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# THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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## Henry's Veto Pen Gets Workout Mightier Than A Sword

By Arnold Hamilton

With majorities in both houses for the first time, Republicans wasted no time dismissing Democratic Gov. Brad Henry – and his devotion to Kumbaya-esque bipartisanship – as the political equivalent of a 90-pound weakling on muscle beach.

They kicked sand in the governor's face by filing a lawsuit that sought to restrict his line-item veto power and by jump-starting an assembly line for bad bills aimed at – among other targets – destroying public education, breaking the teachers' union, smooching big insurance, crippling trial lawyers and imposing a fundamentalist theocracy.

Legislative Democrats often weren't much kinder: They openly fretted the nice-guy governor might not have the stomach for a session-long test of wills. And at the session's mid-point, some even joked they were issuing an APB – All Points Bulletin – for an important part of the governor's anatomy they thought had gone missing.

Henry fooled them all.

As the session entered its final week [tentative May 22 deadline], the governor was poised to break his single session record for vetoes – 13 in 2008. But more importantly, he emerged as the force that minority Democrats prayed for.

The governor's willingness to veto – often in opposition to the state's most powerful interests and deepest pockets, including Chambers of Commerce – emboldened and united legislative Democrats, forging a critical last line of defense against GOP chicanery and power grabs.

As state Rep. Mike Brown, D-Tahlequah, put it, "He's awakened to the fact that these guys are bent on passing the most caustic legislative



I've ever seen."

As a result, Brown said, House Democrats in the closing weeks presented Henry a list of 67 questionable bills for which they could deliver the votes to sustain gubernatorial vetoes.

Henry, whose wife Kim is a former school teacher, kept his commitment to common education by vetoing at least three measures that could have crippled public schools.

The most important veto: SB 834, the so-called school deregulation

act, which was nothing but a thinly-veiled blueprint by the Republican pro-voucher crowd to destroy public education so it can be replaced with religious schools and home-schools.

The veto not only saved collective bargaining and teacher protections, but also kept alive important education standards – including class size restrictions – created by former Republican Gov. Henry Bellmon's marvelous HB 1017 reforms.

Bellmon's cutting-edge program is on life-support because past Legislatures, both Democratic- and Republican-controlled, failed to deliver on promises to put education first, especially when it comes to funding.

But for all who believe that public education is a cornerstone of the United States – a collective commitment to the egalitarian ideal that all, whether rich or poor, genius or developmentally disabled, urban or rural,

deserve an equal shot at the American dream and becoming all their creator intended – the governor's veto was a rare breath of fresh air and hope in an otherwise dismal session.

Further, Henry's veto of HB 1975 – it would have severely limited the Legislature's authority to consider insurance mandates – kept alive hope that Republican legislators, beholden to the big money of insurance companies, will someday soon do the right thing and demand insurers cover treatment for autism.

How strong is the insurance industry's grip on the Legislature? Not a single insurance mandate has been approved by lawmakers since the GOP took control of the state House in 2004. The last to be approved: mammography.

Four hundred Oklahoma children each year are being diagnosed with autism. With proper and timely diagnoses and treatments, they can grow into productive adults. Without either, they represent a ticking time bomb that eventually will explode in the laps of Oklahoma taxpayers who will pay dearly for adult care for those whose hopes and dreams were stolen by pure corporate greed.

The insurance gurus don't care – they're collecting record profits each year. And neither do the Legislature's Republican leaders – they'll be term-limited before the results of their bafflingly bad public policy are fully realized.

Among the governor's other key vetoes:

- HB 1326 that would have prohibited embryonic stem cell research, one of the engines driving the state's cutting-edge Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation and a beacon of hope that some of life's most debilitating and deadly maladies can be someday successfully treated or cured;

- SB 4, the mean-spirited Voter ID bill, a solution in search of a voter fraud problem that doesn't exist [a GOP blueprint to reduce voter turnout among the poor and elderly, two traditional Democratic constituencies];

- HJR 1003, a laughable resolution

See VETOES Page 9

# Observations

## Mad Dog

Vice President Cheney is conducting an unrelenting and vicious attack on President Obama while vigorously defending the Bush Administration – one of the worst in history.

Cheney told the rightwing Weekly Standard why he's emerged as such a vocal Bush defender and Obama critic in contrast to President Bush.

The last straw came when he said Colin Powell had left the Republican Party and given a choice, he would prefer Rush Limbaugh to Powell.

He's not fit to shine Powell's boots. Bush is sore at Cheney and said he said the new President "deserves my silence."

Cheney said that when he was a member of Congress during the Iran-Contra investigations [of which he was a prominent critic], he saw firsthand senior administration officials absolving themselves while unfairly pinning blame on the "little guys."

