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## It's Not What You Think The Obama Effect

By Arnold Hamilton

A Democratic year nationally, a Republican tidal wave in Oklahoma.

So goes the conventional wisdom just 40 days before the election, a betting line hardened by polls showing Oklahoma is now the reddest state in the union – even redder than Utah.

Even if Barack Obama fails to overcome the last vestiges of racism in what is an otherwise dominant Democratic year nationally, Democrats are poised to add significantly to their majorities in the Congress.

In Oklahoma, some Republicans are already celebrating – not only confident they will deliver the state's seven electoral votes to John McCain, but also that U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe will win re-election, their 57-44 state House advantage will grow and the 24-24 state Senate deadlock will be broken after just two years.

As bad as the late summer polls looked for Obama and U.S. Senate nominee Andrew Rice, the election day reality could end up much brighter for Democrats, especially in the all-out war for legislative control.

Without question, Obama's challenge is greatest. Oklahoma hasn't awarded its electoral votes to a Democrat for president since Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

Moreover, Obama organizers faced outright hostility in some counties where Democratic leaders oppose his candidacy. Were they unrequited Hillary Clinton supporters? Was race a factor? Did the Muslim canard stick?

The election appears to be so close nationally that Obama's campaign wisely is steering its money and resources into battleground states that could make the difference in cobbling together an electoral college victory.

Obama's campaign isn't even providing enough money in Oklahoma to supply its small, but enthusiastic, band of supporters with yard signs. An already cash-strapped state Democratic Party spent thousands just to ensure Obama signs were available for distribution at the OKC State Fair.

The central question: Will there be an Obama effect down ballot in Oklahoma? The answer is yes – but not necessarily the effect you might expect.

The conventional wisdom is that if Obama loses in a landslide here, he could drag down the entire Democratic ticket, handing Republicans their dream scenario: control of both houses of the Legislature.

It's also possible that Obama could lose Oklahoma by what is traditionally considered a landslide – McCain corrals, say, 55% of the vote – yet Democrats still could end up celebrating Corporation Commissioner Jim Roth's re-election and the pickup of legislative seats.

Think of it this way: It's not necessarily how many votes Obama receives statewide, it's where his voters turn out. And where his support is strongest could be enough to tip some hotly contested legislative races and help a well-funded Roth.

For example, could youthful enthusiasm for Obama make a difference in Senate District 21, the race to replace outgoing Senate President Pro Tem Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater?

What if Democratic nominee Bob

Murphy, a former state district judge, were the beneficiary of a record turnout in Langston? How many Oklahoma State University students casting ballots in Stillwater even know Republican nominee Jim Halligan is a former OSU president? Does it matter?

Morgan's seat is one of two the GOP targeted this year in its quest for Senate supremacy.

The other is south and west Tulsa's 37th District, represented by Republican-turned-Democrat Nancy Riley. The GOP holds a voter registration edge in the district, but Riley, a former elementary school teacher seeking her third term, is well known and won't be easy to beat, even though some Republicans are sore that her 2006 party switch prevented their takeover of the Senate.

Democrats not only are looking to protect those two seats, but also have identified two possible pickups: southwestern Oklahoma's 31st District [Republican incumbent Don

Barrington] and northwestern Oklahoma's 27th District, an open seat because term limits claimed incumbent Republican Owen Laughlin.

Barrington's five-county district is still considered Democratic-leaning. It's never easy to unseat an incumbent, but the best chance typically is when a candidate, like Barrington, seeks re-election for the first time.

Democrats also are hopeful in northwestern Oklahoma because their nominee is Bowdy Peach, a professional bull rider and small businessman whose family is well known in political circles. His father is state agriculture secretary Terry Peach.

In the House, both parties are working feverishly to protect previously-held seats that opened up because of term limits or early retirements.

Worth watching: Three GOP seats vacated by the early exits of former Speaker Lance Cargill of Harrah [District 96], Majority Floor Leader Greg Piatt of Ardmore [48] and Elections and Redistricting Subcommittee Chair Trebor Worthen of OKC [87].

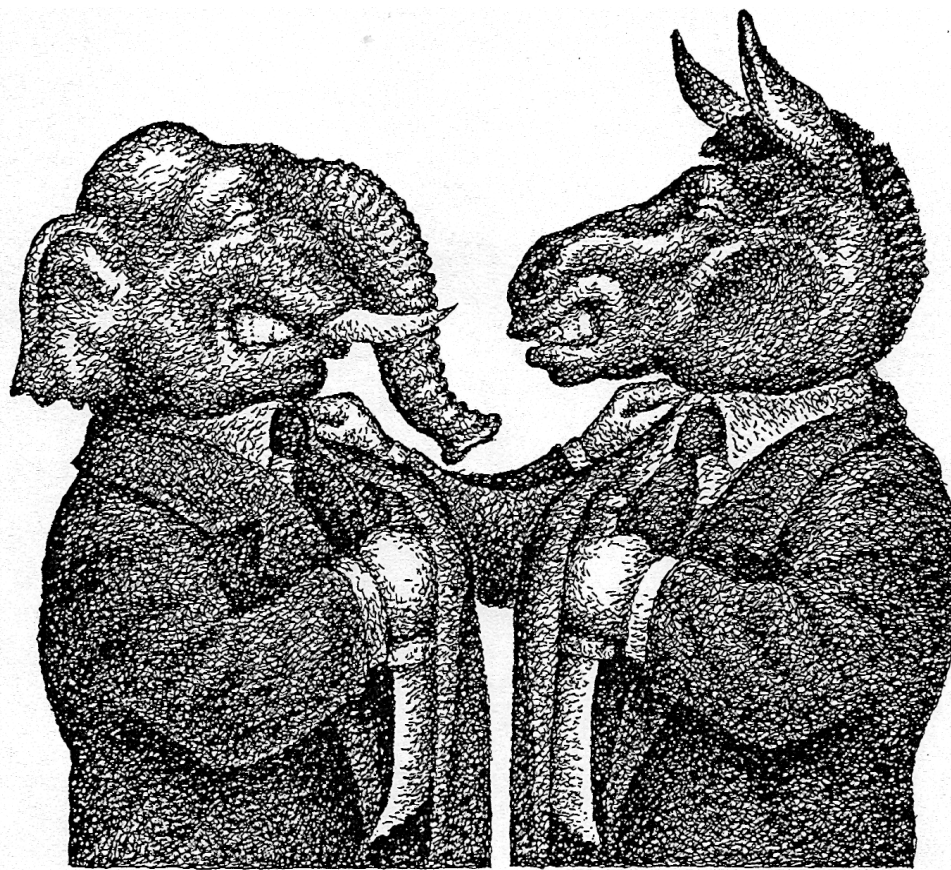
Worthen narrowly won re-election [247 votes] two years ago against Democrat Dana Orwig, who's back for another run.

Democratic seats on the watch list: southern Oklahoma's District 49, open because of the death of Rep. Terry Hyman in a tractor accident; southwestern Oklahoma's District 52 [incumbent David Braddock was term-limited], and south OKC's District 93 [Al Lindley, term limits].

Even though Oklahoma has trended Republican for decades, the GOP's seven-seat majority is hardly overwhelming. Two years ago, for example, seven Republican House victories were by a combined margin of 2,547 votes – an average of fewer than 364 per district.

Why is the balance of power so important?

The Legislature's GOP leadership embraces the same voodoo economics that wrecked America's economy, threatening a second Great Depression and leaving taxpayers on the hook for a \$1 trillion bailout of Wall Street greed and conniving.



# Observations

## It Won't Work

Oklahoma now has in place a financial literacy mandate for the public schools, but will it work?

Even Congress has gotten into the act, passing the Economic Recovery Act of 2008 to allocate funds to improve borrowers' knowledge of home loans.

Lauren Willis, associate professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, specializes in financial products regulation. She says it is the wrong move, arguing that trying to teach consumers to make wise money choices is not only a waste of time and resources, it may be dangerous.

What's so bad about financial education? She says it doesn't work. Sellers of financial products spend billions drowning out well-meaning messages to consumers from non-profits or government agencies.

Also, financial products are always changing – credit and insurance products have changed dramatically in the past 20 years – making it hard for educators to keep up.

It's not like sex education, she said. People get pregnant the same way they always have.

Studies show that sending people to either high school personal-finance classes or adult retirement seminars does not result in better financial behavior.

It may do the opposite. Financial literacy classes give people the illusion that they can successfully manage their finances. So rather than seek help, they end up making worse decisions.

The task is not up to public school teachers who have students six hours a day. It's up to parents to ride herd on the kids. If parents are credit junkies, no amount of classroom time will change attitudes, or replace parents as role models.

## Blow Hard

Note to T. Boone Pickens: a new Department of Energy report says

the United States could get 20% of its electricity from windmills by 2030 – the same amount it currently gets from nuclear plants.

The wind-generated watts would decrease coal consumption by 18% and natural gas consumption by 11%, for a total annual carbon dioxide reduction of 825 million metric tons.

In July oil baron Pickens unveiled a proposal to tap all that potential wind energy to fuel power plants.

Pickens says this would free up natural gas for use as a transportation fuel and reduce the United States' imported oil habit by a third. He also says this is one emergency we can't drill our way out of.

Even if the ballyhoo leads to drilling offshore, it will be five to 10 years before production.

Since those drilling the oil own it, it will go to the highest bidder – probably China or Japan.

## Credit Drunks

It is even scaring economists – workers in their 20s and 30s are using retirement funds to pay credit card debt and home mortgages instead of leaving it alone to accumulate.

Fidelity Investments released a survey that said large numbers of young workers cash out their 401k accounts when they switch jobs, leaving them without an accumulation of cash for retirement.

The typical young worker will work for seven different employers across their career. If you consider the combination of the withdrawal behavior with that propensity for multiple employers, America is facing a crisis with this generation.

Generation X workers, born between 1967 and 1975, said money is their top concern – with 77% of them saying it's their biggest worry. About 74% of Generation Y workers, born between 1976 and 1987, said money worried them most.

Half of the workers said other finan-



THE FINAL STRAW

cial priorities prevent them from setting aside money. It's live high today, to hell with tomorrow.

Younger workers are more likely to use credit than save for short-term purchases, which results in an ongoing struggle with debt management. The same can be said for people in their 30s.

They truly are the "me" generation.

## A Day Off?

Talk about your captive audience – born-again commanders at Fort Leonard Wood promoting Baptist proselytism. The Lebanon, MO, church has been hosting the coercive event for Fort Leonard Wood trainees since 1971.

Americans for Separation of Church and State alleges that soldiers are "coerced" into attending the event, where they are forced to sit through a church service and asked to accept Jesus as their savior.

The Army pretends the program is voluntary and makes no secret of its Baptist affiliation.

The program, formerly known as the "Free Day Away," was recently renamed "The Tabernacle Baptist Church Retreat."

Since April, trainees have been required to sign a waiver stating that they're aware of the event's religious affiliation, said Chaplain [Col.] Roger Heath.

The number of off days a trainee receives depends on his or her training program, but some soldiers receive as few as one or two during their stay at the base.

According to Americans United, soldiers who elect to stay at the base just continue to participate in training exercises and do not get the day off.

Tabernacle Baptist advertises the event on its web site as the "largest ministry to the U.S. military in the United States."

Anybody who has been through basic training knows trainees would take tea with the devil if they could get a day off.

## Gas Cheating

Three cheers for the Oklahoma Corporation Commission for stepping up inspection of fuel pumps.

The commission has shut down dozens of gas pumps and several gas stations for violations that include water-contaminated gasoline and gas pumps.

During the past fiscal year 1,974 retail and non-retail businesses received 5,058 violations. There are 5,332 retail and non-retail businesses across Oklahoma. Some businesses had multiple violations, while others had none during the year, records show.

In addition to gas pump errors and watery gasoline, violations include problems with storage tanks and other fueling equipment.

Fuel inspectors conducted 82,470 pump calibrations at convenience stores, service stations and other businesses. Inspectors found 1,570 pumps out of calibration.

In some cases the pumps were cheating consumers out of gasoline, while other pumps were giving free fuel.

## Help Wanted

Oklahoma is in dire need of more programs to aid incarcerated mothers and their children.

According to a study published by the Oklahoma Commission on Youth and Children, Oklahoma, per capita, puts more women behind bars than any other state in the nation. Bureau of Justice statistics show that 129 Oklahoma women out of 100,000 are in prison. That's more than double the national average.

Nearly 80% of the women in state prisons have children who are hurt by their mother's absence and incarceration.

Programs that work to meet the needs of the children, their caregivers and their mothers are needed to stop the cycle of children following their parents into prison.

This is one place where faith communities and the nonprofit sector ought to be working – especially seeing after the children.

Many women in prison are fearful that their children will be taken into state custody; many want to keep the location of their children secret.

Good programs would help women lose those fears and welcome any attempt to make it easier for their children.

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

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

# Observerscope

**Laurel:** To OKC's Taft Middle School Teacher Heather Sparks, named Teacher of the Year – worth up to \$50,000. In 15 years as an eighth grade Algebra I and pre-algebra teacher, she has stressed opening students to the wonders of the world – not math scores.

**Oxymoron:** Republican diversity. Only 36 of the 2,380 delegates to this year's GOP convention were black, lowest in 40 years. Twenty-five percent of Democratic convention delegates were African-American. [Washington Post]

**Dart:** To the 2008 Legislature for leaving 12,000 on a waiting list for CareerTech training at a time when businesses are crying for new hires. Jobs paying \$30,000 to \$50,000 are going begging.

It is nice to know that ex-Tulsan Don McCorkell is spending \$1 million for a documentary calling attention to the perils of factory farming.

**Laurel:** To U.S. Senate Candidate Andrew Rice, pulling out of a debate with incumbent Sen. Jim Inhofe because the State Chamber closed it to the press and public. It was Inhofe's idea to close the debate. No guts, no glory.

That huge paid ad in the Tulsa World, placed by Catholic Bishop Edward Slattery, slams House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on when life begins. The Bishop preferred to blow parishioners' money better spent to feed the hungry.

**Dart:** To Sarah Palin, approvingly quoting racist columnist Westbrook Pegler who wrote in 1966 he hoped ... "some white patriot of the Southern tier will spatter his [Bobby Kennedy] spoonful of brains in public premises before the snow flies."

Priorities? Americans average 22 hours a year sorting bills, account statements and other paperwork – more than they spend helping their kids with homework or going to the movies, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Smart Money]

**Laurel:** To Marjean Mitchell, party activist, given the 2008 Keith Leftwich Services Award by the Fifth Congressional District Democrats.

The day after the GOP convention, the Bush Administration reported the loss of 84,000 jobs – eighth straight month for job losses. Unemployment is 6.1%. Want a third Bush term? Vote for John McCain.

**Dart:** To State Rep. Randy Terrill, spending \$2,000 in campaign contributions for ticket to sporting events. A bankruptcy trustee is demanding Terrill turn over \$11,301 he had failed to report.

We hope Indian tribes are spending some of that gaming revenue to fight alcoholism, now causing 12% of all Indian deaths while the rate for the nation as a whole is 3.3%.

**Laurel:** To Dr. Bruce Stanton of OKC, recognized by the National Alliance on Mental Illness as a 2008 Exemplary Psychiatrist. He gave up his practice to address the needs of the severely mentally ill.

Veeep nominee Sarah Palin claims the war in Iraq is God's plan. The troops are His messengers. A tape of her remarks to a Pentecostal church in her hometown is playing on the worldwide web. Shades of Dan Quayle.

**Dart:** To those who complain but don't vote. America ranks 114th in the world in the percentage of eligible voters casting their ballots. It was less than 50% in the last presidential race.

Perry pooch Presley has been named the "Greatest American Dog" on a CBS reality show. His nearest rival was State Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore.

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Kim Holland, reporting that uninsured health care costs \$954 million a year – third highest nationally, costing every Oklahoman and business \$1,500.



