a study just published.

Researchers at the London Business School argue that there is merit in introducing targets to ensure the progress of women up the managerial ladder after finding that companies with female chief executives were more likely to enlist women in crucial projects.

"This suggests that executives must take cognition of the fact that when the proportion of women in senior positions is less than critical mass [generally considered to be 30%] then the culture and the practices of the organization are unlikely to create a strong pipeline for women," the authors from the LBS Center for Women in Business said.

IT IS A MATTER OF URGENCY

The researchers, led by Professor Lynda Gratton, conclude: "We recommend that executives address this issue of the tipping point as a matter of urgency."

They also recommend that companies address the gender imbalance by requiring headhunters to field female candidates and that half of all executive selection panels are women.

The study is based on the practices of 61 organizations in 12 European countries ranging from car companies to utilities. It recommends that executives at the top of organizations create initiatives to foster the promotion of women.

It also suggests that management teams should "build and open the leadership experience pipeline to prepare women for senior roles."

"This will involve, for example, ensuring access to internal and external networks as well as internal training and development," the researchers said.

Their study also calls for women to be exposed to "crucial leadership development activities" so companies have a "continuous focus" on leadership development for women.

FOUR WAVES IDENTIFIED

The research identifies what it describes as "four waves of intervention."

The first is measurement and reporting of gender diversity such as recruitment and salary differences, which then become the basis for targets in some organizations.

The second is to enable women to be wives, mothers and have careers, with 90% of companies offering flexible working options but nearly half of the companies admitting that fewer than 10% of women managers work flexibly.

The third is about creating "supportive networks" that help to mentor and coach women.

The final wave is about preparing women to be leaders.

"Leadership research over the last decade has shown that those who get to the top of the organizations typically have experience in leading business critical projects," the researchers said.

But during their research they found that women had a "very low" participation in any leadership activities. They point to one company, Volvo, where this was not the case: the car company asked a female-only team to design and build a car that would appeal to women.

The Guardian UK

Save Yourself A Trip

Just before the funeral services, the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow and asked, "How old was your husband?"

"98," she replied, "just two years older than I."

"So you're 96," the undertaker commented, to which she responded, "I know ... hardly worth going home, is it?"

Fitness Center Workout

I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

The Upside of Old Age

A reporter interviewing a 104-year-old woman: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?" She simply relied, "No peer pressure."

Abstinence Flop Wastes \$1 Billion

By Amanda Schaffer

In the past decade, the federal government has spent more than \$1 billion on programs that promote abstinence as the only healthy choice to make about sex before marriage.

Now the government's own long-term evaluation of the initiatives, required by Congress in 1997, showed that these programs seem to accomplish essentially nothing.

That's right: Nada.

Students in the programs were no more likely to abstain from sex than their peers. If they did lose their virginity, they tended to do so at the same average age and have the same number of sexual partners as other students did.

As Rep. Henry Waxman, D-CA, put it: "In short, American taxpayers appear to have paid over \$1 billion federal dollars for programs that have no impact."

IT SHOULD BE THE DEATH KNELL

The new study, rigorously conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. on behalf of the government, should be the death knell for abstinence-only programs, which have also drawn criticism for perpetuating gender stereotypes, spreading medical inaccuracies, and ignoring the separation of church and state.

While the Bush Administration shows few signs of rethinking this pet project, a growing number of states have begun to wise up, rejecting millions in federal funding because they come with abstinence strings attached.

The problem is that even larger sums of federal money now bypass state governments and flow directly to community abstinence groups, often in the form of multi-year grants, with little or no oversight. It's up to Congress to stanch this ooze.

IT WAS A SOLID RESEARCH STUDY

The Mathematica study is long-term and has scientific bona fides that are hard to dispute. The researchers focused on four abstinence-only education programs – in Virginia, Florida, Wisconsin and Mississippi -- that received federal money through a program called Title V.

Beginning in 1999, the researchers randomly assigned more than 2,000 students either to receive or not to receive abstinence-only instruction, in addition to whatever else they did in school.

Then in 2005-06, when the students were on average 16½, the researchers surveyed both groups about their sexual attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. Remarkably, those who'd gotten the abstinence-only ed – some as often as every school day for up to four years – did not behave differently than their peers.

AVERAGE AGE FOR BOTH IS 15

The abstinence-taught teens were no more likely to abstain from sex or even to wait longer before losing their virginity. [In both groups, those who'd had sex did so for the first time at an average age just shy of 15.]

Undeterred by the Mathematica findings – "new and diverse abstinence programs have grown around the country" since the research began in the 1990s, the Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement – President Bush has asked for \$191 million for abstinence education for fiscal year 2008, an increase of \$28 million over this fiscal year.

But the states may refuse to take the money that flows through them.

States are required to match 75% of the funds they receive for abstinence ed through Title V, and this can jeopardize other priorities.

FEDS PREVENT THE WHOLE TRUTH

Also, teaching abstinence must be the "exclusive purpose" of programs paid for out of this federal pot. Programs cannot promote the use of condoms or contraception, and they must tell kids that sex outside of marriage is "likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects."