Because of this, Cheney said, he "sure as hell will" continue to speak out. In fact, he was the power behind the throne and the chief architect of the Middle East folly. He had his eye on oil.

His next move will probably be to invite Obama on a hunting trip.

## Private Prisons

Republican Senate leader Glenn Coffee has been flirting with private prisons, obviously a way to avoid adequate appropriations for operations and infrastructure of Oklahoma's crumbling corrections facilities.

Private prison companies have expanded quickly and recklessly in the U.S. since 2000, earning millions in profits from lucrative government contracts. But at what cost?

Then-GOP Gov. Frank Keating brought his pals in the private prison industry to Oklahoma.

The last five years have been good to the two biggest private prison operators – Corrections Corporation of America and The GEO Group.

They have seen their respective

stocks climb 13% and a whopping 113% during that period, beating the benchmark S&P 500 which fell 18%.

Oklahoma taxpayers may be unknowing funders for the business of incarceration as more are sent to private prisons, including detained immigrants.

Coffee has noted more than 1,000 private beds are available in Oklahoma. Unfortunately, write-ups in private prisons mean longer stays at taxpayer expense. Oklahoma is fourth in lockup of men as a percentage of the population, first in women.

Since Dec. 31, 2000, the number of federal inmates held in private facilities has increased 102%, while the number of state inmates held in private facilities has increased 32%.

Twenty-one states had at least 5% of their prison population in private facilities as of Dec. 31, 2007.

Cash-strapped state and federal agencies, faced with the problem of ever-increasing prison populations and shrinking incarceration budgets, save money by outsourcing their inmates to the likes of CCA and Geo.

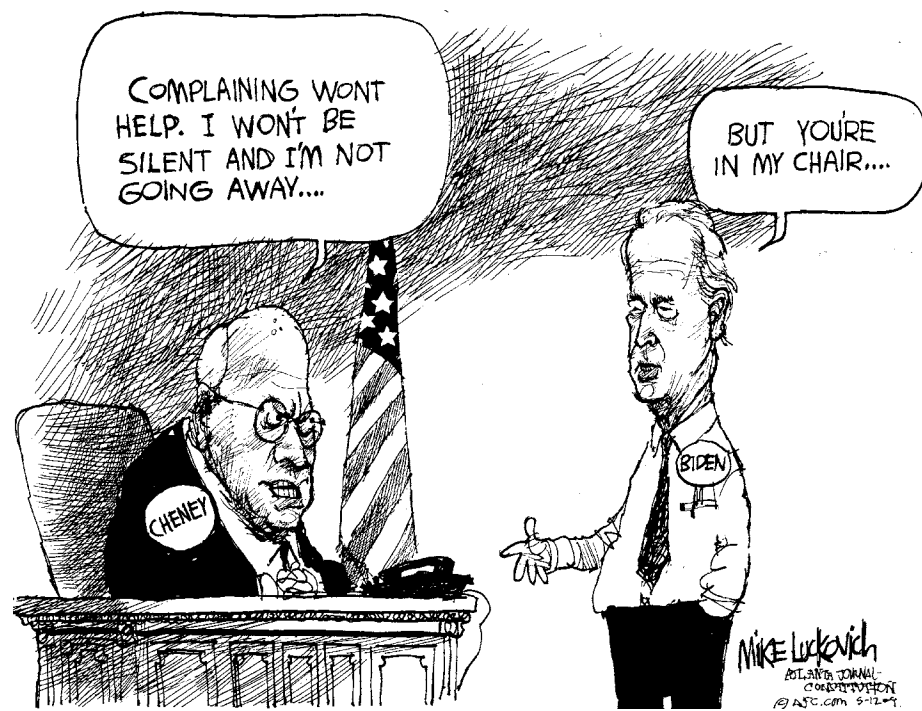
Neither Democrats nor Republicans have remotely funded corrections adequately, feeding the prison machine that has grown exponentially.

## What Works?

School reformers for decades have tried different ideas and techniques to make schools work better. All these reforms have been based on the assumption that better organization is the key to fixing what ails schools.

The theory is that by imposing more organizational requirements – better teacher credentials, more legal rights, detailed curricula, the pressure of tests – schools will get better.

That's the theory. The effect, however, is to remove the freedom needed to succeed at any aspect of teachers' responsibilities – how they teach, how they relate to students, and how they coordinate their goals with administrators.



The extent and effects of bureaucracy would surprise people. Yet Republicans in control of the Legislature for the first time wanted to create more bureaucracy – a stand-alone testing entity outside the scope of public education [vetoed by the governor].