**Sen. Jim Inhofe** told the Tulsa Metro Chamber that Sen. Joe Biden is the most arrogant member of the Senate. Inhofe is the most modest member – and he has much to be modest about.

**Dart:** To the Tulsa Performing Arts Center for hosting Libertarian John Stossel, an ABC-TV nutcase whose attacks on public education and the media are legendary. How about equal time?

A 65-year-old today must have \$122,000 socked away to have a 90% chance of covering eventual health care costs – not counting assisted living. [Employee Benefit Research Institute]

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma high school seniors going out of state for higher education, blowing the SAT away at 1701 compared to the national average of 1511.

Oklahoma leads the nation in domestic abuse as a percent of the population but help is on the way. Sen. Debbe Leftwich's new law will put GPS ankle bracelets on chronic abusers.

**Dart:** To the Daily Disappointment editorial page for a lying personal attack on AG Drew Edmondson for siding with Americans against unprecedented gouging by big oil companies. Hang a red light over their door.

Latest tally in the drug war: 872,721 pot arrests, an all-time high – with 89% charged with simple pot possession, not trafficking, cultivation or sale. Three out of four were younger than 30, one in four 18 or younger.

**Laurel:** To Rep. Mike Brown, D-Tahlequah, castigating his legislative colleagues for standing mum as ex-Speaker Lance Cargill gets a wrist slap for five ethics law violations. Maybe OKC DA David Prater will take a look.

The nonpartisan Citizens for Tax Justice said John McCain was flat lying when he said Barack Obama's tax plan would raise taxes on 23 million small businesses. Obama would wipe out the Bush tax cuts for the super rich.

**Dart:** To J.C. Watts, as phony as ever, saying he is "reluctantly" voting for John McCain because the GOP is not diverse enough. He's looking for those rich Republicans to finance his drive for a cable channel.

**John Tyler Hammons**, young mayor of Muskogee, says his hero is Rudy Giuliani, the thrice-married NYC mayor who moved his mistress into Gracie Mansion. His then-wife learned he was divorcing her by watching TV. The kid mayor flunks Morality 101.

**Laurel:** To the late Father Dan Allen's Neighbor for Neighbor charity, celebrating 40 years of helping the poor. Thanks also to doctors, dentists, lawyers and other professionals who volunteer.

Republicans keep whining about Bill Clinton. A little known fact: He has raised more than \$10 billion for impoverished, hurting children and adults worldwide. What did Apostle John say? Not by word but by deed.

**Dart:** To the Daily Disappointment for terminating health insurance for retired employees as of Dec. 31. They will hold a meeting in which various insurance companies will offer retirees their wares. How big of them.

If Oklahoma would cut the dropout rate 6.4% it would add \$830 million to the economy and produce \$63 million a year in new tax revenue. Dropouts represent 75% of prison inmates. [Education Resource Center]

**Laurel:** To Tulsa's Hamilton Middle School students, packaging more than 100,000 meals for Kids Against Hunger in the 2007-2008 school year. That's real education.

If you value the environment, Sen. Jim Inhofe is the last person to vote for. He voted against all four 2008 major environmental bills. Sen. Tom Coburn ducked three, voted against one. [Sierra Club 2008 scorecard]

**Dart:** To the sorry 2008 Oklahoma legislative leadership which left unpaid bills of more than \$200 million, including a vitally needed law enforcement communications system.

AT&T spent \$22.3 million lobbying last year, with only \$2.3 million going to Democrats. The AMA, pharmaceutical industry and the American Hospital Association spent more than \$93 million, with only \$1.5 million going to Democrats. [Forbes]

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma's Tourism Department, promoting agritourism. Travel-generated spending in Oklahoma hit \$4.5 billion in 2004 and continues to grow.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

When Bill Clinton was president can you imagine what would have happened if he and Hillary had announced that Chelsea was pregnant and not married? ALL of the Republicans would have viciously attacked them for being terrible parents and attacked Chelsea for being promiscuous and immoral. But since it is Republican Sarah Palin and her daughter, it's great.

Extra marital affairs are the ultimate sin when it is John Edwards, but just fine when it's John McCain or Newt Gingrich.

Lies and slander about a war hero are absolutely fine when John Kerry or Max Clelland are the victims, but don't you dare say a word about John McCain. Don't dare mention how many planes he crashed prior to getting shot down in Vietnam. That's off limits.

The Republicans ridicule Barack Obama for his intellect and call him an elitist. If they bothered, they could look up elite and see that it is a compliment not an insult as they intended.

And if they were so inclined they could look up John McCain's records from the Naval Academy and see how far down the list his grades put him.

After the last eight years I am very eager to have a smart president again. We sure need one.

Deborah Lewis  
Garland, TX

Editor, The Observer:

In swing-state Colorado, the Republican Secretary of State conducted the biggest purge of voters in history, dumping a fifth of all registrations. Guess their color.

In swing-state Florida, the state is refusing to accept about 85,000 new registrations from voter drives – overwhelming black voters.

In swing state New Mexico, HALF of the Democrats of Mora, a dirt poor and overwhelmingly Hispanic county, found their registrations disappeared this year, courtesy of a Republican voting contractor.

In swing states Ohio and Nevada, new federal law is knocking out tens of thousands of voters who lost their homes to foreclosure.

Angry? Do something about it! Help Greg Palast place these investigative findings on a national, prime-time, major-network television broadcast. Go to <http://www.gregpalast.com/obama-doesn't-sweat-he-should/#more-2056>

Frank P. Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

What's happened to truth? Did I miss the decision that any lie can be foisted on the public without challenge?

The Internet is, no doubt, responsible for this ability to say anything about anybody, pass it around, and contaminate weaker minds without challenge. Some people used to buy the National Enquirer to get garbage; now we are bombarded with trash right in our own homes without having solicited it.

If I get one more inflammatory e-mail out of Texas, ranting as FACT that Obama is the Antichrist, or that he is a Muslim, or that he has only 183 days of experience, which disqualifies him for the office of president, I may commit Hari-Kari on the sender!

What I want is the facts! I am one of those nameless, faceless citizens who loves her country and wants to know about the major issues confronting us.

The opposition knows that if they throw out enough scary lies, the illiterate and conservative will buy it – to the extent that they may actually pull off another “victory” by pulling the wool over their eyes.

We need solutions yesterday. We need to know that diplomacy will replace reactionism. That our sons and grandsons will not be sent to the desert in a war that was thrust on us before any real effort was extended to avoid it.

Who doesn't believe that the other countries of the world would have flocked with us to stop this thing and bring sanity to the Middle East, if we hadn't jumped in with guns blazing before diplomacy had had a chance to work?

There is no honor in invading any country without first seeking other solutions. Our motive is now quite clear: control of oil.

The great leaders of this country – Lincoln, Roosevelt – entered terrible wars with much thought and even grief that there was no other way to solve the problems of their day and we were better for it. We will never be able to say that about the actions of the present administration.

President Eisenhower, the great general of World War II, hated war. He had seen firsthand the horror of all-out war, especially a war with no real justification.

What are the solutions to the real issues? Who really wants to hear of bulldogs with lipstick? This election seems to be on the slippery slope to another win by conservatives, based



JOHN MCCAIN AND THE PIPS

on lies and distortions.

Most of all, I resent those who accuse us of dishonoring our military if we disagree with Bush policy, that we don't love, mourn for, and appreciate the sacrifices of those men and boys who fight and die each day for Bush. I will always respect and honor those members who volunteer for service to their country, but are sent on senseless missions not worthy of their deaths. It is a terrible disservice to the men and their families and to this country.

Carrie McGee  
Seminole

Editor, The Observer

Watching [state Transportation director] Gary Ridley's press conference sickened me! Oklahomans have not a clue how they are being robbed at every pocket! They only know that they are!

Oklahoma started life as a state by people who cheated and jumped the gun and it's still going on to this day. This behavior seems ingrained in the hierarchy that rules this state today by controlling what the taxpaying public reads and hears at “press conferences.”

What they do NOT hear is the truth regarding our crumbling infrastructure and the payola that rules what gets done in this state ... witness the OKC downtown development.

Getting to OKC on the deplorable highways and byways is the story that won't be told until our citizens learn the truths.

Darla Sparks Reynolds  
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

I woke up last night with heartburn, but it wasn't from something I'd eaten. It was caused by two paragraphs from a Bill Moyers piece in the August 25, 2008 issue of the Observer entitled, Mother's Milk of Politics Turns Sour. Mr. Moyers said:

“Democrats have turned to Steve Farber. He's [Farber's] using the resources of his big K Street law and lobbying factory to help raise \$40 million for the Democratic National Convention.

“Half a dozen of his clients have signed up, including AT&T, Comcast, Western Union and Google. Their presence at the convention will offer lots of opportunities to curry favors at private parties while ordinary delegates wander Denver looking for the nearest Wendy's.”

Those two paragraphs caused my skepticism and cynicism to rear their

ugly heads. Moyers' words were bad enough without reading anything else into them, but of course I had to. What set me up in bed was the realization that Barack Obama had left the campaign trail and returned to Washington, DC, for the specific purpose of voting in favor of the FISA bill, the one that granted civil immunity to AT&T for their complicity in assisting G.W. Bush to illegally spy on all Americans.

When the senator's intentions to vote in favor of the bill were announced, I was first disappointed. I had put my heart and soul into the man, thinking that at last we had found a statesman, a noble public servant who would put country and countrymen first in all things.

My next reaction was one of confusion. Why, I had asked myself a thousand times, would this crusader, the man who would end politics as we know them, who would send K Street pimps a packing – why would he vote to grant AT&T immunity?

The Moyers article provided a practical answer – politics as usual. Perhaps there are more and better reasons why the senator cast his vote in favor of the giant utility complex. I'd like to know what those better reasons are so I can tuck my skepticism and cynicism back in their hidey holes.

Hiram K. Myers  
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

If I see on television another well-fed Republican candidate claim he is more conservative than his opponent, I'm going to vomit.

Just what are conservative values? Based on my observations, they include gluttony, intolerance, xenophobia, sexism, pigheadedness and lip service about adequately funding the costs of public education. By “pigheadedness” I mean adopting a thought or idea and steadfastly clinging to it even when it's falseness is indisputably proven.

I'm puzzled. I can't imagine why the election polls are so close. That people would vote Republican in this election proves the adage, “You can fool some of the people all of the time.”

The only Republican I ever voted for, and not been ashamed of afterwards, was Henry Bellmon. No contemporary Republican approaches his stature. Nevertheless, I would vote for a pink zebra before I would vote Republican this year.

Robert Nilson  
El Reno

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## Frosty's Notebook

# Never Mind

Until Sarah Palin was unleashed a majority of voters were focused on issues, not personalities. With John McCain surging in the polls, a third Bush term is a real possibility.

What will that mean to one of the most critical issues – education? McCain is a Bush clone, endorsing the No Child Left Behind law, the most vicious attack on public education since the 1981 A Nation At Risk.

The American people hold strong opinions on a range of issues affecting public education, including seemingly decisive views about which presidential candidate would be best for the public schools.

Oklahomans, always victims of their media, are once again found on the far right on most political issues. Barack Obama is right on most issues but has little chance of catching fire in Oklahoma.

According to the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the subject, if people were voting solely on the basis of a desire to strengthen the public schools, they would choose Barack Obama over John McCain by a margin of 46% to 29%.

Four years ago, in a similar poll, President Bush and the Democratic nominee, John Kerry, each polled 41%. The latest poll findings:

People trust Obama to do a better job on closing the achievement gap [59%, compared with 18% for McCain] and on funding education [48% to 28%].

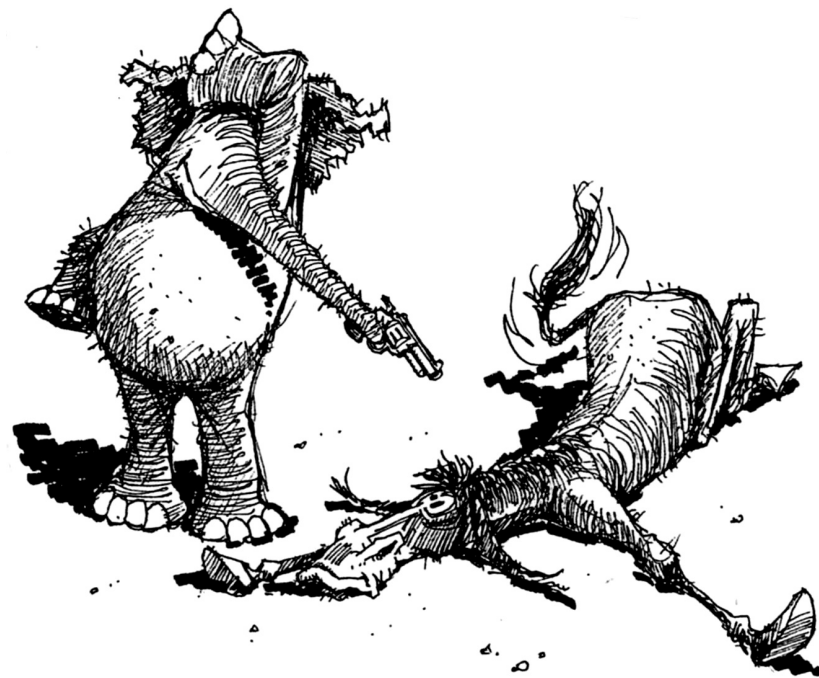
People are dissatisfied with the No Child Left Behind Act, with 42% wanting to change the law significantly and another 25% saying it should be allowed to expire.

Thirty-seven percent of the people think that using federal taxes would be “the best way” to finance public schools [compared with 35% for state taxes and 20% for local taxes].

When asked to grade the public schools in their own communities, 46% say they would give them an A or a B – but only 22% would give those grades to schools in the nation as a whole.

Half the people favor relying on national educational standards to measure student achievement, while a slightly smaller group [46%] prefers state standards.

A plurality of Americans [37%] think there is “too much emphasis on achieve-



ment testing” in their local schools, while 34% regard the emphasis on testing to be “about right” and 23% think there’s “not enough” emphasis.

Seventy-seven percent of the people want teachers to pass a national competency test before being licensed, in addition to a state test, in subjects they will teach.

Relatively few Americans are escaping the troubling effects of rising prices and a declining economy, so it’s no surprise that public education is feeling the strain, too.

The outlook seems increasingly bleak despite Oklahoma weathering the economic downturn better than almost any other state – thanks to an oil and gas bonanza.

In what passes for the media in Oklahoma, there have been only skimpy reports on the deliberate crippling of public education by a Republican-controlled Legislature.

Indications are that the GOP will take over both houses of the Legislature in 2009. You can bet that vouchers will be at the top of their list and more attacks will be made on public school teachers and administrators.

Today’s political climate in Oklahoma gives new meaning to “Dumb Okie.”

## Your Vote Counts

I was sitting on an airplane beside a well-dressed businessman who said he was so disgusted with the candidates for president – and politics generally – he was not going to vote.

“It’s only one vote,” he said. “I doubt if they’ll miss it.”

By a margin of one vote Texas, California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho became states.

In a recount, Merton Bulla lost the race for Oklahoma City mayor by one vote.

England’s King Charles I literally lost his head when the vote to behead him was 67 to 68.

In the U.S. presidential election of 1800, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied in the electoral college vote, throwing the election into the House of Representatives.

After 36 separate ballots, Jefferson finally won the election by one vote.

The Alaska Purchase of 1867 was ratified by just one vote, paving the way for annexation of America’s largest state.

One of the great political trials in America’s history ended in May 1868 when a Senate impeachment vote against President Andrew Johnson failed by one vote.

One vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England in 1645.

One vote gave America the English language instead of German in 1776.

One vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts in 1789.

One vote in 1875 changed France from a monarchy into a republic.

One vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the U.S. presidency in 1876.

One vote saved the selective service system just 12 weeks before Pearl Harbor in 1941.

In 1960, when votes were averaged out, John F. Kennedy won by one vote in each precinct.

In 1994, one vote passed Clinton’s budget plan calling for shrinking the deficit using spending cuts and higher taxes on corporations and upper income individuals.