Given that the public is largely unconvinced by this rigid approach – and that government reports reveal medical inaccuracies in abstinence curricula, not to mention this month's evidence that abstinence-ed doesn't make kids more abstinent – it's no wonder that more and more governors are choosing to bail.

Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland announced rejecting more than \$1 million in federal funds and also freeing about \$500,000 in the state budget. [As a spokesman explained, "[I]f the state is going to spend money on teaching and protecting kids, the governor believes it is better to spend it in a smarter, more comprehensive approach."]

STATES ARE OPTING OUT

New Jersey, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Montana, and Maine have also pulled out or plan to do so by the end of the year. [And California never participated to begin with.]

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, a policy and advocacy group, estimates that together, these eight states are turning down about \$11 million of the total \$50 million allocated to the Title V program.

But the rest of that \$50 million is only part of the problem. In 2000, another federal cookie jar opened. Community-Based Abstinence Education, as the initiative is now called, channels money directly to community groups rather than through state governments.

Starting last year, the grant processes and rules were changed. Now participants have to focus less on measurable public health goals and more on chastity as a form of moral virtue.

NEW GUIDELINES STRESS INTEGRITY

Programs "must not refer to abstinence as a form of contraception," but should



Abstinence Only Is ACLU Lawsuit Target

The American Civil Liberties Union has announced a multi-state action calling on the federal government to fix medical inaccuracies in federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula.

Eleven ACLU affiliates sent letters to the Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] alerting the agency to problematic curricula in their states and asking HHS to take steps to remedy the situation.

"We are taking action today because federally funded abstinence-only curricula across the country contain medically inaccurate information about the importance of condoms in preventing pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted disease," said Julie Sternberg, senior staff attorney with the ACLU Reproductive Freedom.

The government has turned a blind eye to the misinformation in federally funded abstinence-only programs. It is time for the federal government to start properly monitoring the content of these programs.

The ACLU asked HHS and the Oregon Department of Human Services to investigate evidence of misuse of taxpayer dollars to promote one faith over others in an abstinence-only-until-marriage program Stop and Think.

The ACLU threatened to pursue legal action if sufficient measures are not taken to correct any problems.

In early April, a federally commissioned study was released showing that, notwithstanding the more than \$1 billion that the federal government has poured into the programs since 1996, abstinence-only programs don't work.

The study looked at several federally funded programs and found that teens who participated in them were just as likely to have sex as teens who did not participate. Furthermore, these students had first intercourse at the same age, and the same number of sexual partners, as students who did not participate.

Currently, no federal funds are dedicated to supporting sexuality education programs that both teach abstinence and include complete and medically accurate information about how to use contraceptives effectively, despite evidence that these programs can delay sexual activity and increase contraceptive use among teens.

teach that "abstinence reflects qualities of personal integrity and is honorable," according to the new guidelines.

Programs should also teach students to watch out for corrupt classmates, avoiding "parties where sexually active peers are likely to attend."

The length of grants was increased to five years, which means fewer opportunities for oversight. And so far, Congress hasn't helped either. Congressional earmarks to abstinence-only groups, like the Abstinence Clearinghouse and the Medical Institute, continue apace.

Now that the Democrats are in control, they need to crack down. The current funding for Title V expires in June and, given this latest study, should expire for good.

As for money that flows directly to community groups, Congress could cut this, too, despite the five-year grants, to decrease the number of new grants offered or possibly reduce payments to existing grantees.

Now that the government has collected its own evidence that teaching about abstinence doesn't make kids less sexually active, it's time to redirect money to comprehensive sex ed.

The kind that teaches kids to protect themselves with condoms and is much more likely to do some good.



Announcing the all new...

Observer Blog

Taking the Oklahoma Observer to new heights.

www.okobserver.net

Robertson's Rantings Beamed To China

By Don Wilkey

Recently I learned that the number of Christians in China exceeds the number of believers in the U.S. According to one author the only Christian on Chinese TV is Pat Robertson.

I was recently contacted by the press to share some information about Pat and was quoted about how absurd some of his statements were.

I thought I might take the time to go into my files to come up with a religious profile of a man who is having such an impact in our world.

REVELATIONS

The New Testament's First John reminds readers to test the spirits. In John's own day there were those who claimed to have a revelation from God and the author urged caution.

Pat Robertson has received several direct revelations from God. Among the most popular was the one he had while speaking at a Full Gospel Business Men's meeting where it was revealed to him some of the people there were being healed from hemorrhoids.

In 1988, God told Robertson to run for President. Since Pat lost his own home state by a wide margin this places God's providential future way below Karl Rove's.

Pat's revelation's often come in regard to the President and Presidential politics. Pat has even a higher calling than national politics. God was supposed to have revealed to him that he would usher in the Son of God's return.

Pat had plenty of warnings for the nation from God. In the 1980s, he predicted an economic collapse for the nation as well as world wars that never came to pass. Biblical prophets whose predictions did not come true were known as false prophets.

Pat has an out for his clairvoyance. He recently claimed that when there were no hurricanes as predicted one year, a strong storm would suffice. When Dover, PA residents voted out his favored creationist candidates on the school board, Robertson warned them not to expect any divine protection in the region.

As recently as 2006, he predicted a number of disasters would fall upon the nation.