## Shameful

One of the sorrier bills of this sorry session of the Legislature is House Bill 1595 pushed by fanatic anti-abortion proponents.

You don't have to be for or against abortion to know this bill is not only an unnecessary spending of tax dollars, it also would be a horrible invasion of a woman's right to privacy.

HB 1595, would create the "statistical abortion reporting act," and passed in the House 93-4. The reporting requirements would be listed on a state-run website, so detailed that you could actually identify in rural towns who had an abortion.

Initial cost would be \$281,285 to set up and \$256,285 for each subsequent year.

Why would Democratic legislators [minus Reps. Ryan Kiesel, Jeannie McDaniel, Mike Shelton and Al McAfre] want to add more pain and anguish to an already difficult decision? Shame on them.

The anti-abortion freaks in a community would hunt down the woman who decided to terminate an unwanted pregnancy and paint a red "A" on her door. Another hit on Oklahoma's tattered reputation.

## Tax Loophole

It didn't take long for the fat cats, including the Oklahoma delegation, to react to President Obama's corporate tax reforms.

Corporate taxes collected by the U.S., as a percentage of GDP, falls well below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] average – despite the fact that the U.S. has a higher statutory tax rate than most countries.

Due to the myriad loopholes, shelters, and deductions that are available for corporations to take advantage of, one explanation of this is the corporate practice of deferring tax payment by stowing profits in low-tax countries like the Cayman Islands.

By keeping this money offshore, corporations are able to significantly lower their effective tax rate – in some

cases by more than 20 points. General Electric, for instance, paid just 5.5% in taxes in 2008.

In 2004, U.S. multinationals paid an effective U.S. tax rate of just 2.3% on \$700 billion in foreign profits.

According to U.S. PIRG, a \$100 billion annual tax burden is shifted onto U.S.-based companies and taxpayers due to tax avoidance.

Obama's proposed changes are reasonable measures that will bring the tax code closer to responsibly and fairly calculating income to be taxed.

Check their oil and gas contributions before believing the Oklahoma delegation's outcry – especially by lone Democrat Dan Boren. They should hang red lights over their office doors.

Even before Obama formally announced his plan to reform the tax code, the business lobby was gearing up to fight the proposals, forming a lobbying coalition called Protect America's Competitive Edge that is devoted specifically to defeating the President's tax proposals.

## Hoax To End?

Let's hear it for President Barack Obama! His proposed FY '10 federal budget would eliminate funding for abstinence-only programs which turned out to be a cruel hoax by George W. Bush.

Repeated independent studies have shown that these programs are ineffective at best – a total waste of the \$1.5 billion the U.S. government has spent to date on these failed programs.

Even worse, abstinence-only programs often contain false or misleading information about condoms and contraception, leading America to outpace western nations in teen pregnancies and venereal diseases.

Then-Republican Gov. Frank Keating was one of the first to stick his tin cup in the federal trough, picking up an initial \$10 million by using abstinence-only, dropping real sex education.

With this budget, President Obama fulfilled a campaign promise to return to science-based policies and to cut programs that simply don't work.

Will Congress have the courage to follow through on this vision? Tell your representatives it's time to end funding for abstinence-only programs and start funding comprehensive sex education – or get out of the way of sensible states.

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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

If that so-called tort bill is a reform then pigs fly. Guess who will pick up the cost over the \$400,000 cap? Yep, taxpayers. No wonder everyone was at the table except Democratic legislators.

**Laurel:** To Vicki Miles-LaGrange, named chief judge of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals western district. She was appointed by President Bill Clinton as the first black federal judge in the 10th Circuit

Oklahoma public education spends 58 cents out of every dollar in the classroom, ranking third nationally behind Hawaii and Rhode Island. - National Center for Education Statistics

**Dart:** To the Sooner Catholic diocesan paper for digging out a four-year-old diatribe by Cardinal Francis George in which he advocated a mixture of religion and politics.

Republicans would do well to drop the Limbaugh tripe and go with the Jack Kemp philosophy if they are ever to regain a national footing. Democrats should pray that Rush keeps bellowing.

**Laurel:** To the Obama Administration for going after overseas tax shelters that rob the American treasury of an estimated \$210 billion in taxes each year, making the bill that much higher for the rest of us.

"Americans need to reevaluate why we believe it is reasonable to hit young, vulnerable children, when it is against the law to hit other adults, prisoners and even animals. - Elizabeth Gershoff, developmental psychologist

**Dart:** To the minions who run the Legislature, unable to decide whether the budget shortfall is \$600 million, \$900 million or somewhere in between. They would flunk any math course in high school.

Oklahoma made the Newsweek cover, featuring Cynthia Lynch, 43, who thought she would like to join the Klan in an Arkansas gathering. When she tried to back out she was beaten to death.