It was the prime mover in turning the country around and getting the U.S. economy back on its feet. Vice President Al Gore cast the tie-breaking vote.

On Nov. 8, 1923, members of a recently formed political party met at a beer hall in Munich to elect a leader. By a majority of just one vote, they chose an ex-soldier named Adolf Hitler.

If you think the candidates are unworthy, vote for the one you dislike the least. Voting is the dues you owe to live in a great country.

## Why The Observer?

I stopped to buy a birthday card for a friend the other day and the lady at the checkout counter recognized me and asked me how the Observer is doing.

I told her these are tough times for small publications, thanks to the U.S. Postal System. She said she had never subscribed but she wondered what it was all about.

I realized I had never defined the Observer, thinking it spoke for itself. So I decided to tell readers why my late wife Helen and I had spent most of our adult lives dedicated to the Observer. Why?

To provide a home for new ideas. To prepare an agenda of items requiring attention and discussion by the people of Oklahoma. To flush out new points of view.

Yes, and to support unpopular causes and issues such as penal reform. To focus a consistent and intelligent criticism on prevailing attitudes, policies and dogmas.

To expose the recurring exaggerations, omissions and distortions of the press and media. To offer sound and impartial criticism of books and the arts and the performance of the media. To break the taboo on particular subjects such as gay rights and sex education.

Above all, our small-circulation publication provides the seedbed for ideas which are often fragile at birth and require nurture, pruning and careful editorial cultivation.

This is part of the mysterious, never fully understood process, by which ideas are finally projected out into the society for discussion, debate and possible testimony.

These are vital, indispensable functions which the mass media cannot perform. With support from thinking Oklahomans of all political stripes, the Observer is here to stay.

## Wonder Drug?

Most of the 1,400 respondents to an informal, non-scientific, online survey reported taking drugs to improve concentration. The drug of choice for the responders, the majority of whom work in biology, physics, medicine or education, was Ritalin, according to a report by CNN.

Stimulants like Ritalin or Adderall are approved to treat attention-deficit disorder, but scientists say they would have a noticeable effect on almost anyone. Busy professionals are not alone, as other surveys have found that one in four college students has taken prescription stimulants, with or without a doctor’s orders.

Meanwhile, half the responders to this CNN survey reported unpleasant side effects [headaches, anxiety and sleeping troubles], but 69% said the boost was worth the risk.

In addition, a third of responders bought their drugs on the Internet, while the majority got them from a pharmacist, family member or friend.

In all, this makes up “America’s uncontrolled experiment in pharmacology,” said Martha Farah, director of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania.

## Oklahoma The Neediest

# U.S. Mental Health System A Disaster

It may seem arcane, but reimbursement and spending priorities of government health agencies have life and death consequences for people with mental illness.

Just ask the family of Carolyn Howard, who was bludgeoned to death in 2005 on her front lawn by her adult son Keith, who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia.

The tragedy unfolded after the Florida Medicaid program abruptly dropped Zyprexa, the expensive anti-psychotic medication upon which Keith Howard had depended, from its formulary of approved drugs.

### HE HEARD VOICES ABOUT HIS MOTHER

As a result, Howard was hospitalized twice in the two months before the killing, having heard voices telling him his mother conspired with murderers like Lee Harvey Oswald.

An investigation by The Orlando Sentinel last year found that Howard was prescribed substitute medications but that they didn't help.

Today, compelling federally funded studies question the effectiveness of such "second generation" anti-psychotic medications as Zyprexa.

These drugs, although they may work for certain individuals like Howard, also pose health risks such as diabetes while boosting Medicaid's anti-psychotic drug costs 10-fold in barely a decade.

### BLAME FOR SHAMBLES

On virtually every front, Medicaid and other government agencies, the drug industry, and health-care providers all play a part in a fragmented system that uses taxpayers' dollars to pay for treatments and drugs that too often don't work.

At the same time, Bush wholesale budget cuts, convoluted reimbursement rules, and conflicting funding agencies have helped create a perfect storm of waste, needless deaths and ineffectiveness.

Tragically, this diverts scarce resources from proven, recovery-oriented programs such as "supported employment" that promotes a guided return to work, or integrated "dual diagnosis" treatment for the 50% or more of seriously mentally ill people who are also substance abusers.

### OKLAHOMA'S RANKINGS

Oklahoma is in the bottom 10 states in expenditures per capita for treatment of the mentally ill, and No. 1 one in the percentage of the population mentally ill.

## Schools Starving In Free-Fall Economy

As 50 million children returned to classes across the nation, crippling increases in the price of fuel and food, coupled with the economic downturn, have left schools from California to Oklahoma cutting costs.

Some Oklahoma districts have trimmed bus service, others are restricting travel. As many districts are forced to cut back, the number of poor and homeless students is rising.

First-year teachers have lost their jobs and positions have gone unfilled. It has been 10 years since the Legislature increased funding for administration.

Gov. Henry Bellmon's school reforms have been shelved as districts crowd classrooms and textbooks are in short supply.

### FUEL, FOOD COSTS UP, REVENUE DOWN

"The big national picture is that food and fuel costs are going up and school revenues are not," said Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association. "We're in a recession, and it's having a dramatic impact on schools."

Oklahoma's pain is minor compared with the woes of some cities. Detroit has laid off at least 700 teachers, Los Angeles 500 administrators and Miami-Dade County hundreds of school psychologists, maintenance workers and custodians.

Schools in many states have cut bus stops to save diesel. Districts in California and Ohio have gone further and eliminated bus service either completely or for high schools, leaving thousands of students to find their own way to school.

### BELT TIGHTENING UNDERWAY IN OKLAHOMA

In Oklahoma, officials worried about the cost of heating classrooms this winter have restricted travel for field trips to save money.

Some districts have taken a more radical measure – four-day school weeks. Hundreds of districts, responding to higher food prices, are charging more for cafeteria meals.

All told, the state School Boards Association estimates Oklahoma schools will need \$80 million more to cover skyrocketing costs.

In interviews, educators in many states said they were seeing more needy families than at any time in memory. Two charities in suburban Detroit announced in August that they would hand out student backpacks, attracting hundreds of families.

### BATTERED STATE BUDGETS

The problems in many districts can be traced to battered state budgets. According to a July report by the National Conference of State Legislatures, 31 states had budget gaps totaling \$40 billion, and many had cut school financing.

Unfunded mandates continue to bedevil districts in Oklahoma and across the nation – especially the No Child Left Behind law.



"Medicaid hasn't given much attention to mental-health reform, just to cutting costs," said Dr. Robert Drake, director of the multiyear National Evidence-Based Practices Project who also leads the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center.

"We're funding vested interests to suck profits out of the system rather than helping the patient."

All told, financing policy plays a central role in a system that President Bush's own New Freedom Commission on Mental Health declared nearly six years ago to be in "shambles." And then the administration proceeded to cut mental health funding.

New drugs are generally no safer or more effective than older, cheaper drugs – they are just ballyhooed more through industry funding of researchers.

New medications are as much as 20 times more expensive than the old drugs, leading to billions in extra profits for the drug companies that raided Medicaid's coffers.

The drug manufacturers responsible are facing tens of thousands of lawsuits  
See MENTAL ILLNESS Page 9

Oklahoma's budget gap was \$114 million this year but California still has a \$15.2 billion budget gap.

Los Angeles Unified sliced \$400 million from its \$6 billion budget partly by laying off 500 administrators and secretaries, though no teachers. The number of students whose family income qualifies them for subsidized meals is up, too.

### MORE FOOD SUBSIDIES REPORTED

Under the National School Lunch Program, children in a family of four whose parents earn no more than \$39,220 a year qualify for a subsidized 30-cent breakfast and 40-cent lunch. If the parents earn no more than \$27,560, the children qualify for free meals.

Half the school children in Oklahoma qualify for subsidized meals. Nationally, 14.9 million students qualified for free lunches last year, according to data from the Agriculture Department; the Bush administration's budget estimates that an additional 283,000 students will be eligible this year.

A department spokeswoman, Jean Daniel, said that subsidized meals were an entitlement and that no students would be turned away if participation exceeded estimates.

The office where parents fill out forms to qualify for subsidized meals has seen a stream of anxious parents this year, often in tears, pleading for the free meals for their children because they do not have 70 cents a day to pay for the reduced-price meals.

Public schools are being starved in the richest nation in the world. Look no further than the Bush Administration for an economy in free-fall while billions are squandered in the Middle East.

## INSIGHT. ANALYSIS. PERSPECTIVE.

*With three decades on the front lines  
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# Black Caucus Hit On Charter Schools

By Roosevelt Milton

The Oklahoma City Branch of the NAACP has serious concerns about the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University setting up charter school programs for the first time in all the years of their institutions? Who knows?

I think they were pushed, shoved or orchestrated in getting our Legislative Black Caucus to go along with Langston University [LU] and their adoption of "charter schools," the scourge of Equal Education afforded us.

When Sen. John McCain spoke to the NAACP in July, he brought up the subject of vouchers for education and charter schools, and the congregation of the NAACP was mum.

## NO ANSWER TO EDUCATION GAP

They were rejecting his premise that charter schools were any kind of answer to the education gap dilemma America faces.

Oklahoma City is in the eye of this matter as they continue to disdain stability at the top of the school district. Why have there been so many superintendents in so few years?

Those who oppose equality, especially in education, have gone forward with deceitful ways of abrogating the civil rights of blacks and other minorities.

Separation by race has been a course of a substantial segment of this United States society for all the 389 years we've been in America.

## LANGSTON CHARTER SCHOOL WRONG TURN

This phenomenon persists as sons and daughters of those who are privileged keep the flames fed with such subtleties as what has happened with LU's charter school program, "First in the Nation."

It seems as though we have taken our proverbial "eye" off the prize in the black community. The Black Caucus supports this concept, blessed by all the "good ole boys," and they don't even wonder why they are the "first in the nation?"

I became concerned when I saw this new Black Caucus leadership at the Capitol defy those whom their Black Caucus predecessors had resisted, indeed castigated, over the years. My fears are confirmed. The NAACP needs an explanation of their rationale.

## PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP NEEDED

The OKC Branch of the NAACP would prefer more progressive leadership in attacking the education issues we face in our communities.

Historically black colleges and universities will not jump on this "bandwagon,"

# Why Was His Son Sacrificed?

By John Scripsick

My son died in Iraq one year ago and it has made me study the reasons we went to war, as any parent would do looking into the loss of their child.

George W. Bush was in Oklahoma City to raise money for John McCain. I think for a donation of \$5,000 you got a picture with Bush at a beer distributor's house.

My son joined the Marines to help this country do good. I tried to talk him out of joining, but after 9/11, lots of young men and women joined.

One day before his final signing, I thought he was having second thoughts, but Bryan looked at me and said he already gave them his word.

I was worried, but proud that he was a man of his word.

## NOT MEN OF THEIR WORDS

As time went by, I've seen that George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and others were not men of their word. They will lie straight to your face. Most people will lie or stretch the truth for one reason and that is money.

I was there but not to get a picture taken with him, but to ask some questions:

How can our government pay \$800 to \$1,000 a day to Halliburton, KBR, Blackwater employees, which Dick Cheney has ties to, and only pay our troops \$70 to \$100 a day?

Is it true Blackwater, that has cost taxpayers billions to provide security in

# 12% Of Indian Deaths Are Due To Alcohol

Almost 12% of the deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives are alcohol-related, more than three times the percentage in the general population, a new federal report says.

The report by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found 11.7% of deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives between 2001 and 2005 were alcohol-related, compared with 3.3% for the U.S. as a whole.

Dwayne Jarman, CDC epidemiologist who works for the Indian Health Service, is one of the study's authors. He said it is the first national survey that measures American Indian deaths due to alcohol. It should be a "call to action" for federal, state, local and tribal governments, he said.

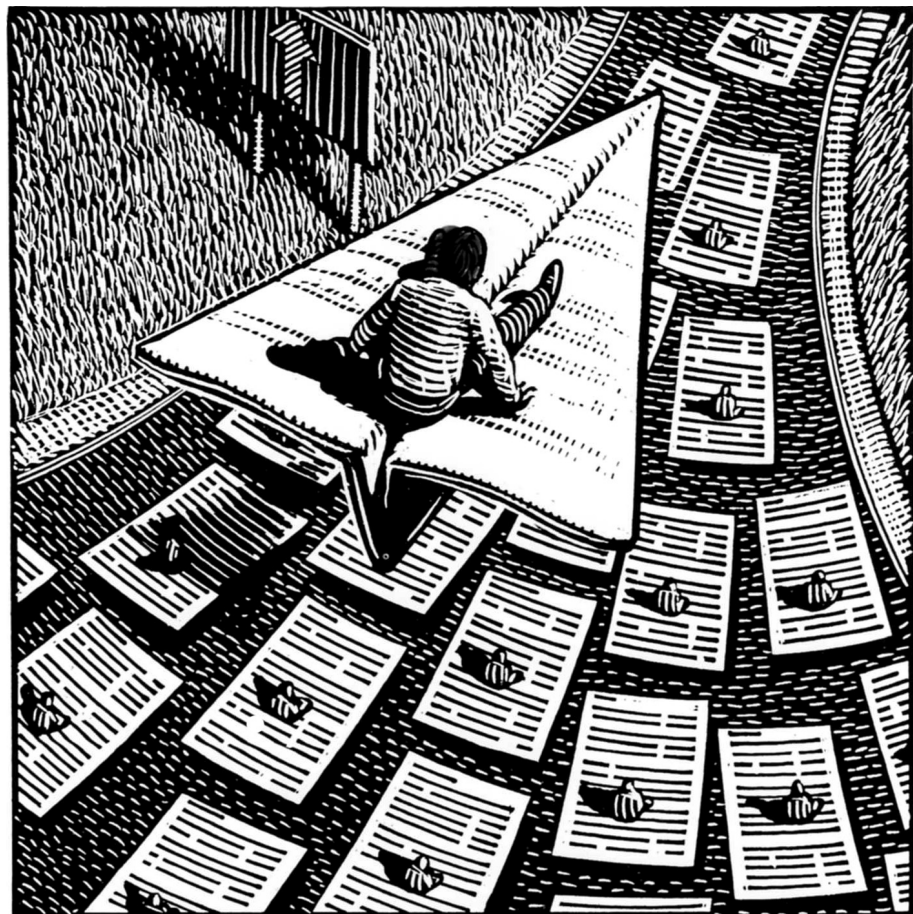
The researchers obtained their statistics by analyzing death certificates over the four-year period.

## TWO LEADING CAUSES LISTED

The two leading causes of alcohol-related deaths among Indians were traffic accidents and alcoholic liver disease, each of which cause more than a quarter of the 1,514 alcohol-related deaths over the four-year period.

Also listed are homicide [6.6% of alcohol-related deaths], suicide [5.2%] and injuries in falls [2.2%].

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which I believe will ultimately be discredited. We are smarter than this. Opio Toure, Angela Monson, Kevin Cox, where are you?

Where were you when your successors in leadership made a socio-political right turn when they came to the fork in the road?

Then they give someone from Mustang, a community with no blacks, the superintendent's position to reign over a community with 35% black and 38% Hispanic students.

I am still trying to figure out why LU is setting up the infamous "first in the nation" National Black College/University Charter School.

Some in today's Black Caucus support vouchers for education.

I believe it is my duty, as the deposed president of the state NAACP and current president of the OKC branch of the NAACP to be informed and to speak on these critically important issues. So let it be written!

Iraq, has given generously to your campaign?

Was Enron your largest contributor? Did a Texas oil company, who gave to your campaign, drill in the Kurdish region yet? Did you read the report sent to you in August 2001 about an attack in America coming soon?

## WAS HUSH MONEY PAID?

Did you pay \$5 million to a man from Iraq so he would not talk about weapons of mass destruction? Did you ignore Iran's offer to infiltrate al-Qaeda after the 9/11 attack?