When the Prime Minister of Israel lay comatose in a hospital in Israel from a stroke, Pat claimed God got him back for giving Gaza to the Palestians.

Pat's crystal ball often works for him in the Middle East. He at one time claimed that CBN reporters knew the whereabouts of hostages in Lebanon.

His friend in office, Ronald Reagan, found the reports unfounded and wondered at such remarks.

The most recent revelation, shared by ally Jerry Falwell, was a guarantee from the Lord that the Republicans would carry the elections in 2006.

Such a paper trail that leaves the impression that God got it wrong must leave with it lessons to be learned. However, Robertson has continued to speak out in public issues.

MEDIA LEADER

At one time Robertson led the GOP pack in his attempt to be President. Authors suggested his escape from combat in Korea by family ties led to his downfall.

Lawyer Robertson leveled a lawsuit at the accuser, but later dropped the effort instead forming the Christian Coalition. The coalition, though falling on recent hard times, sparked a lobby effort that has turned into the most powerful in the

Christians Differ On What Kind Of God

By William Blake

George Gallup once said, "I could prove God statistically." While his statement is farfetched, two recent academic studies of religion and politics reveal several interesting conclusions about the American people, our political parties and our houses of worship.

The latest national survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life finds that most Americans continue to say that religion's influence on the country is declining.

Most who express this view believe that such decreased influence is less than positive. Americans also overwhelmingly consider the U.S. a Christian nation: 67% characterize the country this way, which is up from 60% a decade ago.

The Democratic Party continues to face a serious "God problem," with just 26% saying the party is friendly to religion.

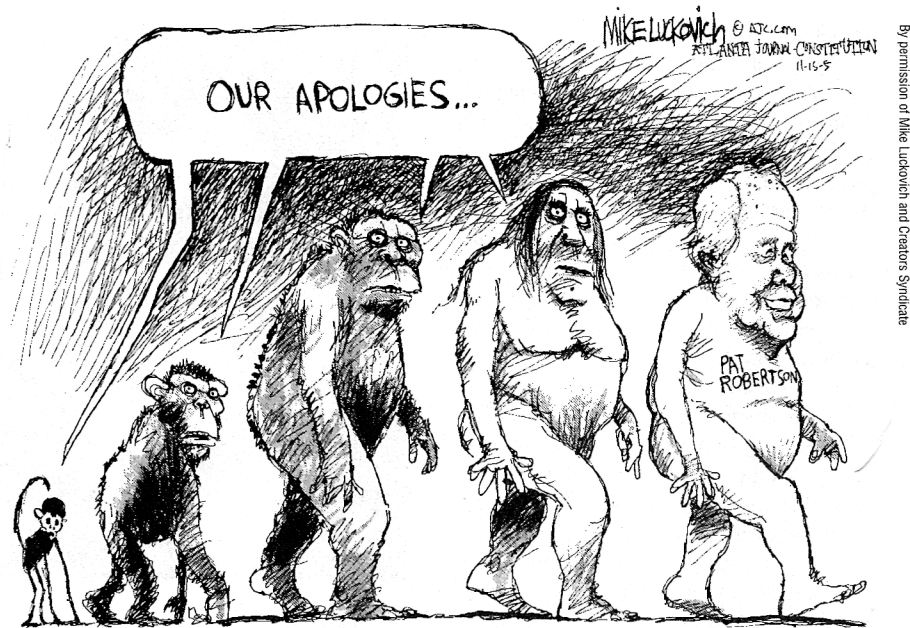
The proportion of Americans who say the Republican Party is friendly to religion, while much larger, has fallen in the past year, with a particularly sharp decline coming among white evangelical Protestants [14%].

AMERICANS ARE CONFLICTED

Americans remain conflicted about what the appropriate relationship should be between religion and government. When asked whether liberals have gone too far in trying to keep religion out of schools and government, 69% said yes.

Conversely, when asked if conservatives have gone too far in imposing their religious values on the country, 49% answered yes, which is up five points from last year.

There is also a lack of consensus on whether houses of worship should express their views on pressing social and political questions. Roughly half of Americans surveyed [51%] say houses of worship should express their views on such issues, while 46% believe they should keep out of such matters.



By permission of Mike Luckovich and Creators Syndicate

nation, according to many sources.

His link to Republicans has caused some of his critics to claim Pat is more interested in GOP than God. He has been known to even work with cult leaders like Rev. Moon if it meant defeating Democrats.

Pat has friends around the globe and some of them are strange bedfellows. One of his business partners was accused of helping to fund Al-Qaeda. Nor is it any secret that Pat enjoys the support of the Coors beer family, which also supports many Religious Right groups in the nation.

Politics makes for strange friendships and power tends to make even more interesting alliances. Pat became friends with the dictator of Zaire. He sought to use his friendship to get an audience for the harsh dictator to seats of power in the U.S. government.

On the other hand, if he did not like a dictator, his benevolence was not so kind. He recently got on national TV and called for the assassination of the dictator of Venezuela.

Not only are some of the revelations suspect, some of Robertson's newscasts arouse suspicion.

He once claimed a little girl in Kingsville, TX was forbidden to pray over her school lunch. The story rocketed across the land and journalists were dispatched to interview the offenders.