**Laurel:** To Gov. Brad Henry for his veto of a bill proclaiming Oklahoma's sovereignty. We're with the Guv - we never lost it.

Forty-two percent of public school student are minorities while only 7% of teachers are minorities. For black males it is even worse - 2%.

**Dart:** To Dr. JoAnn Haysbert, Langston University president, whose policy decisions have cut enrollment to barely 1,900. It was 2,413 in 2006. Tulsa and Oklahoma campuses are also in decline. Regents wake up!

Billionaire Tulsa Oilman George Kaiser forgot more about the industry than the squirrels on the Oklahoman editorial page will ever know. He's for dropping energy tax exemptions but they want more freeloading.

**Laurel:** To stockholders raising hell about the \$75 million bonus for Chesapeake CEO Aubrey McClendon after the company lost \$6 billion.

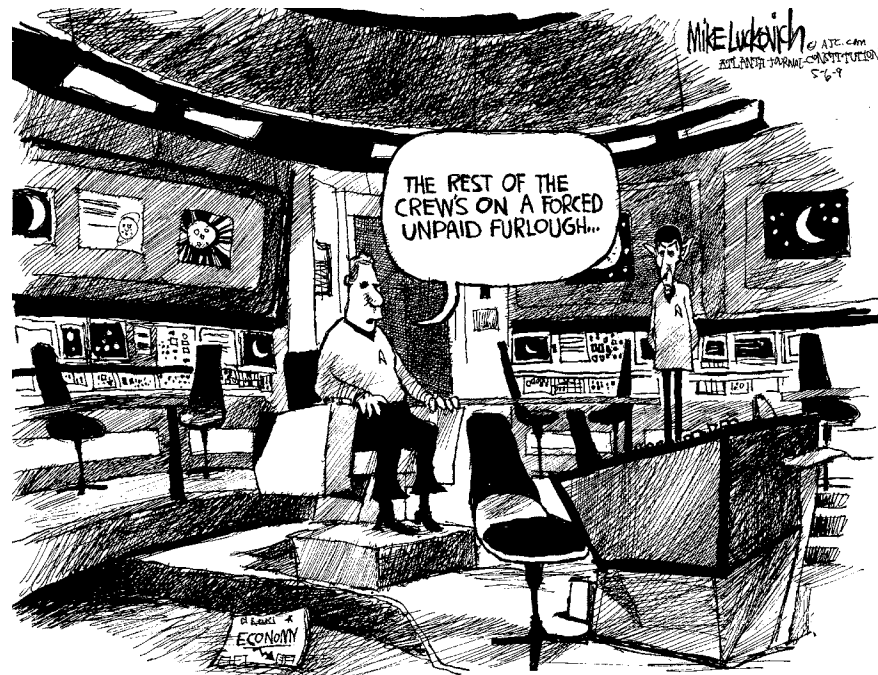
Former President G.W. Bush will be speaking at a Woodward rally this summer - if he doesn't wose the wide map.

**Dart:** To Feed the Children, already in a heap of trouble for platinum salaries and perks, now registering in Washington as a lobby. Founder Larry Jones should retire.

Have you followed the nightmare school board antics in Sperry? Oklahoma GOP legislative leaders want to do for public schools what Congress did creating the Wall Street disaster - total deregulation.

**Laurel:** To philanthropists Henry Zarrow and Mollie Williford, being honored by the Tulsa Global Alliance for their marvelous contributions to citizen diplomacy and international understanding.

Every time the governor vetoes a bill, the GOP leadership sends it to a vote of the people. Why were they elected? Some of their submissions seem of questionable constitutionality.



**Dart:** To Rep. Tad Jones, chairman of the House Education Committee who talks out of both sides of his mouth - praising teachers then voting to gut their right to due process.

Latest figures show American public school teachers rank 10th internationally in starting salaries as a percentage of per capita GDP. Tops is South Korea. Even Belgium ranks ahead of America.

**Laurel:** To Tulsa World Reporter Kim Archer, honored by the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association for her reporting on the battle to keep OSU's osteopathic hospital in Tulsa.

U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin hammers ex-Rep. J.C. Watts in a Sooner Poll on the GOP race for governor - 45.3% to 25.9%. In the close Democratic race, Lt. Gov. Jari Askins tops Attorney General Drew Edmondson 33.9% to 28.6%.

**Dart:** To Halliburton, fined \$559 million for bribes in Nigeria - largest ever paid by a U.S. company. Their ex-sub-sidiary KBR greased palms to build a gas liquefaction facility, according to the Department of Justice and the SEC.