Why did you ignore Joe and Valerie Wilson's true knowledge about WMDs and al-Qaeda in Iraq? How many military leaders, CIA, and others have resigned since you have been president?

If you collect enough money, pull a good looking rabbit out of the hat, and McCain becomes president, do you get a pardon from these questions?

My son died in Iraq Sept. 6, 2007. Does my asking these questions make me not patriotic? Did my son die for my freedom or did he die so you could pump money through private contractors and please your campaign contributors?

I'm sure standing on a corner, outside the fundraiser, did not get these questions answered. But maybe the right person will hear the message. I do know that doing nothing will produce nothing.

- The author lives in Wayne, OK

There may be many more alcohol-related deaths than the study shows, in part because the CDC analysis did not count deaths related to some diseases for which alcohol is believed to be an important risk factor, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia and colon cancer.

The greatest number of tribal alcohol-related deaths - about a third of the total occurred in the Northern Plains, where reservations are remote and often destitute, the study said. The lowest number of deaths was in Alaska.

## MORE DEATHS IN THE PLAINS

Jarman said the study did not look at why there may be more deaths in the Plains but said it is consistent with previous studies.

"It may be a function of social perceptions of alcohol in that particular region," he said. Their report did not break down the numbers by tribe.

The study said more than 68% of the Indians whose deaths were attributed to alcohol were men, and 66% were people younger than 50 years old. Seven percent were less than 20 years old.

The study recommends "culturally appropriate clinical interventions" to reduce excessive drinking and better integration between tribal health care centers and tribal courts, which often deal with alcohol-related crimes.

# Fighting To Save Affirmative Action

By Michael Camfield

The ACLU of Oklahoma has been involved in a massive legal effort during 2008 to preserve equal opportunity. This work began when the ACLU called for an investigation of irregularities and deceptive practices in the collection of signatures for the so-called Oklahoma Civil Rights Initiative [OCRI] in February.

The initiative was one of a series of ballot initiatives that California businessman Ward Connerly's American Civil Rights Institute [ACRI] spearheaded nationwide to eliminate affirmative action programs by amending state constitutions.

ACRI had been accused of using fraudulent and deceptive practices in nearly every state where it had introduced initiatives.

Oklahoma Secretary of State M. Susan Savage reluctantly certified the ballot initiative at the beginning of February. Savage noted an unprecedented number of duplicate names and addresses that delayed the compilation of her report.

## CO-OPTING CIVIL RIGHTS LANGUAGE

ACLU of Oklahoma Program Director Tamya Cox characterized the initiative as "an attempt by out-of-state zealots to impose their anti-equality agenda on the voters of Oklahoma."

The ACLU focused publicity on how Connerly's ACRI had consistently co-opted the language of the Civil Rights Movement and used deceptive tactics to trick voters into dismantling equal opportunity programs in California, Michigan and Washington.

The ACLU explained how affirmative action is crucial in sustaining equality of opportunity for all Oklahomans and stressed the importance of stopping out-of-state groups from rolling back principles of fairness and justice.

Oklahoma voters filed a protest on March 7 before the Oklahoma Supreme Court to challenge irregularities and questionable practices in the collection of signatures by the OCRI.

The lawsuit, In Re Petition 387, sought to prevent State Question 737 from being placed on the November 2008 ballot. The initiative would amend the Oklahoma Constitution to prohibit affirmative action programs.

## A DISASTER FOR WOMEN, MINORITIES

A similar ballot initiative in California dramatically reduced the participation of women and minorities in higher education, contracting, and employment.

After it passed in 1996, the number of women employed in California's construction industry declined 33%.

The number of minority businesses in the state's transportation construction industry declined even more sharply, with just a third of such enterprises in existence in 1996 still in business by 2006.

ACLU of Oklahoma Lawyers entered appearances in the case with attorneys from the ACLU National Racial Justice Program and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.



The challengers to the petition were state Rep. Mike Shelton, Rep. Jabar Shumate, Fannie Bates, Randall T. Coyne, Bob Darcy, Bernadette Huber, Rey Madrid, Bernice Mitchell, Earl D. Mitchell, Jr., and Juanita Vasquez Sykes.

## SIGNATURE PROCESS FULL OF ERRORS

ACLU of Oklahoma Legal Director C.S. Thornton expressed confidence that a review by the court would confirm that the signature collection process was riddled with errors.

"When equal opportunity and the civil rights of our residents are at stake, it is critically important that the electoral process is fair, transparent and honest," Thornton told the news media when the lawsuit was filed.

Nearly two dozen contract workers were hired to check approximately 140,000 petition signatures against a current roll of registered voters. Their goal was to invalidate enough signatures to disqualify the petition from being included on the ballot.

Faced with the efforts of the ACLU and its allies, the petition's proponents asked the Supreme Court in April to withdraw the measure.

Attorneys for the OCRI filed the request to the Court four days before the date of the first hearing scheduled before a Supreme Court referee.

## CONNERLY CONCEDES DEFEAT

The ACRI's Connerly conceded defeat by calling his Oklahoma group's efforts a "miscalculation" and "a roll of the dice."

When the OCRI filed its request to withdraw, the Supreme Court directed all  
See AFFIRMATIVE ACTION Page 17

# Vet Details Poor Conditions At Norman Center

By Mike Simmons

Regarding this undeserved Laurel to investigator Gary Glover [9.10.08 Observerscope], Henry Shaw said it best when he spoke, "'Tis better to know nothing than what ain't so!"

Glover's involvement in this whitewash effort by Norman Lamb, Oklahoma Secretary of Veterans Affairs, only happened when Lamb and Phillip Driskill, then longtime ODVA crony, tried to steer an investigation up a dead-end road by having the investigation assigned to the state's Merit Protection Board, which did not have jurisdiction to hear veteran complaints.

All this came about in a June 4 meeting at the state Capitol with Lamb, Driskill, Reps. Wallace Collins and Al Lindley, Susan Simmons and James Shearer.

## COVERING UP BAD JUDGMENT, POOR MORALE

Lamb and Driskill were trying to cover up numerous judgment and employee problems created by first-time NVC administrator Bob Weeks. When it became apparent that their ruse wasn't going to work, Lamb hired Glover to investigate the allegations brought forth by veterans at the Norman Veterans Center.

Glover was billed as an independent investigator who is a retired state employee, and was paid \$3,000 for his work. Subsequently, it was discovered that Glover knew Lamb and Driskill, plus he was the investigator for the Nursing Home Licensing Board, which has jurisdiction in such matters because veteran center administrators are required by law to have a nursing home license to be a vet center administrator.

It appears Glover is guilty of conflict of interest; being paid twice for the same job; faulty research methodology which circumvented veteran complaints leading to very questionable, unsubstantiated rulings by Glover.

When Glover met with this veteran and my sister, he refused to take our grievance background and detail file. He finally took the file, but it's apparent that he never read it.

## HOW CLAIMS WERE INVESTIGATED

We supplied Glover with a list of veterans, their families and even employees eager to participate in the investigation. Unfortunately, Glover decided to not interview them, opting instead to use a random sampling of just 13 employees and 16 veterans. What a joke!

Glover did find staffing shortages, which didn't take a \$3,000 study to figure out. Plus, he found one substantiated count of leaving a veteran in his own feces

for 59 minutes.

Weeks had already admitted to the abuse in an earlier investigation, but Glover refused to substantiate vet grievances by Weeks tied to misrepresentation, lying, reprisal and discrimination against two veterans disabled by multiple sclerosis. Weeks was found guilty of uncontrollable rages and employee abuse. This was admitted by Driskill, Weeks' boss, in the June 4 meeting at the state Capitol.

When the results of the tainted investigation were made public, Weeks went on TV and the Daily Oklahoman admitting that the veteran was left in his own filth but he doubted the time listed. Well, Weeks is right. The time was not correct - it was 59 minutes and 40 seconds to be precise.

## AUTHOR WAS ABUSED

I know because I'm the veteran that was abused and I have a large clock on my wall.

Plus, my sister was on the phone with me when it happened. Everyone knows that I am the veteran who was made to lie in his own feces. Weeks continues his systemic culture of abuse, attempting to vilify and discredit me. This is further proof of his abuse and discrimination.

Now we have a phony effort by Lamb and Martha Spear, the successor to Driskill, in which they collected anonymous comments from staff and a few veterans and their families.

In the Sept. 12 edition of the Norman Transcript, Lamb promises something will be done by the ODVA leadership. In the same breath he talks about a couple of resident troublemakers who are creating a hostile work environment.

## THREAT AGAINST WHISTLEBLOWERS

Weeks is the one responsible for the current state of low morale. All the veterans want is to have a safe place to live. Lamb's media remarks are nothing more than threats of naked reprisal against the whistleblowers.

In these instances, I'm proud to be one of those veteran "troublemakers." It's apparent that Lamb and the ODVA would rather cover it up than fix it up.

This veteran thinks it's time for a change in the Oklahoma Cabinet Secretary of Veterans Affairs office, the NVC administration and the ODVA. It's time to stop the whitewash that's happening now. The ODVA leadership no longer serves the veterans. It appears they are serving only themselves.

- The author is a resident of the Norman Veterans Center



# Music Teachers Hit By A Perfect Storm

By James South

The music education leadership has been sounding the alarm for over 15 years about the declining number of new teachers entering the music profession.

In Oklahoma, it is becoming the Perfect Storm – we are losing teachers to attrition and migration at the same time fewer numbers of students are choosing to be music educators.

Already, secondary performing programs are being closed in small schools because a suitable teacher cannot be found.

All of us, as music educators, must evaluate what we can do, individually and collectively, to help solve this problem.

## SUBCONSCIOUSLY STEERING STUDENTS?

Do you subconsciously steer your best students away from considering a music education career with comments like, “You’re really smart – you should go into medicine or law?”

Or do you encourage them to look past the salary and the hours and to examine the fulfillment that is possible in music education as a career?

It’s easy to be caught up in the negatives which any profession, including music education has, but around our students we should focus on the positive. We are a large influence on our students, whether that is positive or negative. Let’s be a positive influence!

## MUSIC STRETCHES THINKING SKILLS

Music education is a career that can allow you to use your very best critical thinking skills. There is nothing that stretches the analytical mind more than preparing and conducting a challenging work or deciding how to reach an autistic child in your elementary music class.

We do our profession and our students a disservice if we don’t encourage the best and brightest among them to consider music education.

The future students of Oklahoma deserve great music teachers – let us encourage our greatest students to become music teachers.

## STUDENTS ASKED TWO QUESTIONS

I ask students two questions: [1] Do you like working with people, especially young people, and [2] Do you love music and want to share the joy of music with other people?

If they answer yes to both questions, music education is a career option that they should consider. They will not make as much money in music education as they might in management, or medicine, or law, BUT they also won’t starve.

Even with Oklahoma’s relatively modest teacher salaries, one can live a middle-class existence, and [most important], love what they do every day.

## HE ENJOYED TEACHING VERY MUCH

When I was a young teacher [it doesn’t seem so long ago!], I attended my 10-year reunion from high school. I was a band director at a middle school and enjoyed teaching very much.

One of my high school band classmates had become an accountant for a large utility company. She was already making roughly twice my salary, but she told



me she would trade jobs with me in a heartbeat, because she hated going to work every day.

That comment has stuck with me. It’s not all about the money, and we know that. Do our students know that?

## HALF THE TEACHERS ARE LEAVING

The other issue we face is the retention of current teachers. We know that roughly half of all teachers leave the profession within five years. OMEA has put a special emphasis on helping young teachers become a part of the OMEA community.

I know that many of you were helped by a more experienced teacher – it makes a huge difference.

We need to help young teachers as they enter the field. As a teacher of future teachers, I talk in classes about the struggles of the first few years.

It is difficult, even with excellent preparation. There are some things that all teachers must learn on their own, in the heat of battle.

There are many struggles faced by young teachers. It is difficult to learn classroom management until a class is really your own, and when you finally have your own class, you often don’t have a mentor there to help you improve.

## YOUNG TEACHERS FEEL ISOLATED

Young teachers often feel isolated when leaving college and entering teaching. They go from a situation where they hang out with musicians 24/7 to a situation in which they may be the only musician in the school district.

As musicians, we are also used to being good at what we do. We practice for years on our instrument or voice, and performing well becomes a fun habit. Then we enter the teaching field and all of a sudden, we are beginners again, and it is a shock.

Young teachers need to know that it takes time to learn to teach well. Many

See MUSIC Page 19

# MENTAL ILLNESS

From Page 6

by irate consumers; Eli Lilly alone has reported paying over \$1 billion to settle 30,000 suits from patients claiming they developed diabetes and other illnesses.

Roughly two dozen state attorneys general have launched investigations and filed lawsuits, asserting that the drug companies improperly marketed these drugs, leading to increased medical costs.

But the \$11 billion spent annually on these dubious atypical, often for unapproved uses, also has another dire effect: Drugs now take up as much as 25% of Medicaid’s mental-health budget, siphoning off money needed for direct services to people with mental illness.

As Yale psychiatry professor Dr. Robert Rosenheck observes, \$11 billion is more money than the income of all 47,000 U.S. psychiatrists combined, and more than enough to pay for 150,000 additional case managers who could help provide intensive evidence-based services.

## ADVERTISING WAS KEY TO THE HYPE

“It was all based on false advertising,” Drake contends. “We spend billions on ineffective medications, and we won’t spend a few million to get people back to work and off of the Social Security rolls. Does that make any sense?”

Indeed, the perverse incentives and chaos of the mental-health system would only get worse under changes proposed by the Bush Administration for the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS].

Those reforms aim to slash nearly \$50 billion in federal support for coordinated, intensive services.

“People are already caught in a fractured system, and this will only fracture it further,” says Robert Bernstein, executive director of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

## PROBLEM UNADDRESSED IN OKLAHOMA

You won’t find an army of high paid lobbyists going office to office at the Oklahoma Legislature. Oklahoma’s mental health agency is generally silent on the problems of the mentally ill.

Who can remember when problems crying out for solutions last hit the in-bas-

ket at the Capitol Press Room?

“The people most at risk and dependent on Medicaid, the seriously mentally ill, end up inappropriately in jail, on the streets – or dead,” said Dr. Steven Sharfstein, former president of the American Psychiatric Association.

Based on the research, supported employment is the single most effective mental-health treatment, using a “job coach” as part of an integrated clinical team that can help most of the seriously mentally ill return to work and lead fulfilling lives.

Sadly, less than 5% of people with disabling mental illnesses are even enrolled in such a program – while Medicaid lavishes billions on near-useless “day treatment” programs to warehouse the mentally ill.

## IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO MAKING A PROFIT

“They get the services that are billable – not the services they want or need,” notes Doug Devoe, president of Ohio Advocates for Mental Health.

These Kafkaesque absurdities play out with grave consequences to physical and mental health. Devoe notes, for instance, that although a woman who was sexually abused needed private counseling, “they sit you in a group so the therapist can charge all 10 of you for an hour each.”

Despite widespread evidence about the prevalence of “co-occurring” mental and addiction disorders, when Amy had another relapse, the Medicaid-funded drug treatment staff insisted that she stop taking her lifesaving anti-psychotic medication at night so she wouldn’t be too sleepy in the morning to participate in group therapy.

## BARBARIC IGNORANCE

Such barbaric ignorance is only reinforced by a Medicaid reimbursement policy that pays for certain services, regardless of quality, with virtually no incentives for effective outcomes.

It’s up to the rest of us, though, to make sure that when health care providers do follow the money, government spending priorities actually serve the interests of the people who receive treatment and the taxpayers who are footing most of the bill.

## BOOKS

# The Worst Kind Of War-Time President

By Tim Rutten

### THE WAR WITHIN

A Secret White House History 2006-2008

By Bob Woodward

Simon & Schuster

512 pages, \$32

One of modern warfare's founding fathers, the 19th Century Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke, was of the opinion that no military plan, however well and carefully conceived, could survive its first contact with the enemy.