It was quickly discovered there was no basis for such a story that served its purpose to rile up a public but was unfounded.

Robertson also blamed Janet Reno for the Randy Weaver incident with the FBI. The facts bear out the news that Reno was not even attorney general at the time.

Replying to Pat's book *New World Order*, critics have charged that he is a trailer park David Letterman. Others who commented on the work say the author is a paranoid pinhead.

With being so close to government power, you wonder why he is so suspicious of it. He has compared federal agents to Nazis claiming they will persecute Christians. Authors have noted his push to return the nation to the days of Dwight Eisenhower.

Such a claim brings with it images of a nation with sweatshops, no civil rights, limited women's rights and dismal environmental protections. These are the glo-

See ROBERTSON Page 17

Baylor University recently released one of the most comprehensive studies of religion ever conducted. The study found that most non-atheist Americans conceive of God through one of four methodologies.

Believers in an authoritarian God tend to view God as angry and capable of meting out punishment to those who are unfaithful or ungodly. Individuals who subscribe to a Benevolent God believe God is mainly a force of positive influence in the world and is less willing to condemn or punish individuals.

IT IS GOD AT A DISTANCE

Believers in a Critical God feel that God really does not interact with the world. However, God still observes the world and views the current state of the world unfavorably.

Individuals who believe in a Distant God think of God as a cosmic force which set the laws of nature in motion. Thus, God does not interact with the world and does not hold clear opinions about world events.

These different ways of viewing religion have a profound impact on how individuals view political and moral issues. Believers in a Critical God are the most likely to favor the equal distribution of wealth, the closer regulation of businesses and protection of the environment.

Adherents to a Benevolent God are the least likely to support affirmative action. Believers in a Distant God are more than twice as likely as people who believe in an Authoritarian God to want the government to abolish the death penalty.

Believers in an Authoritarian God are more than three times as likely to desire government funding for faith-based organizations than are believers in a Distant God.

The Interfaith Alliance

America Defeated In Economic War

By Thomas Heffner

Japan has accumulated \$1 trillion surplus currency reserve. China has also accumulated \$1 trillion surplus currency reserve through their balance of trade surplus with the United States.

All this monetary ammunition is being used to buy our major corporations which are for sale daily on the open stock market.

We have already lost 8,000 companies in the last 10 years alone to foreign purchase and domination.

All this coupled with a dismantled industrial infrastructure assures a foreign dominated future and a much lower standard of living.

This accumulated money held in foreign hands is now making us almost completely controlled in every way by foreigners.

AMERICA IS A DEBTOR NATION

- Foreign countries are funding almost 100% of our government debt.
- Lobbying American politicians [hundreds of millions of dollars spent in Washington in last decade].
- Influencing American media through advertising dollars.
- Influencing American educational institutions through professor fellowship and research funding.
- Creating inextricable links to local communities through "insourced" manufacturing and employment.
- Not just sheer magnitude of ownership of U.S. companies, but ownership of major chokepoint industries as well as key thought controlling publishing, movie, and other media industries.

UNHEALTHY, VULNERABLE POSITION

There is now no limit to what foreign countries can do to infiltrate, bind, and obligate our local, state, and federal officials and business leaders.

We are not allowed to do any of these things in other countries and we have no oversight or restrictions as to how foreign countries can influence and take over our economy and control our whole country.

We have heard it all before: America is the world's only superpower, the U.S. military is unrivaled, its GDP thriving.

ROBERTSON

From Page 16

ry years, according to Pat.

EXTREMIST VIEWS

The TV host is also host to a large volume of extremist views and statements. The most revealing is in his book about a supposed new world order. In the work, the use of anti-Semitic sources and legends brought forth the wrath of the Anti-Defamation League.

Pat used the terms "European Bankers" several times in the work. The words are euphemistic ways of blaming Jews for world problems.

In *New World Order*, Jimmy Carter is part of the secret plot to overthrow the government. Masons and world bankers are in the clandestine organization. Even the Gulf War was set up by this secret society.

Bush Sr. was in on it, though maybe he was unaware. It was, according to the work, bankers who caused the Communists to take over Russia. It was also this group who made us lose in Vietnam.

For 70 years, Pat claims in the work, this secret cartel has run the nation. The Rockefeller family is in on the plot as well as the U.S. secretaries of state who want to set up this one world government.

Pat's far right views have landed his movement on the front pages of investigative web sites.

Frank Rich of the New York Times warned that Pat threw gasoline on the psychic fires of the nation's militias.

Not only did the ADL lament Pat's book, they have noted with interest the law school he founded and funded with state money. Among the literature found objectionable by the ADL were several anti-Semitic periodicals in the school.

Being a law school grad himself, one wonders at some of his legal advice. He once stated that the president does not have to obey court rulings.

Pat's disdain for liberals seems to exceed his dislike for the devil. He warned that just as Nazis persecuted Jews in Germany, liberals in America want to do the same to Christians.