Good thing his dad left him the Forbes Magazine fortune. Steve Forbes is a genetic mutation - so far right you can't find him with a flashlight. He wants to voucher all the kids in America.

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma County DA David Prater, calling for cameras in state nursing homes to curb neglect and abuse cases. Some five-star nursing home already have them in common areas.

More than 5,000 teens were killed in car crashes last year. House Bill 1895 in Congress would curb nighttime driving, reduce in-car distractions and put a cap on the number of friends in the car. Go for it.

**Dart:** To OCU President Tom McDaniel for doing a commercial for Cox cable. If Trojan donates to the university, will he do a condom commercial?

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe has introduced federal legislation to proclaim English as America's official language. The human brain starts working the minute you are born and never stops until you are elected to public office.

**Laurel:** To Oral Roberts, 91, physically feeble but with a mind that is still sharp as he proved in his address to the State Senate. What we always admired about Roberts is that he didn't use his ministry for political purposes.

If it clears legal hurdles Oklahoma voters will decide whether a Ten Commandments monument will be housed on the Capitol grounds. Now, if we could get those legislators who voted for it to follow them.

**Dart:** To ex-State Rep. Tim Pope, R-Mustang, who pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of aiding and abetting a violation of the state's campaign finance law. He drew a three-year deferred sentence and a \$5,000 fine. He still says he's not guilty.

Nearly 450,000 Oklahoma children under 13 are latch-key children, meaning they need at least part-time care while their parents work.

**Laurel:** To Ivan Holmes, stepping aside after two years as state Democratic chairman. He devoted his life to the party, working around-the-clock without pay.

The Oklahoma Mozart Festival is celebrating 25 years in Bartlesville June 12-20. If you've never gone you've missed a real treat. Both classical and popular music are performed. Details? Call 918.336.9800.

**Dart:** To the Legislature for failing to lengthen the school year. Tax cut goodies took priority. Oklahoma has the shortest year in the nation - 175 days. In Arkansas it's 178 days, Texas 180 days, New Mexico 180 days, Kansas 186 days.

Don't let legislative leaders mislead you - The Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center was broken up because they told the truth about corrections in Oklahoma.

**Laurel:** To the Journal Record's columnist Jim Roth for telling it like it is - there is no such thing as clean coal.

"Jesus couldn't get a yes vote as a judge from the GOP. It is no wonder the GOP wants to make sure sinners are punished because Jesus and God are just too empathetic, sympathetic and compassionate for today." - Karen Webb, Moore, OK

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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Thanks for running the Oklahoma Policy Institute's article titled "\$339 Million In Oklahoma Oil, Gas Rebates" in the 5.10.09 Observer.

I just finished updating Chesapeake Energy's campaign contributions to sitting legislators through 12.31.08. These contributions total \$660,990. So the bills extending the rebates - SB 313 and HB 2062 - will pass this year despite the fact that "schools, social services, public safety and other vital areas of the state budget are looking at deep cuts."

Sickening, isn't it.

Wanda Jo Stapleton  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Recently the Oklahoman published an irresponsible, sarcastic criticism of the Sierra Club as an editorial on their opinion page.

Unable to Google their archives to retrieve the editorial, I typed their piece as it appeared next to a photo of a conservation officer in Brisbane, Australia while he inspected a massive oil spill! I wrote:

"The Sierra Club would like you to know that Tuesday is the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The environmental group is exploiting the anniversary to ooze the message that oil spills are 'still a regular occurrence.' The latest happened off the coast of Australia earlier this month.

"Offshore drilling sends an average of 47,800 barrels of oil into the ocean each year and there is no effective method for cleaning up an oil spill. The antidote is clean energy solutions that would paint oil out of the energy picture.

"We would honor the Sierra Club's request for a long editorial on this topic were it not for the fact that the effort would consume so much hydrocarbon-produced electricity - as do the group's frequent nationwide e-mails and all the associated printing."

The Oklahoman's "letters to the editor" chief, J.E. McReynolds, has informed me that he will never again publish a [leftwing] letter written by me.

Frank Silovsky  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I am quite disturbed by Bob Nichols' letter [5.10.09]. What on earth is ceramic uranium oxide gas? Based on this description, it sounds like uranium oxide encapsulated in very miniscule particles of ceramic, so small

that they would float through the air like a dust cloud.

How could this be of military value? You breathe it in - the particles lodge in your lungs - and 10, 20 or 30 years later, you die from radiation induced lung cancer. How could anyone call this a military weapon?

I must be missing something. Please contact Bob and print a more detailed description of what is going on.