The same might be said about preconceptions concerning what makes a good wartime president. America's two greatest wartime leaders, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, were not just temperamental but also managerial opposites.

Lincoln – solitary, brooding, agonized – was what we'd call today a micromanager, involved in everything from the development of new weapons to individual generals' tactical planning.

Roosevelt – gregarious, preternaturally sunny, optimistic – set grand strategy and political goals but left the military side to his magnificent chief of staff, Gen. George C. Marshall.

What Lincoln and Roosevelt did have in common was mature idealism coupled with iron resolve and an exquisite adaptation to the realities of their particular historical moment.

### BUSH AS WAR-TIME PRESIDENT

The question of what sort of wartime president George W. Bush has been runs like a thread through Bob Woodward's brilliantly reported new book, the fourth volume in his running, insider's account of the Bush administration's conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The series began with a generally positive assessment of the president in *Bush at War* and has moved down through deepening levels of disenchantment in *Plan of Attack* and *State of Denial*.

In this latest volume, the weight of evidence finally produces a verdict – and it isn't a happy one.

Bush, in Woodward's view, is the worst kind of wartime president: controlling and disengaged, all at once. Worse, he frequently is not only detached from unpleasant or inconvenient facts but is also positively hostile to those who recite them.

### WILLFUL BLINDNESS DETAILED

As Woodward reconstructs the last two years – in a stunning series of on-the-record interviews with participants – this willful blindness has spilled out of the White House and into the departments of Defense and State in a perfect maelstrom of dysfunction.

"For years, time and again, President Bush has displayed impatience, bravado and unsettling personal certainty about his decisions," Woodward concludes. "The result has too often been impulsiveness and carelessness and, perhaps most troubling, a delayed reaction to realities and advice that run counter to his gut. ... Bush was intolerant of confrontations and in-depth debate. ... The president was engaged in the war rhetorically but maintained an odd detachment from its management. He never got a full handle on it, and over these years of war, too often he failed to lead."

The central events in *The War Within* are the conception and execution of "the surge," the infusion of additional U.S. troops that appears to have stabilized the security situation in Iraq, creating an opportunity for President Nouri Maliki's government to assert itself.

### A SIGNIFICANT CAMPAIGN ISSUE

The success of this strategic shift is a significant issue in our own presidential campaign, since the Republican nominee, John McCain, was an early, vocal supporter of the surge. [Indeed, although the Arizona senator has supported the war from the outset, he has consistently criticized the Bush administration for committing too few troops to the fight. Sen. Barack Obama opposed the war but recently conceded that the surge is working.]

Woodward's appraisal is more nuanced. He argues that the current situation was created by the confluence of three forces of which the troop surge may be the least consequential.

More important is a hyper-secret new program [by inference, a combination of technology and operational techniques] that has allowed U.S. forces to identify, locate and kill huge numbers of the insurgency's leaders, including members of al-Qaeda.

When military and White House officials learned that Woodward knew of the secret program, they asked that he withhold any details because publication would endanger the operation and compromise its use elsewhere.

Responsible though Woodward's decision may be, it lends a fairly frustrating opacity to what is *The War Within's* biggest revelation.

### SURGE DIDN'T WORK AS EXPECTED

The author also argues that the diminution of violence in Iraq owes a great deal to the so-called Anbar Awakening, in which the tribal sheiks in that crucial Sunni-dominated province have turned on al-Qaeda and aligned themselves with the U.S. and the new central government.

Woodward points out that the success in Anbar began long before the surge with the Marines' successful counterinsurgency efforts on the Syrian border. The result of those efforts reached critical mass at about the time the surge began.

In fact, Woodward quotes a memo from one of Gen. David H. Petraeus' counter-insurgency experts, musing that the troop surge has had the opposite effect from the one intended, which was to give the Maliki government a safe space into which it could extend its influence as a national regime.

Instead, the memo argues, the presence of additional U.S. troops has allowed the tribal leaders to assert themselves and their influence not only locally but also on the Baghdad government in an evolving but specifically Iraqi expression of civil society.

Unexpected – unless, of course, you recall Von Moltke's dictum.

### AN INDICTMENT OF BUSH'S LEADERSHIP

The weight of evidence Woodward provides to support his indictment of Bush's leadership comes in his reconstruction of the surge's origin.

By 2006, it had become apparent, even to the White House, that the U.S. strategy in Iraq was failing utterly. Violence was on the rise with no end in sight.

A study group convened by the administration was told by Michael V. Hayden, director of Central Intelligence, that the situation – under the prevailing strategy – was hopeless.

Still, according to Woodward, Bush resisted any change, refused to fire then-Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and persisted in misleading the public with upbeat assessments because he feared the truth's effect on mid-term congressional elections.


After the Democratic gains that November, Bush's doggedly loyal national security advisor, Stephen J. Hadley, convened a secret White House task force that cut the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Pentagon out of the loop and went to retired military generals – mainly the Army's former vice chief of staff, Gen. Jack Keane – for strategic advice.

### MILITARY COMMANDERS DEMORALIZED

It was a decision that, according to Woodward, has left America's top military commanders demoralized ever since.

The result of Hadley's secret consultations was the surge, a concept the Joint Chiefs had opposed from the start. In essence, their argument was that, even if the surge succeeded in reducing violence, the U.S. might end up a loser because it would increase the Iraqis' dependence on American military forces.

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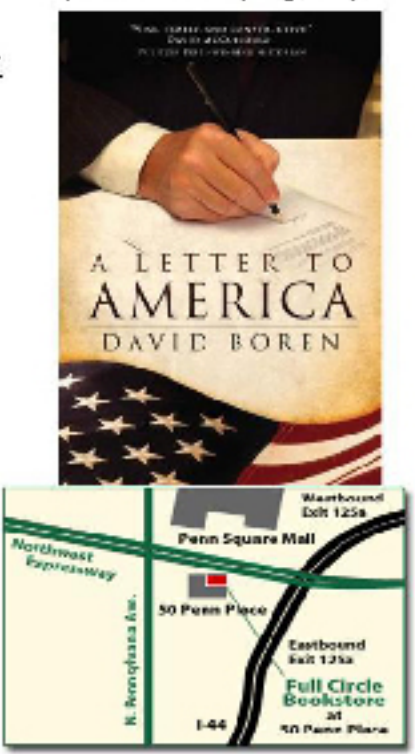
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THE OKLAHOMA Observer



# ***Birdbrains Can't Be Bothered With Issues***

***By Llyn French***

We walked into our ninth grade civics classroom that 1960 morning and knew immediately that Mrs. Malphus was about to erupt. We could almost see the smoke ascending from her black beehive hairdo. In her black fitted blouse and skirt and gold wire-framed eyeglasses that resembled antennae, she gave the appearance of an angry, wingless butterfly.

And she was furious.

She called the roll, which we answered soberly, and began to pace in livid silence in front of her desk. After several seething passes, she spoke.

"Class," – she paused, eying each of us – "I went to vote this morning before school. As I was standing in line, I overheard the two ladies ahead of me. One said, 'Ethel, who are you going to vote for?' and the other answered, 'Well, Mabel, I believe I'll vote for Mr. Smith. He has the cutest little mustache.'

"And I thought to myself, 'YOU BIRDBRAIN!!!!'"

## **NO FRIVOLOUS VOTES**

Thoroughly exploding now, she strode faster, jabbing her finger at us repeatedly as she thundered.

"Class, don't any of you EVER vote for a candidate for such a shallow, frivolous reason! Don't you EVER vote for anyone because of what he looks like, or his personality, or what he says he believes, or what he promises, or how much his wife and children adore him, or what a fine fellow his friends think he is.

"YOU BASE YOUR DECISION ON ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY – HIS VOTING RECORD! VOTING RECORD! VOTING RECORD! VOTING RECORD! NOTHING ELSE! AND DON'T ANY OF YOU EVER FORGET IT!"

I may be the only one, but I have not forgotten. Indeed, I dare not – not only because she was right, but also because I dread that the ghost of Mrs. Mary Jane Malphus would rise from the grave and throttle me.

## **PERSONALITY TRUMPS ISSUES?**

Yet according to The Washington Post, "Rick Davis, campaign manager for John McCain's presidential bid, insisted that the presidential race will be decided more over personalities than issues."

What a pity that he will never wither under the wrath of such a teacher.

I don't know what is going on in our schools these days, but I believe it to be a safe bet that there are precious few, if any, Mrs. Malphuses. It seems that our teachers no longer teach history, current affairs, government, and civic responsibility the way they used to do.

Deplorably, our current administration and one of its would-be successors would love to abolish the Department of Education and our public school system to keep the people in ignorance so that we cannot govern ourselves. Our Bill of Rights and the entire Constitution are under assault.

## **NO EXCUSE FOR IGNORANCE**

Democracies can be maintained only by educated people. With all the information available to us now, we have no excuse for ignorance.

We have Internet access to Project VoteSmart, which allows us to examine every detail of every congressperson's voting record. We have the League of Women

# ***Why I'm Ignoring The Bishop, Voting Obama***

***By Sharon Martin***

*I attend Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Cushing. My priest recently read a letter from Bishop Slattery telling us we should vote for the pro-life candidates. This is my open response to any person in authority who has the audacity to tell people how to vote:*

I am voting for Barack Obama because it is my choice. No preacher, teacher, or person in authority has the right to tell me how I should vote. Telling the parishioners that they should vote for pro-life candidates is telling them how to vote. Shame on you.

Jesus never advocated that his followers force others to believe. I can't tell someone else how to believe on matters of religion or politics. I can't make personal decisions for anyone but myself.

I certainly can't tell any woman what she can or cannot do with her body. Neither should our legislators or our courts. Her decisions are between her and God.

Some of the decisions we should consider include the following:

## **WHAT'S REALLY 'IMMORAL'**

It is immoral that anyone in this country be denied proper medical care. No one should lose his home because of medical bills. A working person should be able to afford health insurance for his or her family. Period.

America lost the moral high ground when we invaded Iraq on trumped-up pretexts. The first order of business is to get our soldiers out of Iraq and to let Iraqis govern themselves. As many as a million people have died for our transgressions. That is immoral. Torture is not only immoral, it is impractical.

It is immoral to destroy our planet in favor of short-term profit. And to suggest that we can save our planet by building nuclear power plants is ludicrous. If the Republicans really think this is a good idea, perhaps some of them will agree to let us dispose of spent waste in their neighborhoods.



Voters Web site providing all the objective information we could need.

We have access to more newspapers than we ever dreamed possible. We have every tool our Founding Fathers could have desired in order to educate ourselves sufficiently to take responsibility for our democracy, to preserve a government of, by, and for the people.

Yet of what use are these tools if we do not use them? If we do not think? Adolf Hitler: "What luck for the rulers that people do not think."

## **LIARS AND EXPLOITERS**

John Trudell expressed it most eloquently at the 1980 Black Hills International Survival Gathering: "We wonder what type of a condition exists when the people have been afraid to speak their minds ... when the people's spirit is at such a low place ... that they knowingly and willingly accept that they are governed by liars and exploiters. The American people laugh about how you can't trust a politician. The people must take the political system under their control."

This is not sedition. This is our sacred responsibility to our Founding Fathers, who bought our democracy with their own blood, and to our generations to come.

No, freedom is not free. We today buy it not with our blood but with the effort and time we expend in educating ourselves, in paying attention, and in participating. If we do not, then we will surely pay with blood in repression and have to fight another revolution.

It's the issues, stupid!

– *The author is a fifth-generation Oklahoman from Enid who lives in St. Petersburg, FL. She is a science editor and publications designer for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.*

I believe in alternative energy, the right of employees to unionize, the right to privacy, the right to a fair trial. I believe our government should offer certain basic services, including a free and quality education to every citizen. Schools in poor areas should be as well equipped as those in richer neighborhoods.

## **PRIVATIZATION IS BAD IDEA**

I'm against the privatization of most government services, and I'm especially against the privatization of Social Security. Any time you add a profit motive to any service, that profit will increase the cost of the service. This applies equally to prisons, road maintenance, and Social Security.

Social Security is one of the 20th Century's proudest achievements. Quit borrowing from [and not repaying] Social Security funds and there won't be a Social Security crisis.

There should be no citizens of this country who are denied dignity and basic rights. This includes hard-working immigrants who may not look or worship like members of your family, and this includes gays and lesbians, whom the good Lord created as he did you and me.

Those of us born to poor parents, who aren't athletic, and who aren't beautiful are owed the same chances for success as anyone else.

## **TREAT WORKERS WITH RESPECT**

It is time we treat working people with respect and take care of the least among us.

Those items aren't on the Republican platform as far as I can tell.

If you are a good Catholic, don't ask, "How does the Bishop want me to vote?" Instead, ask, "How would Jesus vote?" I think he would vote for an end of war and for social justice.

That is my choice, as well.

– *The author lives in Oilton*

# Finding Political Will For A Secure Future

By James Stovall

Ignorance is no longer an excuse in regard to the long and short-term effects of our oil-based system and our patterns of massive economic consumption. Our economy is destabilized. Our national security is threatened. Our natural systems are collapsing. Our moral fiber is compromised as we accumulate massive debt and destroy the earth.

President Bush has described our current love of oil consumption as an addiction. In dealing with addiction, it has been said many times that the first step is admitting that you have a problem.

Admitting a problem suggests a recognition that the current system is not working and that things must change dramatically. Admitting a problem implies that a major overhaul and a totally new way of living is needed.

It also means that no quick fix or superficial response will be sufficient.

## PICKENS' SOUND PROPOSAL

Oilman T. Boone Pickens has been promoting a strategy for getting our nation off of imported oil and implementing a move in the direction of wind and solar power. Pickens' proposals represent sound economic strategy as well as a sound national security policy.

Before major steps in this direction will be taken, like the addict or alcoholic, we must first admit that we have a serious problem that requires a total transformation.

The prerequisite to such a fundamental change is political will and a powerful consensus that change is needed.

Weaning ourselves from oil and excessive material consumption represents a sound moral and ethical approach to life that involves doing no harm to the earth and to future generations.

## ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

It implies that we should do to others as we would have them do to us. It suggests that we are all in it together.

Accepting appropriate limits on our use of the earth's natural resources is the right thing to do. Our current energy crisis represents a convergence of economic, environmental and moral concerns.

Economists, scientists and national security experts are mostly in agreement that the continuation of our current fossil fuel based economy will be a disaster. The dangers of climate change are very real and if we wait for total agreement, it will be too late.

To call for fundamental change is not a call for greater government control or an expansion of the federal budget. To the contrary, it is a call to personal and collective responsibility.

Each of us needs to recognize and understand the fact that we have a real problem that deserves immediate attention that has vast implications for how we live.

## AMERICA'S WORSHIP OF MATERIAL ABUNDANCE

Kentucky farmer Wendell Berry has said that we have founded our present society upon "delusional assumptions of limitlessness." Taking on the sound of a Hebrew prophet, he has said that our commitment to material abundance and economic growth has become a false idol that we worship in so many ways. Unlimited power is limited to the divine.

People get into trouble when they begin to think and act like God. Throughout history, our religious traditions have called for limits on human activity.

Our rigid refusal to consider any constraint on our economic behavior is a rec-

# Cynic Develops Rules To Live By

Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me either. Just pretty much leave me the hell alone.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and leaky tire.

It's always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal your neighbor's newspaper, that's the time to do it.

Don't be irreplaceable. If you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.

Always remember that you're unique. Just like everyone else.

Never test the depth of the water with both feet.

If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of car payments.

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is probably not for you.

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably a wise investment.

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Some days you're the bug; some days you're the windshield.

Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.

The quickest way to double your money is to fold it in half and put it back in your pocket.

A closed mouth gathers no foot.

Duct tape is like "The Force." It has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.

There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works.



ipe for global catastrophe. Berry argues that, like many characters in the Bible, we, too, seek to become Godlike in our power in which we refuse to acknowledge any limits from nature or any other power.

Too often, we sacrifice our core values of compassion and concern for future generations on the altar of economic growth and material abundance.