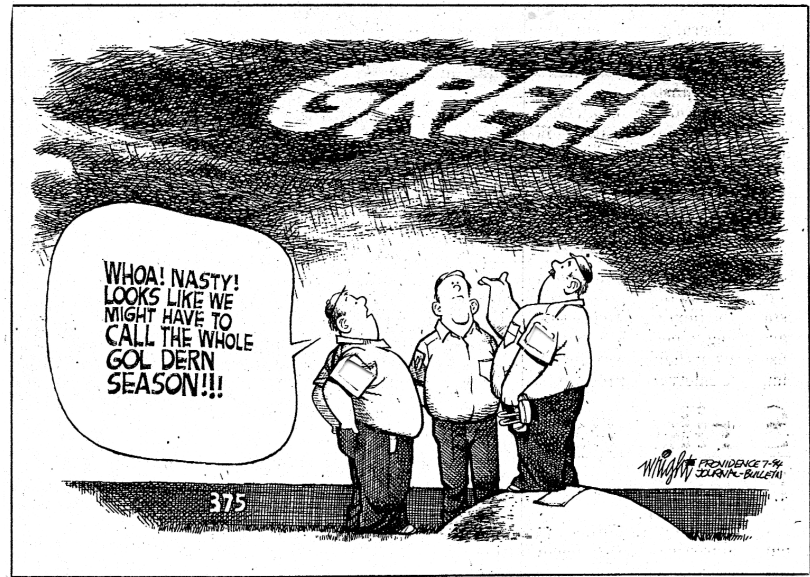
Seeking to top himself, Pat got on the airways and stated that Methodists represent the spirit of the anti-Christ. The anti-Christ is the creature who wars against Christ in scripture. Some sources see this being as a direct incarnation of the devil himself.

A recent disclosure of foreign policy proposed by the commentator was revealing. Pat suggested that we might need to drop a nuclear bomb on the United Nations.

But perhaps the most revealing social statement that Pat made about contemporary American can be found in his viewpoint about the women's movement. Robertson declared, "The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians."

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Pat Robertson does not like the idea of separation of the church from the state.



What you don't hear is currently the U.S. is standing on a rug of insecurity that at any time can be pulled out from under us by foreign creditors who own the national debt and are financing our government.

By analyzing our strengths and weaknesses, it will be seen that the rising debt and the dependence on foreign creditors to purchase and keep purchasing our debt has put the U.S., the so-called "superpower," in a very unhealthy and vulnerable position.

WHAT IF THEY TAKE THEIR MONEY ELSEWHERE?

Currently Japan holds \$644.3 billion in U.S. government debt, China \$349.6 billion, the United Kingdom \$239.1 billion, according to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Treasury.

The U.S. in international relations is a dominant military force backed by an economy that is not very healthy as its existence is propped up by debt.

If any of these countries stop buying U.S. debt and take their money elsewhere, domestic inflation would skyrocket and our economy would be unsustainable. We would be in serious trouble.

Our standard of living would dramatically erode and we could no longer maintain and support our military.

Contact your local Congressmen and tell them the current deficit and dependence on foreign creditors is unacceptable; that a real superpower's economic health shouldn't be dependent on a foreign country's good will and fickle temperament.

www.EconomyInCrisis.org

Experts who have monitored his movement and school note his love of dominion theology.

The idea behind dominion theology – or as it is called in some circles, Reconstructionism theology – is for the church to take over the state. Pat and fellow patrons believe separation applies only to the state interference with the church and not vice versa in the First Amendment.

Robertson has not been shy about soliciting money from the state for his Christian programs and schools. He once denounced the idea but recently got \$500,000 from the government.

He is reported to have gotten over \$55 million from the state of Virginia for his law school.

His friend, George W. Bush, has stepped up the effort to get faith-based money sent from the government to the churches for social programs. The entanglement of government monies into church ministries has blossomed during the Bush administration.

Pat replied that the idea of the church staying out of politics comes from Hitler. A historical claim that seems rare since Hitler seemed more intent on keeping Jews out of politics than the church.

Through dominion theology and the Christian Coalition's influences, the nation has felt the impact of a hardball political machine. The machine is documented with threats and intimidations for agendas that many Christians find not related to Christian ethic.

Pat commented that now Christians are the head and no longer the tail of U.S. politics.

The movement Pat has provided leadership for once boasted they placed Reagan in the White House.

The movement evolved when the Reagan years did not satisfy them to the place where they decided to take over the nation from the bottom up. Or as Pat's organization put it, "one precinct at a time."

Pat's law school uses texts by Gary North and R. J. Rushdoony, both avid Reconstructionism writers.

The president of the school one time was Herb Titus, who is on board with dominion theology and has worked across the nation in political movements aimed at such.

Pat sees Barry Lynn as his arch-enemy because Lynn heads up the national organization promoting separation of church and state. Pat says that Lynn is lower than a child molester for advocating such viewpoints.

To sum up Pat Robertson's viewpoint of the fallacy of separation of church and state, you don't need to listen long to hear his summation of the grave criminal act of separation. Pat claims the whole idea is a Soviet concept.

These strange pronouncements come from a man who is not only having an impact on the nation, his viewpoints are being spread around the world as the official version of American Christianity.

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

Mythical Tales Of Reagan's Presidency

By Joe Conason

Sensing their own smallness, contemporary politicians often seek to puff themselves up by appealing to myth and legend. For Republicans, there is no mythology more appealing than that of Ronald Wilson Reagan, as the party's presidential candidates eagerly demonstrated during their debate in the library that bears his name.