Jerry Gowman  
Oklahoma City

Bob Nichols replies: Good letter and questions, Mr. Gowman. The questions and answers are listed:

**Q:** What on earth is ceramic uranium oxide gas?

**A:** The actual battlefield product is "nano-meter length particles of ceramic uranium oxides and nitrides in aerosols" small enough to be breathable and pass through clothing and the skin. That's less than a billionth of a meter.

The metal particles catch on fire when exiting the barrel of a gun or when the bomb explodes and burn at 5,000 to 9,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The tiny particles are electrically charged, radioactive and are ceramicized by the extreme heat.

They do not dissolve in blood, lymph nodes, bodily fluids or stomach acid.

**Q:** How could this be of military value?

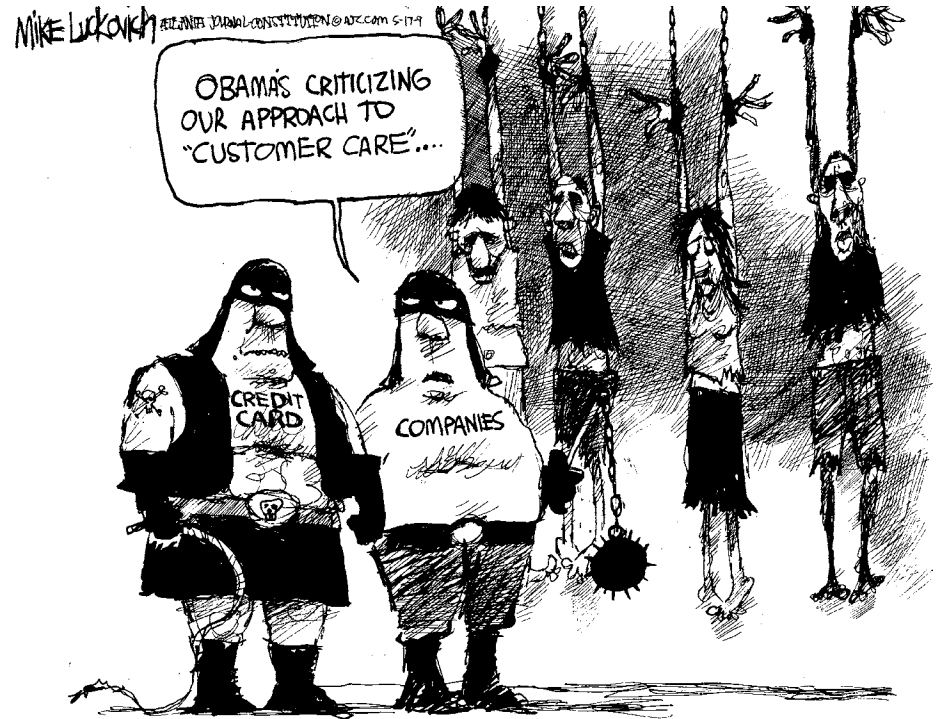
**A:** Uranium Munitions can be considered a force multiplier, a thing or event that literally multiplies the lethality of an armed force. An example would be that the 1991 Iraqi invasion had approximately 500,000 troops. The weaponized uranium gas and aerosols causes extensive death, radiation caused illness and maimings in the population for the next 10 years. The subsequent American invasion and occupation required only 150,000 troops.

**Q:** How could anyone call this a military weapon?

**A:** The Law of Armed Conflict does. Uranium Munitions are poison gas weapons that remain active after the battle is over; weapons that cannot be turned off; weapons that target civilians indiscriminately. Those are war crimes by action of American law and international treaties.

Major Doug Rokke, U.S. Army [Ret.], director of the Pentagon Depleted Uranium Study, 1995-96 told me in San Francisco Bay View newspaper interviews, "Uranium weapons kill our own troops and ... are a crime against God and humanity."

These are hard facts. I did not dis-



cuss how many Oklahomans are war criminals due to the operation of U.S. law and treaties. That is a legal question. It seems to me a lot of Okies are war criminals for authorizing, financing, manufacturing and delivering those weapons Rep Dan Boren speaks about.

What do you think, Mr. Gowman?

Editor, The Observer:

As a voice for so many of the "unseen" Oklahomans - those with mental health diagnoses, those who are living in poverty, and those with disabilities - I have often been unnerved when The Observer's writers use phrases such as "a village will have one less idiot" that are offensive to persons who have cognitive disabilities.

I've resisted writing because such phrases are part of the vernacular and were, I'm certain, not meant to offend. I've now seen why such complacency on my part, as an advocate for people with disabilities, is as bad as those printed words.

In the 5.10.09 issue, Edwin E. Vineyard's column, "Too Many Villages Missing Their Idiots," reports on the current legislative session by likening members of the Legislature to "mentally challenged" youth of his mother's church many years ago. He states that introduced legislation "places Oklahoma in the intellectual backwater" with "more than it's share of those [with cognitive disabilities]."