A belief in limitlessness is deeply ingrained in the American psyche. The result is what Berry describes as "moral minimalism" in which we are unencumbered by the values of neighborliness, respect, reverence, accountability and self-subordination.

## A REFUSAL TO ACCEPT LIMITS

We imagine a "right" to exploit the earth's resources regardless of the consequences on future generations. In our refusal to accept limits, we have incurred an economic and environmental debt that will have a harmful effect on many generations yet to be born.

Science and technology, though extremely useful, cannot ultimately rescue us from the limits that the earth presents. As the commercial says, "you can't fool Mother Nature."

Our ethics can be guided by a principle of mutual consent and non-exploitation. In an economic context, this principle means that we have to take into consideration all of creation in our attempts to improve our lives from a material standpoint.

The earth does not give consent to its own exploitation. We have to figure out what a mutually enhancing relationship with the earth might look like. It does not look like the rape of the earth that has taken place over the past 100 years or so.

Similarly, we have to take into account the many generations to come that can not speak for themselves or offer meaningful consent to actions made today that will have a horrible impact on the earth that they will inherit.

The well being of the earth's resources must become the central organizing principle of all human enterprise. This fundamental change in the way our society operates will happen either as a result of catastrophe or human choice.

- The author is director of training at the Mediation Institute in Oklahoma City and is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. He can be contacted at [j\\_stovall@site.net](mailto:j_stovall@site.net).

Generally speaking, you aren't learning much when your lips are moving.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

Never miss a good chance to shut up.

Never, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night.

- Thanks to Marc Troy for these jewels

# WORST

From Page 10

The more troops committed, this line of thinking went, the longer more of them would have to stay to prop up the Baghdad regime.

Moreover, committing the number of troops Hadley demanded - and he, not Bush, was the author of the policy - would leave the Pentagon unable to respond to any other global threat.

Even Petraeus, who emerges from Woodward's account as a formidable and honorable warrior, agreed on that point. Hand-picked by Keane, who has continued to be a back channel between the Oval Office and Petraeus outside the military chain of command, the new commander of U.S. forces in Iraq met privately with Bush immediately after his Senate confirmation. The president called his decision to order the surge "a double down."

"Mr. President, this is not double down," Petraeus responded. "This is all in."

No matter who wins in November, "all in" is precisely where the next president and the American people will find themselves when George W. Bush leaves office in January.

© Los Angeles Times

# Will Joe Biden Help Win Catholic Voters?

By Katherine Skilla

Barack Obama didn't choose just any Roman Catholic when he named Joe Biden his vice presidential running mate. He chose a weekly massgoer who once threatened to shove his rosary beads down the throat of the next Republican who said he wasn't religious.

Obama, in introducing his pick for the No. 2 spot, twice mentioned Biden's religious denomination. But how much of a boost could Biden's faith give the Democratic ticket?

In a country that is 24% Catholic – the largest single faith group – it's not that simple, because for years Catholics have not been the reliable Democrats they once were.

## THERE IS NO CATHOLIC VOTE

"The thing that is important to know about the Catholic vote," says John White at the Catholic University of America in Washington, "is there is no 'Catholic vote.'"

A professor of politics, White says the high-water mark for Catholic voters came in 1960, when Democrat John F. Kennedy made history as the first Catholic president, capturing 78% of their vote.

Now, though, Catholic identity tends to be just one feature these believers bring into the voting booth, along with factors such as race, gender, class, education level, and sexual orientation.

Experts say conservative Catholics who oppose abortion and same-sex unions skew Republican. Liberals who support social justice causes and oppose war and the death penalty tend to be Democratic.

## ONLY HISPANICS TREND TO DEMOCRATS

Catholics of European heritage, such as the Irish, Italian, and Polish, have gravitated to the GOP as they've scaled the economic ladder and settled in suburbs. But Hispanic Catholics, a growing group, trend Democratic.

While there are two ends of the spectrum, says John Green, a senior fellow at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "there's also a large middle. And a lot of Catholics make their choice case by case, election by election."

In the past few decades, Catholics have swung back and forth between the parties in presidential contests. President Bush won a majority of them in 2004, after three successive wins by Democrats Al Gore and Bill Clinton.

Before that, the GOP had a three-election winning streak, thanks to George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan. Earlier, Jimmy Carter claimed Catholics in 1976, as did Richard Nixon in 1972.

## CATHOLICS MOVING AWAY FROM DEMOCRATS

"Since Lyndon Johnson's landslide election in 1964, there's been a slow trickling away of Catholics from the Democratic Party," White says.

He says a more pertinent cultural divide separates those who attend church regularly and those who don't.

Regular churchgoers trend Republican. Then there are those for whom religion



is more an interior phenomenon. White calls them the "My religion is for me, not for you" crowd and says that for them, church hierarchy is one moral voice but not the only one. And they are more apt to be Democratic.

Should Obama triumph in 2008, it would make history. The United States has never had a Catholic vice president. The list of major-party presidential nominees is also short. Kennedy prevailed after Al Smith, the Democrats' choice for the White House in 1928, fell short. Likewise, Democrat John Kerry lost the race in 2004.

Up to now, Catholic vice presidential nominees have not brought much luck to any ticket. They include Democrats Geraldine Ferraro, who was Walter Mondale's running mate in 1984; Sargent Shriver, who was George McGovern's pick in 1972 [after Tom Eagleton dropped out amid disclosures that he'd undergone electric shock treatments], and Ed Muskie, who was Hubert Humphrey's choice in 1968.

## GOLDWATER TAPPED A CATHOLIC

In 1964 Republican Barry Goldwater tapped William Miller for the No. 2 spot.

This year, non-Hispanic white Catholics, who political scientists say are more likely to vote than Hispanic Catholics, are evenly split between John McCain and Obama, according to a poll by the Pew Research Center. It found 45% backed McCain and 44% Obama.

That Obama is making a play for Catholics, while McCain courts them aggressively, is not surprising. The same poll found that among the all-important "undecideds," those for whom the sale has not yet closed, more than one in five is Catholic.

Most analysts think Biden might help Obama with some Catholics – but certainly not all of them.

© Truthout

# Blue Dogs Could Soon Have Their Day

By Froma Harrop

Hmmm, suppose there were a liberal Democrat as president but a more conservative Democratic majority in Congress. That could happen.

As Democrats scoop up seats in traditionally Republican districts, they add members quite unlike their old-time lefties with a program for every plight.

Meet the Blue Dog Democrats.

They are not averse to helping the little guy, but are opposed to helping him with borrowed money. These are fiscal conservatives who generally hail from the South or Midwest. But they do include a good number of Californians and a smattering of Northerners, as well.

## BLUE DOGS PREFERRED HILLARY

To them, Bill Clinton's presidency was the golden age of fiscal rectitude, a model of sobriety beside the Bush administration's eight-year bender of spending and borrowing. Not surprisingly, the Blue Dogs' preferred presidential candidate was Hillary Clinton.

Allen Boyd represents the Florida panhandle and is co-chair of the 49-member Blue Dog Coalition. I asked him how his group feels about the party's decision on a nominee.

"Any discussion of what might be better is irrelevant," Boyd said philosophically. "We move forward from here."

But presidential politics is not the Dogs' big game, anyway. They're fixed on adding pups to their pack in Congress. And they like what they see on the electoral horizon.

## TARGETING EIGHT GOP SEATS

In 2006, Blue Dogs took eight seats from Republicans. The coalition is now endorsing nine candidates – eight of them in Republican-held districts. [The one Democratic seat is that of Alabama Rep. Bud Cramer, who is retiring and an esteemed Blue Dog founder.]

The race that especially excites Boyd is for the Idaho's 1st Congressional District, which includes Coeur d'Alene and Boise's western suburbs. Walt Minnick has been polling remarkably well against the Republican incumbent, Rep. Bill Sali, in this reddest of red states.

"Can you imagine a Democrat winning in Idaho?" Boyd said with relish.

Liberals are of course delighted by the prospect of a strengthened House majority, but they ought to digest the reality that these new Democrats aren't entirely their type.

## BLUE DOGS WIN SPECIAL ELECTIONS

Remember how they rejoiced earlier this year when their party took three Republican seats in special elections?

Two of them, Travis Childers in Mississippi and Don Cazayoux in Louisiana, immediately joined the Blue Dogs. They are economic populists but also as socially conservative as any Southern Republican and deficit hawks.

And so the day may dawn when a President Obama draws up a wish list for expanding health coverage, stimulating the economy and investing in alternative energy, and this huge bloc of his own party says, "Love it, but where are we going to find the money ... ?"

The Blue Dogs praise Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for holding firm on PayGo, the rule that any new spending or tax cuts must be offset by tax hikes or spending cuts elsewhere.

## BLUE DOGS WORK EITHER SIDE

But party liberals have been howling at the PayGo restrictions as the killer of their dreams. They say that Republicans never worried about paying for anything, did they?

They did not, but that's one of the Blue Dogs' selling points to the voters. That's why they are better.

What do the Blue Dogs want to hear from candidate Obama?

"He should speak to me about the fiscal crisis," Boyd said, "that we must address this prior to addressing these other problems."

And if fiscal discipline makes liberals mad, that's OK. The Blue Dogs are seeking to establish a bipartisan coalition of the center. And they are willing to work with whomever gets elected president in November.

As Kansas Rep. Dennis Moore told a Blue Dog gathering in Denver: "The American people want Democrats and Republicans to work together. Let the extremes at both ends go their own way."

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# Corporate Queen's Phony Populism

By Jim Hightower

"Perfect populist pitch," beamed CBS analyst Jeff Greenfield right after Sarah Palin's big speech at the GOP fawnfest in St. Paul, MN. "She's a populist," echoed Karl Rove over at Fox TV.

Excuse me? Palin is to populism what near beer is to beer, only not as close.

She might be popular, she might be able to field dress a moose, she might live in a small town, she might enjoy delivering "news flashes" to media elites, she might even become vice president – but none of this makes her a populist.

By trying to place the noble crown of an authentic people's movement atop the head of a candidate who is a shameless corporate servant, the chattering television pundits are perverting language, American history and the substance of today's genuine populists.

## WHAT POPULISM REALLY MEANS

You want a taste of the real thing? Try this from another woman who hailed from a small town and was renowned for her political oratory:

"Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street. ... Our laws are the output of a system which clothes rascals in robes and honesty in rags. ... The people are at bay, let the bloodhounds of money who have dogged us thus far beware."

That, my media friends, is populism!

It comes from Mary Ellen Lease's speech to the national convention of the Populist Party in 1890. Lease spoke all across the land, rallying a fast-spreading grass-roots revolt against the corporate predators of her day.

## REALITY VS. RHETORIC

"Raise less corn and more hell," she urged farmers. She didn't need to brag that she was a pit bull in lipstick because her message, idealism and actions made her an actual force for change.

Populism was and is a ground-level, democratic movement with the guts and gumption to go right at the moneyed elites. It is unabashedly class based, confronting the Rockefellers on behalf of the Littlefellers.

To be a populist is to challenge the very structure of corporate power that is running roughshod over workers, consumers, the environment, small farmers, poor people, the middle class ... and America's historic ideals of economic fairness, social justice and equal opportunity for all.

"Populist" is not an empty political buzzword that can be attached to someone like Palin, whose campaigns [lieutenant governor, governor and now VP] are financed and even run by the lobbyists and executives of Big Oil, Wall Street bank-



ers and other entrenched economic interests.

Populists don't support opening our national parks and coastlines to allow the ExxonMobils to take publicly owned oil and sell it to China. Palin does.

Populists don't hire corporate lobbyists to deliver a boatload of earmarked federal funds, then turn around and claim to be a heroic opponent of earmarks. Palin did.

Populists don't favor giving yet another huge tax break to corporations. Palin does.

Another thing populists don't do is sneer at community organizers, as Palin did in her nationally televised coming-out party. Indeed, populists of old were community organizers, as are today's, helping empower ordinary folks who are besieged by the avarice and arrogance of many of the corporations backing Palin.

## A NEW BUMPER STICKER FOR PALIN

Since the governor likes to put her fundamental Christianity on political display, she might ponder a new bumper sticker that expresses a bit of Biblical populism: "Jesus was a community organizer, while Pontius Pilate was governor."

Working for such needs as clean elections, environmental justice and fair wages, community organizers embody the vitality of modern populism, doing the essential grunt-level work of democracy.

What gives Palin any legitimacy to denigrate that? By standing with the rich and powerful whom grass-roots folks are having to battle, she's a plutocrat, not a populist. Big difference.

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# The 'Reform' McCain Wants You To Forget

By Joe Conason

With the markets in frightening turmoil and the public outraged by financial irresponsibility and excessive greed, John McCain has suddenly rediscovered the importance of strong, watchful government.

Only six months ago, he assured the Wall Street Journal that he is generally opposed to regulation, but today he is ready to control executive compensation, defend 401k accounts from corporate predators and impose renewed federal oversight of errant markets.

This populist rhetoric sounds strange, especially when emitted by a politician whose circle of advisers includes former Sen. Phil Gramm, vice president of the scandal-tainted Union Bank of Switzerland, and John Thain, chief executive of the firm formerly known as Merrill Lynch.

But when facing the angry voters who have watched their savings evaporate, the conservative Republican hopes to sound more like a liberal Democrat again.

He wants to blur the differences between himself and Barack Obama on fundamental economic philosophy. But there is one critical issue where the Arizonan has established a record that cannot be escaped so easily.

McCain wants to privatize Social Security. It is a stance he has repeatedly taken over the past 10 years in recorded votes, interviews, speeches and documents. It is also a position that he will deny in this campaign.

In fact he tried to deny it at a June town hall meeting in New Hampshire, when he declared, "I'm not for, quote, privatizing Social Security. I never have been. I never will be." But the contrary evidence is overwhelming.

## RUNNING FROM HISTORY

As long ago as 1998, several years before the Bush administration sought to promote privatization, he voted to partially replace Social Security with private accounts. He included privatization in the economic platform of his 2000 presidential campaign.

He spoke out in support of the White House's ill-fated push for privatization during the spring of 2005. And when that plan started to sink into oblivion, despite an advertising and public relations budget that exceeded \$50 million, he tried to save it.

McCain was still pushing the Bush plan earlier this year, when he needed to persuade his own party's ultra-rightists to accept him as their nominee.

During the same interview when he told the Journal editors that he generally opposes regulation, he explained his plan to "reform" Social Security. "I believe that private savings accounts are a part of it," he said, "along the lines that President Bush proposed."

Obviously such remarks no longer serve McCain's political purposes, and cer-

tainly won't attract voters, who never liked the Bush plan – and probably like those ideas even less as they watch the market ravage their pension funds and equity accounts.

Listening to the Republican nominee promise to "protect" their retirement accounts, they might wonder how he will do that when so much of the value of those accounts has disappeared already.

They might also wonder what would happen to the elderly and other beneficiaries of Social Security if the privatizers like him had succeeded in consigning their future to the same Wall Street sharks he now denounces for their greed and irresponsibility.

## OBAMA'S CHALLENGE IN CLOSING DAYS

For Obama, this moment presents a crucial opportunity to draw the most important distinctions between himself and his opponent as well as between Democrats and Republicans.

By going after McCain on Social Security, he can assure those Democrats with the deepest doubts about him – older white working-class voters – that he is on their side and can be trusted to understand their concerns.

And, of course, the Social Security theme fits well with the broader Obama indictment of McCain as an echo of the president's failed policies – because on this issue, that he is exactly what he has done, not only this year but for many years.

More broadly, Obama needs to convince voters that he has a program to address the economic crisis – and tell them why Democratic solutions are not only in their interest but also in the national interest.

This is a chance for him to explain how progressive solutions work – how shared prosperity made America strong and productive during the century when we became the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world.

He should place responsibility for stagnation and decline where it belongs – on the Republican policies that have created staggering inequality.

And he should emphasize that by every measure, Democratic administrations over the past 100 years have achieved measurably more economic success than Republican administrations – not only with better budgeting and fairer taxation, but even in the growth of equity values. Stock prices rise when a Democrat is president.