Those charmless imitators seem to believe that the late president's image can not only win primary votes but vanquish America's enemies. As Rudolph Giuliani explained, a Reaganesque glare should be enough to scare the Iranian despot into surrendering any nuclear ambitions: "He has to look at an American president and he has to see Ronald Reagan. Remember, they looked in Ronald Reagan's eyes, and in two minutes, they released the hostages."

STANDARD MYTHS FOR GOP CANDIDATES

Such belligerent invocations of the old actor are standard fare on the GOP primary circuit. The actual circumstances of American relations with Iran during the Reagan years – and indeed of security policy in general back then – were more complex and less inspirational.

The tough gunslinger described by the Republican candidates resembles the real Reagan about as accurately as his movie roles resembled his real life. It was strange to hear him mentioned in the context of Iran, the scene of the worst foreign-policy fiasco of his administration – and the topic that most clearly demonstrates the distance between right-wing fantasy and historical reality.

And it was especially strange to hear those words uttered by Giuliani, who wants everyone to remember that he once served as a top official in the Reagan Justice Department, yet seems to have forgotten the criminal case and constitutional crisis known as the Iran-contra affair. But let's begin at the beginning.

REAGAN DIDN'T WIN RELEASE OF HOSTAGES

Available evidence strongly indicates that when the Iranian regime released American hostages in January 1981, within hours of the first Reagan inauguration, that decision had nothing to do with fear of the new president and everything to do with a pre-arranged deal. While no proof of that plot has ever emerged, the covert sequel that commenced three years later certainly arouses suspicion.

Between 1984 and 1986, the Reagan administration tried to free American hostages in Lebanon from their Shiite captors, not by confronting the terrorists militarily but by negotiating with their presumed Iranian sponsors. By then, Reagan had already retreated from Lebanon, withdrawing the Marines after the terrorist bombing of their Beirut barracks had claimed 241 American lives.

Instead of retaliating against Iran or any of the organizations that claimed responsibility for the Lebanon attack, Reagan approved a secret initiative to "improve relations" with the Iranian leadership by shipping advanced missiles to them.

REAGAN SENT THEM A CAKE

The immediate objective was to get the Iranians to lean on Hezbollah in Leba-



non to release a group of six American hostages.

National Security Adviser Robert (Bud) McFarlane visited Tehran, carrying a Koran and a cake as tokens of presidential esteem. Meanwhile, the profits from the arms transactions – conducted by private citizens working with White House and CIA personnel – were diverted to finance the contra rebellion in Nicaragua.

These bizarre intrigues breached U.S. law and policy in myriad ways, including repeated violations of the statute forbidding aid to regimes that support terrorism. At first Reagan tried to deny that he had "traded arms for hostages," then reluctantly confessed many months later, while seeking to blame his subordinates.

Although there was much more to the amazing scandal that nearly ended Reagan's presidency – including the starring role of neoconservatives who have since masterminded another and worse disaster – the basic outline is clear: Terrorists killed our troops, and Reagan responded by retreating from Lebanon, kowtowing to the terrorists' sponsors, meeting their demand for advanced weapons and pleading for the release of our hostages.

IF ONLY IT HAD BEEN A DEMOCRAT

It is easy to imagine how the Republicans would have reacted to this kind of behavior by a Democratic president – and how they would recall such behavior today. Words such as "strong" and "resolute" would not leap to their lips.

With Reagan, however, myth replaces memory. The truth is that he saved his presidency by ousting the hawks and neoconservatives who had almost destroyed it, and by entering into the unprecedented negotiations with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that helped to end the Cold War peacefully. For that momentous decision, he suffered angry public attacks by many of the same conservatives who lionize him today.

The macho posturing in Reagan's name is comical and demeaning, but not without danger. Let's hope this is all just campaign bluster – and that none of the pretenders who may someday achieve power believe in their own fakery.

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Republican To English Dictionary

In case you've been having trouble recently in deciphering Republican speeches and news reports:

alternative energy sources /n./ New locations to drill for gas and oil.

bankruptcy /n./ A means of escaping debt available to corporations but not to poor people.

"burning bush" /n./ A biblical allusion to the response of the President of the United States, when asked a question by a journalist who has not been paid to inquire about non-issues.

Cheney, Dick /n./ The greater of two evils.

class warfare /n./ Any attempt to raise the minimum wage.

climate change /n./ Progress toward the blessed day when the blue states are swallowed by the oceans.

compassionate conservatism /n./ Poignant concern for the very wealthy.

creation science /n./ Pseudo-science that claims George W. Bush's resemblance to a chimpanzee is truly coincidental.

DeLay, Tom /n./ Past tense of De Lie.

extraordinary rendition /n./ Outsourcing torture.

faith /n./ The belief that the Beatitudes include "Blessed are the rich" and "Blessed are the warmakers."

free markets /n./ Halliburton no-bid contracts at taxpayer expense.

girly-men /n./ Males who neglect opportunities to grope unwilling women.