While I respect Mr. Vineyard's views, I am offended and deeply saddened by the comparisons. People with disabilities of all types, but particularly those with cognitive disabilities, have been marginalized, segregated, and lampooned by society at large for thousands of years. They are seen as less valuable and less able to contribute, simply because some part of their body works differently than the body of a person without a disability.

As a professional in the field of developmental disabilities for nearly 20 years, I can attest to the extraordinary contributions and abilities of people who have cognitive and other disabilities, both in my field and within society at large.

I draw attention to the fact that words common in our language today - imbecile, idiot, retarded - are or were medical diagnoses, denoting a level of cognitive disability. For the most part, these words are no longer common in diagnoses, but they continue to be used to describe people who display

ignorance. For people with cognitive disabilities and the people who love them, hearing such words to describe ignorance is offensive and cruel.

If you have any doubt, try substituting any racial epithet in place of "retard" or "idiot" and see if you aren't offended. Now, think about what such words do in the long term - people with disabilities are segregated from their peers in classrooms; they are discriminated against when health insurance and medical treatment are sought; and they are adjudicated as "incompetent" so their civil right of voting is taken away from them.

If we are to have a society where all people are equal, we must end the use of words and phrases that perpetuate the myth that people with disabilities - whether they be physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory or otherwise - are less than capable, less than worthy, and less than valuable. Sure, people with disabilities may need assistance and support to be part of our community - but that's true of us all. Please show respect for people with disabilities by ending the use of discriminatory and offensive language.

Ann Trudgeon  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Sen. Joe Liberman is at it again. He told some reporter that releasing the [prisoner abuse] pictures was just to feed voyeurism.

Movie after movie after movie and who knows how many museum displays devoted entirely to torture done by Nazis, but we can't have any done by U.S. citizens, especially when they are having so much fun it looks like a frat party, except for all the nudity and blood.

If you want to improve our image then do a full-scale investigation and get the guys who initiated the torture from the top down. They are made because people like Dick Cheney are going around bragging about saving the world with torture.

Karen Webb  
Moore

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## Frosty's Notebook

# Graduation

It's that time of year when students proclaim: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God I'm free at last! It's graduation time and across the country high school seniors are plotting their futures.

Unfortunately, the present generation has left the grads mountainous debts, a dearth of jobs and colleges so expensive that many will have to pass.

It's an era in which the GOP has taken America to a level not seen since the Great Depression after the Wall Street crash of '29.

The cost of a college education at a four-year public university has risen a devastating 35%.

When George W. Bush took office, he promised to be "the education president." It was typical Bush Administration bait and switch.

As an added gift for the new grads, the Bush Administration's last budget-cutting guidelines will lead to a \$550 million reduction in federal assistance to needy college students. Democrats vow to reverse it.

In Oklahoma, during a time when the first-ever control of the Legislature fell to the Republicans, \$720 million in tax cuts were made, deliberately leaving the state treasury \$900 million in the red. The stimulus package could cut that to \$300 million.

Are low taxes more important than providing the opportunity for our young to get a higher education? There are a few minimal programs to aid students from low-income families.

Would rank and file Oklahomans rather shut students out of college classrooms or cut taxes for the affluent? Oklahoma was already 50th in local, state and federal taxes combined, according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation.

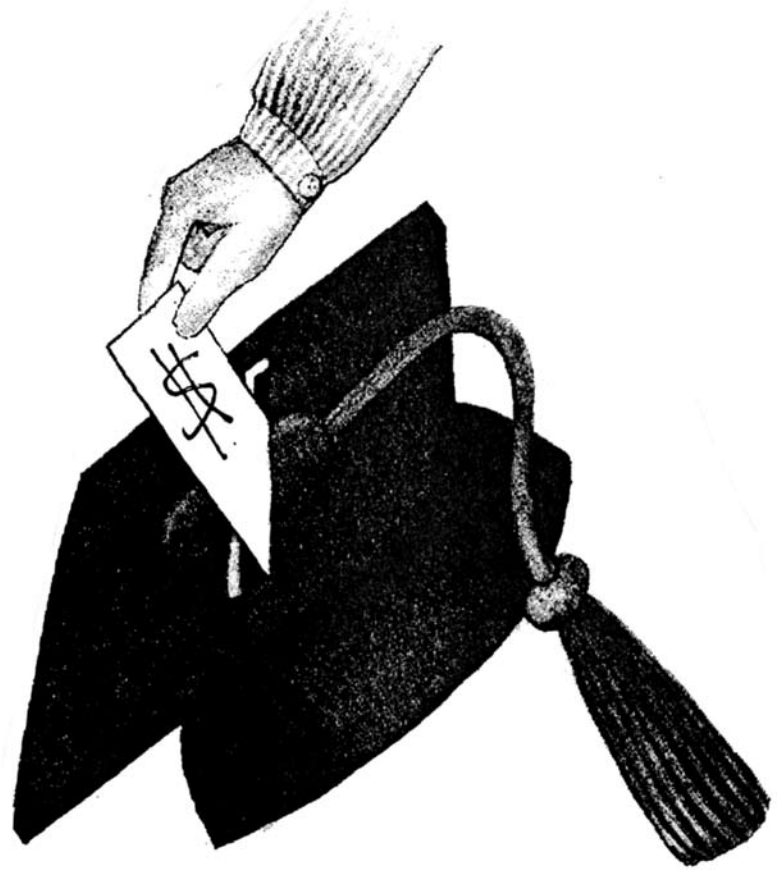
The perverted priorities of the GOP drew tax cutting help from a bevy of tag-along Democrats and a Democratic governor.