The history is so clear that it is hard to understand why any investment banker or broker votes Republican. But then we've learned lately that they aren't necessarily so smart, after all.

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## McCain For Super Rich

# Obama Tax Cuts For Middle Class

By Bob McIntyre

Presidential candidate John McCain's campaign is running ads that say Sen. Barack Obama proposes "painful tax increases on working American families."

McCain lately has been telling Americans that "Sen. Obama will raise your taxes."

These statements show either a proud ignorance or a willful dishonesty.

We respectfully ask that McCain act honorably and avoid attempts to mislead the public about his opponent's positions.

Obama proposes two types of tax cuts. First, he proposes making the Bush tax cuts permanent for all but the richest 2% or 3% of taxpayers. Second, he proposes the creation of many additional tax cuts for the middle-class.

President Bush and his allies in Congress enacted tax cuts that are scheduled to expire after 2010. For the richest 2% or 3% of Americans, Obama would make no changes to current law.

### WHAT THE OBAMA PROPOSAL DOES

For everyone else, Obama would change the law to make the Bush tax cuts permanent, and he also proposes many additional tax cuts for the middle-class, which are described below.

Specifically, Obama calls for making the Bush tax cuts permanent for everyone except married couples with incomes above \$250,000 and singles with incomes above \$200,000.

Citizens for Tax Justice released a report in January finding that only 2.1% of taxpayers have adjusted gross income [AGI] over \$250,000, while only 3.2% have AGI over \$200,000.

The only changes in the law proposed by Obama that would affect the richest 2% or 3% are a partial extension of the cut in the estate tax and a partial extension of the loophole for dividends.

### MCCAIN FLIP FLOPS ON TAXES

McCain proposes to make the Bush tax cuts permanent for all Americans, regardless of how wealthy they are.

The fact that Obama would not make them all permanent for the richest Americans has been falsely presented by the McCain campaign as "painful tax increases on working American families."

Both candidates propose additional tax cuts, but Obama's new tax cuts benefit middle- and low-income families while McCain's new tax cuts primarily benefit corporations and businesses.

McCain proposes major cuts in taxes paid by corporations and businesses. He also proposes an increase in the exemption for dependents, which would not benefit those taxpayers [over 40% of all taxpayers] who pay federal payroll taxes but don't pay federal income taxes.

### A VARIETY OF NEW TAX BREAKS

In contrast, Obama's plan has a variety of new tax breaks targeting middle- and low-income families. His refundable Making Work Pay Credit would refund \$500 in payroll taxes [or \$1,000 for a working couple].

His refundable American Opportunity Credit would provide up to \$4,000 for post-secondary education.



He would exempt seniors with incomes below \$50,000 from income taxes.

His refundable Universal Mortgage Credit would offer a tax break for homeowners who don't benefit from the current mortgage interest deduction.

He would strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The list goes on, but the point is clear. Obama proposes to cut taxes in a big way for middle- and low-income families.

McCain's advisers are fully aware that the message the McCain campaign is delivering about taxes is untrue. Time's Michael Sherer wrote back in July:

### MCCAIN'S ECONOMIST BACKTRACKS

"Here is Douglas Holtz-Eakin, McCain's chief economic policy adviser. 'I used to say that Barack Obama raises taxes and John McCain cuts them, and I was convinced,' he told me in a phone interview. 'I stand corrected about Obama's plans.'"

McCain actually voted against the two major components of the Bush tax cuts. He first voted against the 2001 law that cut the personal income tax mostly benefiting the rich and phased out the estate tax, which entirely benefits the rich.

He then voted against the 2003 law that increased the loophole for capital gains, created a new one for dividends, and sped up or extended other cuts in the personal and corporate income taxes.

McCain was critical of Bush's tax proposals even before Bush took office. McCain said back in 2000, "Gov. Bush wants to spend the entire surplus on tax cuts. I don't believe the wealthiest 10% of Americans should get 60% of the tax breaks. I think the lowest 10% should get the breaks."

### CLINTON POSITION DOES NO HARM

There is no evidence that allowing taxes to revert to the levels in place under President Clinton will harm the economy. It is therefore even less likely that Obama's plan, which would only do this for the richest, would harm the economy.

See TAXES Page 17

# Ending Lobbyists' Stranglehold On Democracy

By Jim Hightower

Jack Abramoff, the infamous Washington super-lobbyist who slipped on his own sleaze, was sentenced in early September to four years in prison for corruption. How appropriate that his denouement came on the very day that John McCain was nominated by Republicans to be their presidential standard-bearer, and only one week after the Democratic Party convention.

The timing was appropriate because it put the corrupting power of corporate lobbyists back in the news, even as both parties were chanting that they would be the agents of "change" in Washington.

In St. Paul and Denver, Republicans and Democrats alike were posing as ethical purists who would take on the special interests.

Yet, out of camera view, those very interests were honored guests at both gatherings! They sat in the platinum-level splendor of skyboxes, watching and winking as the rhetoric flowed.

### GUESS WHO FINANCED CONVENTIONS?

What neither party wants you to know is that their presidential nominating conventions were paid for by the latter-day Jack Abramoffs, who were sipping cocktails and schmoozing with elected officials in those corporate suites.

More than 100 corporations, from AFLAC to Xerox, pumped in about \$1 million each to finance the shows below, including some 25 corporate swingers that sponsored both events.

McCain's pretense was especially cynical. Even though he publicly assails lobbyists as "birds of prey" who are after "the spoils" of government, he literally has put them in charge of his White House bid.

### MCCAIN TEAM: A WHO'S WHO OF LOBBYISTS

Campaign manager Rick Davis is a longtime lobbyist for AT&T and other telecom giants that have received legislative favors from Sen. McCain. Chief strategist Charlie Black is the dean of Washington's lobbying corps, representing such

clients as Blackwater, GE, Philip Morris and Rupert Murdoch. Former top economic advisor Phil Gramm [who may become treasury secretary if McCain wins] is lobbying director for UBS, the Swiss-based banking conglomerate.

Fundraising chairman Wayne Berman lobbies for the Carlyle Group, Chevron, Shell, Verizon and others. The campaign's national security advisor, Randy Scheunemann, is a lobbyist for foreign governments, including the Republic of Georgia, whose cause McCain has embraced.

"Well, so what?" ask those who ply the trade. "Yes, we peddle political influence, but, hey, it's not illegal, except when an Abramoff takes the practice too far. Ours is an honorable profession that performs the noble function of enhancing the democratic participation of our clients. We are political guides and interpreters, merely helping these citizens maximize their voices in the halls of government. And we most certainly comply with the laws written to assure our ethical behavior."

### ARE WE COMPLETE SUCKERS?

Sheesh. Do we look like we have sucker wrappers around our heads?

First, these Washington fixers only enhance the voices of "citizens" who can afford \$600-an-hour lobbying fees.

But, second, complying with Washington's ethical rules is a breeze and farce, since the lobbyists are inside the system writing the rules, making sure they are looser than a shoplifter's overcoat.

Last year, when Democrats took charge of Congress, there was a loud pledge by the new House leaders to reform the culture of corruption that had become pervasive under GOP leader Tom DeLay.

Sure enough, in the Democrats' first month, such crass practices as letting lobbyists pay for members' junkets and rides on corporate jets were banned.

See STRANGLEHOLD Page 19

# More Than Half Of Kids Out Of Wedlock

By Karen Uhlenhuth

Think of it as a new “normal” in American family life. After creeping slowly and steadily upward most of the last 50 years, the number of babies born to young unmarried women quietly crossed a troubling threshold in 2006.

For the first time in a half-century of record-keeping, a majority of babies born to women younger than 30 were out of wedlock, according to Andrew Sum, economist at Northeastern University in Boston.

In 1960, 6% of babies born to women under 30 were born to unmarried women. By 2006, that figure had grown to 50.4%.

Out-of-wedlock births are closely correlated with education. In 2005-06, 67% of babies born to high-school dropouts under 30 were born to unwed women. Among high-school graduates with no further education, the figure was 52%. Among college graduates, it was 14%.

## BRISTOL PALIN FOCUSES THE NATION

The nation got a reminder that unwed pregnancies can happen anywhere when Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin announced that her 17-year-old daughter, Bristol, was five months pregnant. The family said Bristol will keep the baby and marry the baby's father.

The Institute for American Values published a study pegging the annual cost to taxpayers of children living with a single parent – whether because of divorce or an out-of-wedlock birth – at more than \$112 billion annually.

For the vast majority of single young mothers there's no rescue in sight.

## THIS EXPERT PREDICTS DISASTER

Sum, who directs Northeastern's Center for Labor Market Studies, warns that the burgeoning number of such families presages “disaster.” His 2006 calculations are his most recent.

“The inequality of incomes in these families is unbelievable,” said Sum, who has written numerous books and articles about the job market, young families and poverty.

“Forty percent are poor, or near-poor. A large fraction is dependent on public assistance. Unless the mother is very well-educated and has a bachelor's degree or above, there's a huge fiscal cost to the rest of us.”

Most of the mothers are not college-educated. In fact, the story of the American family has split into two widely divergent realities, according to Sara McLanahan, a professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University.

## WELL-EDUCATED WOMEN IMMUNE

By and large, she said, college-educated women are marrying later, having babies within a marriage and divorcing less. Their husbands are spending more time with the children.

Women without a college degree are doing just the opposite and in growing numbers.

“The next generation of children is going to be much more unequal than what we have today,” Sum warned.

“You're going to have a really elite group and a group that will massively fall

# Eating Disorders Troubling Many Women

By Robert Preidt

A whopping 65% of young American women report disordered eating behaviors, and 10% report symptoms of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa or binge eating disorder.

The findings – from an online poll of more than 4,000 women between the ages of 25 and 45 – found that 75% eat, think and behave abnormally around food.

The survey was conducted by SELF magazine in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The survey found that these behaviors cut across racial and ethnic lines and are not limited to any one group.

## IT COVERS ALL ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

“Women who identified their ethnic backgrounds as Hispanic or Latina, white, black or African-American and Asian were all represented among the women who reported unhealthy eating behaviors,” Cynthia R. Bulik, a professor of eating disorders and director of the UNC Eating Disorders Program, said in a prepared statement.

“What was found most surprising was the unexpectedly high number of women who engage in unhealthy purging activities.

More than 31% of women in the survey reported that in an attempt to lose weight, they had induced vomiting or had taken laxatives, diuretics or diet pills at some point in their lives.

## MORE THAN HALF ARE PURGING

Among these women, more than 50% engaged in purging activities at least a few times a week, and many did so every day.

Eating habits that some women think are normal – such as skipping meals, avoiding carbohydrates and, in some cases, extreme dieting – may actually be signs of disordered eating, which is often linked with emotional and physical distress.

While there's a widespread belief that eating disorders affect mostly young women, the survey found that women in the 30s and 40s had about the same rates of disordered eating as younger women.



behind. These gaps are really extraordinary. I testified before Congress and said, ‘Look guys, we really need to face this.’”

Sum advocates providing more public assistance and tax breaks for low-income families, especially those in which the parents are married and working.

Private family miseries translate into major public burdens, he said.

## TOO POOR TO HELP THEMSELVES

“You can't raise revenue from families that have such a low income,” Sum said. “And you have to spend so much more to keep them afloat.”

He estimates that taxpayers pony up about \$7,000 a year each to support the typical family of an unwed mother without a high school diploma.

“Our ability to afford this has come to an end.”

Fatherless families also earned a mention from Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama. He chose Father's Day to chastise men in the black community in particular for failing to perform any duties of fathering beyond the act of conception.

## TEN YEAR STUDY UNDERWAY

Princeton's McLanahan has been trying to gain a better understanding of this burgeoning family form with a 10-year effort known as the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study.

McLanahan and her research team initially interviewed 8,000 couples, three-fourths unwed, upon the births of their children, starting in 1998.

The researchers have interviewed them periodically since then. Their lives are complicated in many ways, she said.

At the time of an out-of-wedlock birth, she said, about half of the couples live together. Two-thirds of those relationships typically dissolve by the time a child is born.

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Here are the other findings:

- 67% of the women [excluding those with actual eating disorders] are trying to lose weight.
- 53% of dieters are already at a healthy weight and are still trying to lose weight.
- 39% of the women said concerns about what they eat or weigh interfere with their happiness.
- 37% of respondents said they regularly skip meals to lose weight.
- 27% said they'd be “extremely upset” if they gained just five pounds.
- 26% have eliminated entire food groups from their diet.
- 16% have dieted on 1,000 or fewer calories a day.
- 13% smoke to lose weight.
- 12% often eat when they're not hungry, and 49% sometimes do.

The survey was published in the May issue of SELF and presented at the Academy for Eating Disorders' International Conference on Eating Disorders in Seattle.

# OBAMA

From Page One

What keeps Oklahoma afloat, at least temporarily, is high oil and gas prices that mask the broader economic realities. When the state begins to feel the pinch, as it undoubtedly will, lawmakers will be called upon to make tough decisions about funding schools, rebuilding crumbling bridges and highways, solving prison overcrowding and treating the mentally ill, just to name a few.

If Democrats were to close the gap in the House, and at least maintain a deadlocked Senate, they could band together with moderate Republicans to adopt a smarter, more realistic agenda than the government haters now in charge.

An Obama vote in at least the low 40% range statewide, and a heavy turnout in the right precincts, could be enough to make it happen.



# Safety Shelved In Bush Labor Agency

By George Miller

For millions of Americans there was little cause for celebration on Labor Day. While workers' wages have fallen, the cost of living has skyrocketed, the unemployment rate has soared, fewer workers have health coverage, and good retirement plans are increasingly scarce.

Nearly a century ago, Congress established the federal Department of Labor to be the advocate and champion for working Americans.

Specifically, the department was created to advance three core goals: "to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions, and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment."

Under the Bush Presidency, these goals and the interests of workers have been destroyed.

## UNDERMINING WORKERS' RIGHTS

From day one, Bush's Department of Labor has actively worked to undermine workers' rights to organize, to fair pay and decent benefits, and to safe working conditions.

These rights are essential to growing and sustaining a strong middle class. U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and other high-level appointees came to their posts determined to weaken the agency.

Under Chao's leadership, the department has repeatedly torpedoed rules designed to help workers. One of her first actions was supporting the repeal of a rule that would have protected workers against repetitive motion injuries, the leading cause of workplace injuries.

## SHE DELIBERATELY WEAKENED LABOR

Chao went on to severely weaken the department's Wage and Hour Division which enforces overtime, minimum wage, and child labor laws.

Wage theft has skyrocketed at the hands of this administration. An ongoing U.S. Government Accountability Office investigation has uncovered repeated cases where the agency refused to go after scofflaw employers who admittedly owed their workers back wages.

Chao consistently refused to support increasing the minimum wage, allowing it to erode to its lowest value in 50 years. It wasn't until Democrats took over Congress in 2006 that the minimum wage was finally raised for the first time in 10 years.

Time and again, Chao has proven her loyalty to a different constituency. She has expended boundless energy making sure unscrupulous employers have a ready supply of exploitable labor.

## TRYING TO CUT PREVAILING WAGE RATES

Just recently the department proposed new regulations that will cut the prevailing wage rates for agricultural guest workers and make it easier for employers to hire cheaper, temporary guest workers from overseas instead of qualified, available American workers.

While the administration dragged its feet to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina, it moved quickly to slash wages for Gulf Coast workers in the hurricane's

# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

From Page 8

parties of record to file briefs about the issue.

The ACLU of Oklahoma, the ACLU National Racial Justice Program and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a brief agreeing that the petition should be withdrawn.

Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmonson likewise filed a brief advocating withdrawal of the petition.

Having received all briefs by the April 29 deadline, the Supreme Court has not yet issued a decision. Nonetheless, it appears that SQ 737 will not appear on the November ballot.

Oklahoma was one of five states targeted nationwide for anti-affirmative action efforts. The other states were Arizona, Colorado, Missouri and Nebraska.