God /n./ Senior presidential adviser.

growth /n./ 1. The justification for tax cuts for the rich. 2. What happens to the national debt when policy is made according to Definition 1.

healthy forest /n./ No tree left behind.

honesty /n./ Lies told in simple declarative sentences [e.g., "Freedom is on the march"].

House of Representatives /n./ Exclusive club; entry fee \$1 million to \$5 million [See also, Senate]

insanity /n./ See: staying the course.

laziness /n./ When the poor are not working.

leisure time /n./ When the wealthy are not working.

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liberal(s) /n./ Followers of the Antichrist.

No Child Left Behind /riff./ There are always jobs in the military.

ownership society /n./ 1. A civilization where 1% of the population controls 90% of the wealth. 2. A political system in which all power is in the hands of the owners.

Patriot Act /n./ 1. Preemptive strike on American freedoms to prevent the terrorists from destroying them first. 2. The elimination of one of the reasons why they hate us.

pro-life /adj./ Valuing human life up until birth.

Senate /n./ Exclusive club; entry fee: \$10 million to \$30 million.

simplify /v./ To cut the taxes of Republican donors.

staying the course /interj./slang./ Continuing to perform the same actions and expecting different results [See: insanity].

stuff happens /interj./slang./ I don't have to live in Baghdad.

voter fraud /n./ A significant minority turnout.

woman /n./ 1. Person who can be trusted to raise a child but can't be trusted to decide whether or not she wishes to have a child. 2. Person who must have all decisions regarding her reproductive functions made by men with whom she wouldn't want to have sex in the first place.

A Capital Moral Offense

"Teachers now are expected to staff the permanent emergency rooms of our country's dysfunctional social order. They are expected to compensate for what families, communities, and culture fail to do. Like our soldiers in Iraq, they are sent into urban combat zones, on impossible missions, under inhospitable conditions, and then abandoned by politicians and policy makers who have already cut and run, leaving teachers on their own ... The neglect of urban education – a capital moral offense in its own right – is but a symptom of what is happening in America. We are retreating from our social compact all down the line." – Bill Moyers

Union-Busting At Homeland Security

By Dick Meister

President Bush and his Republican allies in Congress agree that airport screeners play a vital role in the war against terror, yet continue to deny them the basic right of unionization by asserting that it would "threaten national security."

The actual motive is as obvious as the often-demonstrated anti-unionism of Bush and friends. House members recognized that in January when they voted 299-128 for a bill that would repeal a provision of the five-year-old Aviation Transportation and Security Act that gives the President authority to bar screeners from exercising the collective bargaining rights granted other federal employees.

The Senate is about to take up the bill. But though the slim Democratic majority there is certain to support it, Republicans are threatening a filibuster that could block passage. Even if the measure should squeak through Congress, Bush has promised to veto it, and the GOP minority has promised enough votes to sustain a veto.

GET A LOAD OF THIS COMPARISON

Bush and other opponents of the bill compare the 45,000 men and women who screen air passengers' luggage with the men and women who are fighting in Iraq.

"Marines don't collectively bargain over whether they're going to wind up, you know, being deployed in Anwar province or in Baghdad," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff explained.

"We can't negotiate over terms and conditions of work that goes to the heart of our ability to move rapidly in order to deal with the threats that are emerging."

Bush agrees. He, too, sees nothing wrong with ignoring the labor laws including those granting union rights "when it serves our national interest."

But does it really serve the national interest to prohibit airport screeners from grabbing hold of unionization, the tool that workers must have if they are to gain job security and a fair and effective voice in determining their working conditions?

WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION

To prohibit them from having union protection that would enable them to freely blow the whistle on wasteful, abusive or fraudulent management practices?

The screeners certainly aren't happy with their current conditions. They have a higher turnover rate than the employees of any other federal employee group, a higher injury rate and file more discrimination charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Screeners complain especially about being forced to work overtime without prior notice, having their working shifts arbitrarily changed, their paychecks delayed and being sexually harassed.

publicans, who has bluntly preached sensible penal reform, attempting to educate members of both parties on the need for a tiered program for released sex offenders. A skinny dipper or other minor offender's driver's license should not be branded forever - the same as a child molester.

Rep. Richard Morrisette, D-OKC, was the biggest thorn in the side of dominant House Republicans this session. He knows the rules and moves to enforce them. He is not afraid to challenge members of both parties - especially the GOP. His angry debate often produces the truth about bills. He so annoyed Speaker Lance Cargill that when Cargill presented one of his bills, he turned his back on Morrisette's debate.

Rep. Doug Cox, R-Grove, was House sponsor of the Fit Kids Act. As the most independent and passionate legislative Republican, he frequently collides with fellow Republicans. Remember when Republicans stood for keeping out of people's private lives? As a physician, he has never performed an elective abortion but fought to assure that as long as there is a Roe v. Wade, abortion should be safe and private. There are times when you win by losing.

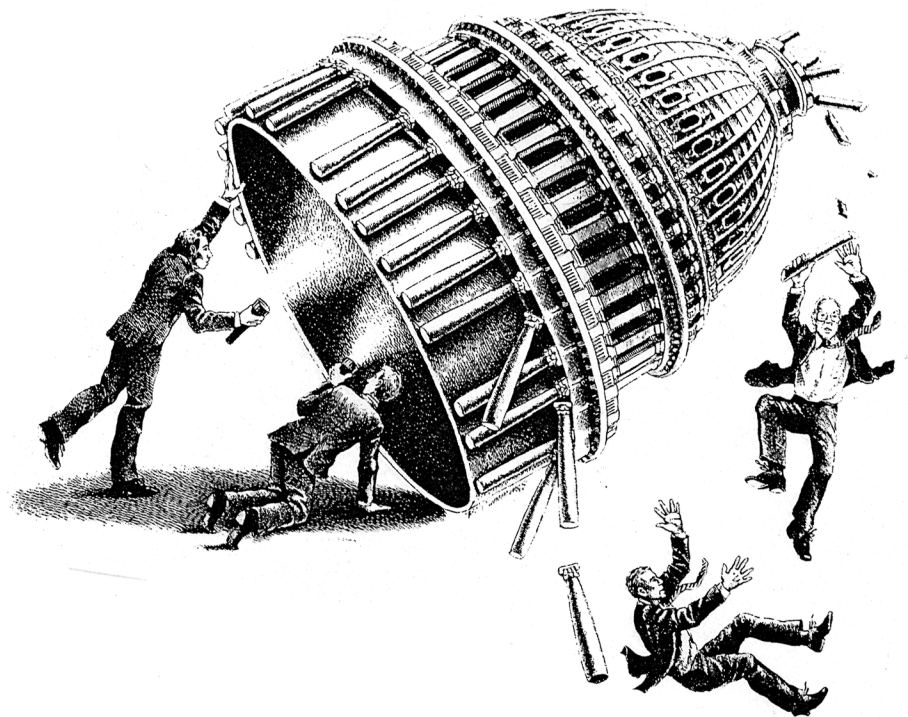
Rep. Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, is the foremost House champion on health

policy issues, especially those affecting children and the elderly. This session he authored HB 1928, expanding health savings accounts options for all state employees. These allow people to put money into tax-free accounts for use for medical expenses, deductibles, co-pays and incidentals. Whether he is battling for healthy children or protecting the elderly, he's a committed legislator.

House Worst

Rep. Lance Cargill, R-Harrah, new Republican Speaker, promised openness, fairness and accountability. He failed on all three. Cargill quietly let his Republican committees gut major legislation for children and the elderly while creating a new bureaucracy - a Faith Based state-funded agency. He joined Senate leaders to pass one of the worst state budgets on record. Gov. Brad Henry vetoed it and the House minority Democrats backed his veto. Cargill was so upset, all Democratic bills in committees were killed. Bush league politics.

Rep. Dave Dank, R-OKC, is the epitome of the bitter ex-Democrat whose switch certainly improved the Democratic Party. This session he was notorious for introducing a resolution calling for State Auditor Jeff McMahan to step aside. Why? No charges



They say they face retaliation for complaining about their conditions or about problems with their agency's operations and lack sufficient health and safety standards and procedures to resolve grievances.

GOVERNMENT WOULD BENEFIT

John Gage, president of the union seeking to bargain on behalf of the screeners, the American Federation of Government Employees, notes that those who run the Transportation Security Agency, which employs the screeners, also would benefit from unionization.

For as employers elsewhere have learned, things in general go much more smoothly if there are mutually agreed-to rules and procedures for dealing with labor-management relations and the operations of the workplace.

In any case, Gage says, "It's time to put an end to TSA's bullying."

The administration is still trying to impose a similar system on the Defense Department's 700,000 employees, and is likely to soon come up with another new system for the Department of Homeland Security.

It's the very least we can expect from George Bush and his Republican accomplices in their undiminished eagerness to protect the nation from the threat of unionization.

- The author is a freelance columnist in San Francisco

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are pending. No grand jury investigation is underway. It's typical for the most partisan member of the House. Sicko partisan Dank was silent when Republican Rep. John Trebilcock was arrested for drunk driving. Duh!

Rep. Mike Reynolds, R-OKC, is easiest the biggest loon to serve in the Legislature in modern history. He has attacked Oklahoma County's marvelous Maps For Kids at every opportunity. He proposed an amendment to every appropriations bill but was the only House member voting for them. Reynolds is a solemn, unsmiling, sanctimonious ass, the verbal equivalent of a gutterball.

Rep. Randy Terrill, R-OKC, is a likable, loquacious legislative disaster. He has been the prime mover in huge tax cuts while the state's bills go unpaid - tens of millions of dollars. He keeps prattling that tax cuts promote

industrial development but Oklahoma is already 50th in state, local and federal taxes combined! Read our lips: Industry wants well-educated employees. The Capitol's most dangerous place? Between Terrill and a TV camera.

Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC, attempts to be Oklahoma's keeper of morals but in reality she's just another right-wing fundamentalist attempting to push her views onto the rest of the state. Does she believe in separation of church and state? She is homophobic and would run roughshod over public libraries. Where are the Henry Bellmon and Dewey Bartlett Republicans? For the most part, Kern, Rep. Sue Tibbs, R-Tulsa, and their fellow legislative fundamentalists are the most meddling in modern history. She proves a GOP public school teacher is an oxymoron.

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