Due to its early involvement and work with this issue, the ACLU of Oklahoma became a leader in national efforts to defend equality.

- The author is development director for ACLU of Oklahoma

# TAXES

From Page 15

For the best-off 2% or 3%, Obama would extend only part of the Bush tax cuts, specifically a lower estate tax and a tax break for dividends. Otherwise, he would let the rest of the Bush tax cuts expire for the very wealthy.

Even if all Americans faced the tax rules that existed during the Clinton years, it's hard to see how this would hurt the economy. Real median household income, which grew during the Clinton years, has fallen in the Bush years.

The poverty rate, which declined under Clinton, has inched back up during the Bush years. Unemployment, which fell under Clinton, has risen under Bush. And, of course, the Clinton budget surpluses have turned into giant deficits under Bush.

As it turned out, wildly cutting taxes was bad fiscal policy and bad economics.



aftermath.

After President Bush tapped a mine executive to lead the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, the agency immediately set about withdrawing vital proposed health and safety rules.

By the time a slew of mining accidents hit in 2006, nearly 200 staffers had been cut from the coal mine safety enforcement division alone - a move that helped cripple the agency.

## FOOT DRAGGING ON THE NEW LAW

When Congress finally acted in the wake of many tragic miner deaths, MSHA acted with little urgency to implement the law. More recently, when the House of Representatives passed additional much-needed mine safety protections, the administration threatened a veto.

It's the same story with Chao's U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Remarkably, the agency has not approved a single new health standard for workers in eight years, aside from one that was ordered by a court.

Even in the face of solid scientific evidence documenting workplace dangers, Chao has turned a blind eye to growing health and safety risks.

Take, for example, the department's failure to address hazardous combustible dust. In 2006, the Chemical Safety Board, an independent government agency that investigates industrial chemical accidents, reported that a string of deadly explosions caused by combustible dust are a serious and preventable national problem.

## SHE HAS BLOOD ON HER HANDS

Although the CSB urged OSHA to quickly issue a new safety standard, Chao refused and continued to refuse even after a sugar dust explosion killed 13 workers last February.

The tragic results of the department's fatal failure to act continue to mount on crane and construction safety, popcorn lung disease, silica, beryllium and more.

In one of its most telling and insulting moves to date, the department is now rushing to enact last minute "secret rules" that would make it even harder for health and safety agencies to issue future protections for workers and that would jeopardize workers' retirement savings.

Our nation's workers, battered by unfair global competition, stagnant wages, declining benefits, and poor employer compliance with labor laws, deserve a Department of Labor that lives up to its name, led by individuals who believe in its mission.

A Secretary of Labor that actually fights to help and protect hard working Americans - now that would be a reason to celebrate.

- The author, a Democrat who has represented California's 7th Congressional District since 1975, is a leading spokesman in Congress on education, labor, and the environment.

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# Heavenly Honker

A man was being tailgated by a stressed-out woman on a busy boulevard. Suddenly, the light turned yellow, just in front of him. He did the right thing, stopping at the crosswalk, even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating woman was furious and honked her horn, screaming in frustration, as she missed her chance to get through the intersection, dropping her cell phone and makeup.

As she was still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and looked up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit her car with her hands up.

He took her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a holding cell. After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects.

"I'm very sorry for this mistake," he said. "You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you, and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper sticker, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk.

"Naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

# National Debt Will Soar To \$10 Trillion

By Jeremy Thompson

Like a ticking time bomb, the national debt is an explosion waiting to happen. It's expanding by about \$1.4 billion a day or nearly \$1 million a minute.

What's that mean to you? It means almost \$30,000 in debt for each man, woman, child and infant in the United States.

Even if you've escaped the recent housing and credit crunches and are coping with rising fuel prices, you may still be headed for economic misery, along with the rest of the country.

That's because the government is fast straining resources needed to meet interest payments on the national debt, which stands at a mind-numbing \$9.13 trillion.

## NOT UNLIKE HOMEOWNERS DEBT

And like homeowners who took out adjustable-rate mortgages, the government faces the prospect of seeing this debt – now at relatively low interest rates – rolling over to higher rates, multiplying the financial pain.

So long as somebody is willing to keep loaning the U.S. government money, the debt is largely out of sight, out of mind.

The interest payments keep compounding, and could in time squeeze out most other government spending – leading to sharply higher taxes or a cut in basic services like Social Security and other government benefit programs. Or all of the above.

## NATIONAL DEBT TO HIT \$10 TRILLION

The national debt – the total accumulation of annual budget deficits – is up from \$5.7 trillion when President Bush took office in January 2001 and it will top \$10 trillion sometime right before or right after he leaves in January 2009.

That's \$10,000,000,000,000.00, or one digit more than an odometer-style "national debt clock" near New York's Times Square can handle. When the privately owned automated clock was activated in 1989, the national debt was \$2.7 trillion.

It only gets worse. Over the next 25 years, the number of Americans aged 65 and up is expected to almost double.

## BOOMERS WILL ADD TO DEBT MISERY

The work population will shrink and more and more baby boomers will be drawing Social Security and Medicare benefits, putting new demands on the government's resources.

These guaranteed retirement and health benefit programs now make up the largest component of federal spending. Defense is next. And moving up fast in third place is interest on the national debt, which totaled \$430 billion last year.

Aggravating the debt picture: the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates could cost \$2.4 trillion over the



next decade.

## BOTH PARTIES MAKING PROMISES

Despite vows in both parties to restrain federal spending, the national debt as a percentage of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product has grown from about 35% in 1975 to around 65% today.

By historical standards, it's not proportionately as high as during World War II – when it briefly rose to 120% of GDP, but it's a big chunk of liability.

"The problem is going forward," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard and Poors, a major credit-rating agency.

"Our estimate is that the national debt will hit 350% of the GDP by 2050 under unchanged policy. Something has to change, because if you look at what's going to happen to expenditures for entitlement programs after us baby boomers start to retire, at the current tax rates, it doesn't work," Wyss said.

## HISTORIC LEGACY OF OVERSPENDING

With national elections approaching, candidates of both parties are talking about fiscal discipline and reducing the deficit and accusing the other of irresponsible spending. But the national debt itself – a legacy of overspending dating back to the American Revolution – receives only occasional mention.

Who is loaning Washington all this money?

Ordinary investors who buy Treasury bills, notes and U.S. savings bonds, for one. Also it is banks, pension funds, mutual fund companies and state, local and increasingly foreign governments.

This accounts for about \$5.1 trillion of the total and is called the "publicly held" debt. The remaining \$4 trillion is owed to Social Security and other government accounts, according to the Treasury Department, which keeps figures on the national debt down to the penny on its web site.

Some economists liken the government's plight to consumers who spent like there was no tomorrow – only to find themselves maxed out on credit cards and having a hard time keeping up with rising interest payments.

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# Nuke Agency Thinks Going Nuclear Wrong

By Harvey Wasserman

A devastating blow to the much-hyped revival of atomic power has been delivered by an unlikely source – the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The NRC says the "standardized" designs on which the entire premise of returning nuclear power to center stage is based have massive holes in them, and may not be ready for approval for years to come.

[This is bad news for Oklahoma proponents who are pushing for going nuclear – including the Oklahoman, the Tulsa World and assorted politicians.]

Delivered by one of America's most notoriously docile agencies, the NRC's warning essentially says that all cost estimates for new nuclear reactors – and all licensing and construction schedules – are completely up for grabs, and have no reliable basis in fact.

## FUTURE NUKES MAY BE YEARS AWAY

Thus any comparisons between future atomic reactors and renewable technologies are moot at best. Any "hard number" basis for independent financing for future nukes may not be available for years to come, if ever.

After two years under construction, the first "new generation" French reactor being built in Finland is already more than two years behind schedule, and more than \$2.5 billion over budget.

The scenario is reminiscent of the economic disaster that hit scores of "first generation" reactors, which came in massively over budget and, in many cases, decades behind promised completion dates.

This astounding pro-utility scheme forces electric consumers to pay billions of dollars for nuclear plants that may never operate, and whose costs are indeterminate.

## RATEPAYERS TO FOOT HUGE BILL

Sometimes called Construction Work in Progress, it lets utilities raise rates to pay for site clearing, project planning, and down payments on large equipment and heavy reactor components, such as pressure vessels, pumps and generators, that can involve hundreds of millions of dollars, even before the projects get final federal approval.

The process in essence gives utilities an incentive to drive up construction costs as much as they can. It allows them to force ratepayers to cover legal fees incurred by the utilities to defend themselves against lawsuits by those very ratepayers.

The public is stuck with the bill for whatever is spent, even if the reactor never opens – or if it melts down before it recoups its construction costs, as did Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island Unit Two in 1979, which self-destructed after just three months of operation.

– The author is senior advisor to Greenpeace USA and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service, and writes regularly for [www.freepress.org](http://www.freepress.org) where this article first appeared.

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# Things Changed In Today's America

One evening a grandson was talking to his grandmother about current events. The grandson asked his grandmother what she thought about the shootings at schools, the computer age, and things in general.

The Grandma replied, "Well, let me think a minute. I was born before television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, contact lenses, Frisbees and the pill.

"There were no credit cards, laser beams or ball-point pens. Man had not invented pantyhose, air conditioners, dishwashers, clothes dryers, and the clothes were hung out to dry in the fresh air and man had yet to walk on the moon.

"Your Grandfather and I got married first and then lived together. Every family had a father and a mother. Until I was 25, I called every man older than me, 'Sir' and after I turned 25, I still called policemen and every man with a title, 'Sir.'

## GOVERNED BY TEN COMMANDMENTS

"We were before computer-dating, dual careers, daycare centers, and group therapy. Our lives were governed by the Ten Commandments, good judgment, and common sense. We were taught to know the difference between right and wrong and to stand up and take responsibility for our actions.

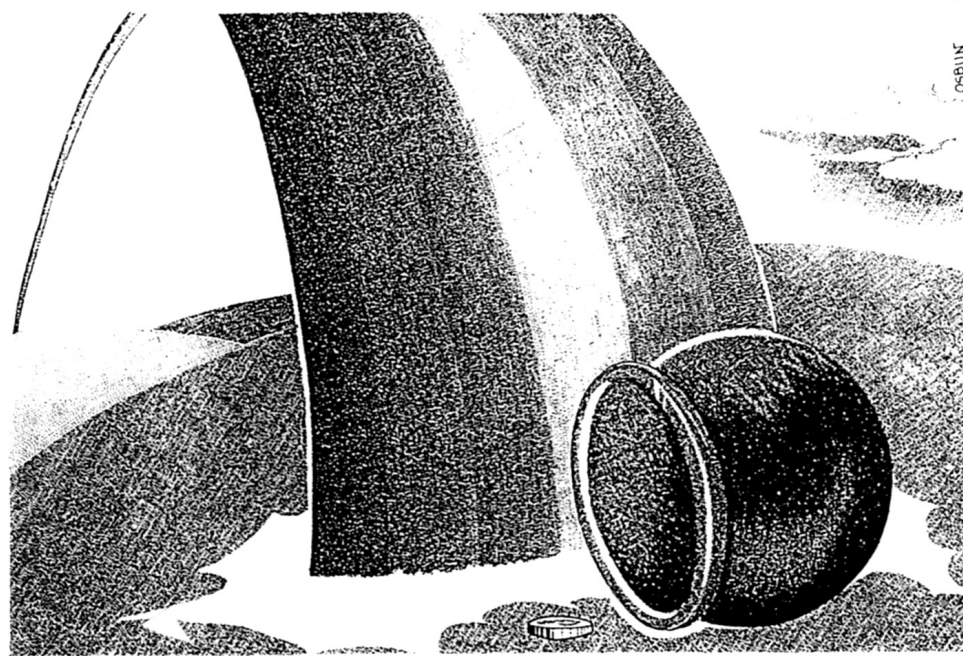
"Serving your country was a privilege; living in this country was a bigger privilege. We thought fast food was what people ate during Lent. Having a meaningful relationship meant getting along with your cousins.

"Draft dodgers were people who closed their front doors when the evening breeze started. Time-sharing meant time the family spent together in the evenings and weekends – not purchasing condominiums.

"We never heard of FM radios, tape decks, CDs, electric typewriters, yogurt, or guys wearing earrings. We listened to the Big Bands, Jack Benny, and the President's speeches on our radios. I don't ever remember any kid blowing his brains out listening to Tommy Dorsey.

## JAPAN EXPORTED JUNK

"If you saw anything with 'Made in Japan' on it, it was junk. The term 'making out' referred to how you did on your school exam. Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and



instant coffee were unheard of.

"We had 5 & 10-cent stores where you could actually buy things for 5 and 10 cents. Ice-cream cones, phone calls, rides on a streetcar, and a Coke were all a nickel. If you didn't want to splurge, you could spend your nickel on enough stamps to mail one letter and two postcards.

"You could buy a new Chevy coupe for \$600 but who could afford one? Too bad, because gas was 11 cents a gallon.

"In my day, 'grass' was mowed, 'coke' was a cold drink, 'pot' was something your mother cooked in, and 'rock music' was your grandmother's lullaby. 'Aids' were helpers in the principal's office, 'chip' meant a piece of wood, 'hardware' was found in a hardware store, and 'software' wasn't even a word.

"And we were the last generation to actually believe that a lady needed a husband to have a baby. No wonder people call us 'old and confused' and say there is a generation gap ... and how old do you think I am?"

This woman would be only 59 years old.

PeoplePC Online

# STRANGLEHOLD

From Page 15

Good! Hurrahs all around.

But, hold the champagne. Behind the scenes, the system had quietly punched a neat loophole into the ballyhooed reform. While a lobbyist can no longer put a key congress-critter on a client's jet and pay for a golfing getaway in Bermuda, the lobbyist can simply give \$5,000 or so to the critter's campaign fund, so he or she can "pay their own way."

## SHAMELESS BUTT-KISSERS

In another twist, at the recent Democratic and Republican nominating conventions, numerous lobbyist-sponsored parties were thrown to "honor" certain powerful members of Congress. Such shameless butt-kissing was supposedly banned by the 2007 lobbying reforms.

But, through creative loopholery, the House ethics committee ruled before the conventions that the ban applies only to events honoring a single lawmaker, not to those benefiting two or more.

As Lily Tomlin puts it, "No matter how cynical you get, it's almost impossible to keep up."

Some 35,000 lobbyists swarm our Capitol City – 65 for each of the 535 members of Congress. Corporate America is spending \$6 million a day on this plutocratic, kleptocratic system, perverting the power of government to serve its narrow self-interest.

Also, guided by their lobbyists, corporate interests dole out millions more each year in campaign donations that bind members of both parties to the corporate agenda.

## THE SYSTEM IS CORRUPT

The corruption is not a matter of the occasional Abramoff. The system itself is corrupt, giving moneyed interests the power to shout down the voice of the people.

Can this corporate stranglehold on the common good be broken?

Yes! Such states as Maine, Arizona, Connecticut and North Carolina have shown the way by providing the alternative of public financing for candidates who agree to take no funding from special interests.

It's a reform that works.

To learn more, including how you can help bring this reform to your state and to Congress, go to [www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org).

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# MUSIC

From Page 9

of them quit when they first realize that they are not yet successful – encourage them to give themselves time to learn.

## YOUNG TEACHERS NEED MENTORS

Be a mentor for a young teacher in your area. E-mail and call them often. Volunteer suggestions even when they don't ask [they may be afraid to ask questions].

Help them with deadlines. Offer moral support when they have conflicts with students, parents or administrators. Share helpful items like handbooks, worksheets, and lesson plans. Invite them to take a personal day and shadow you for a day to learn your day-to-day routine and shortcuts.

The future of our profession depends on people like you choosing to become and remain a music teacher. Music teachers work miracles every day. Please work hard to help recruit and retain quality people. They may someday teach your children or grandchildren.

– The author is past president of the Oklahoma Music Educators Association. This commentary appeared in the fall issue of their journal, *Music Oklahoma*.



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