They wouldn't consider closing corporate tax loopholes or raising taxes on the top 1%. Remember, nearly \$2 billion of tax incentives for corporations that didn't create a single new job.

This year the budget is being balanced on the backs of the most vulnerable – including the state's public schools and colleges.

Oklahoma's premier CareerTech program didn't escape the knife. Last year CareerTech was denied to more than 3,000 students, including 700 dropouts who wanted decent job skills.

What kind of Oklahoma do we want to live in? Our college faculty compensa-



tion packages are in the bottom five and public school teachers are the 48th lowest paid.

The unlamented Legislature was too busy worrying about a Ten Commandments monument, English as the official language, bogus tort reform, the silly "sovereignty" issue, voter ID, prayer in school and creationism.

Trying to get legislative leaders to concentrate on real issues – poverty, obesity, lack of mental health treatment, and the fact that Oklahoma is 50th in overall health and welfare – is like trying to teach an elephant to tap dance.

Much of the media, including America's worst newspaper, the Oklahoman, failed utterly in educating the public. Even the usually well-balanced Tulsa World endorsed a GOP bill to gut public schools – SB 834. The governor vetoed it.

We dearly love Oklahoma, home of the friendliest people and the best neighbors in America. In the main, no other state's voters elect sorrier men and women to public office.

## Guns Out Of Control

How many mass killings before Americans question the wisdom of allowing just about anyone to own a gun, producing a gun culture completely out of control?

In just three recent events 13 people were killing in Binghamton, NY with a 9 mm and a .45-caliber.

Three police officers were shot and killed in Pittsburgh with an assault rifle and five other guns.

Five children were murdered in Washington at the hands of their own father.

When will the silent majority say enough is enough? America racked up over 15,000 murders last year – almost all with guns.

How about the eight people killed in a nursing home in North Carolina a couple of days before these shootings?

## Extraordinary Valor

*Our friend Darla Sparks sent along this item:*

You're a 19-year-old kid. You're critically wounded and dying in the jungle in Vietnam's Ia Drang Valley on Nov. 14, 1965. Your infantry unit is outnumbered eight to one.

The enemy fire is so intense, from 100 or 200 yards away, your own Infantry Commander has ordered the MediVac helicopters to stop coming in.

You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns, and you know you're not getting out. Your family is halfway around the world, 12,000 miles away, and you'll never see them again.

As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day. Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear the sound of a helicopter, and you look up to see an un-armed Huey, but it doesn't seem real, because no MediVac markings are on it.

Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not MediVac, so it's not his job, but he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire, after the MediVacs were ordered not to come. He's coming anyway.

He drops it in and sits there in the machine gun fire as they load two or three of you on board. Then he flies you up and out through the gunfire to the doctors and nurses.

And he keeps coming back ... 13 more times ... and takes about 30 of you and your buddies out, who would never have gotten out.

Medal of Honor recipient Ed Freeman has died at the age of 80 in Boise, ID. May God rest his soul.

If you didn't hear about this hero's passing, shame on the American media – all hyped up on celebrities, car chases and Dick Cheney's verbal garbage.

How about the 10 murdered in Alabama a couple of weeks earlier?

Is there any point when gun rights advocates would admit that we have too much gun violence in America?

National Rifle Association guru Wayne LaPierre went on national TV to assert that most of the weapons used in more than 6,000 murders in Mexico came from Central American countries.

That's a bald-faced lie. Officials tracing the weapons turned up the truth: 90% came from America.

Oklahoma's lone Democrat, Rep. Dan Boren, has been elected to the NRA national board. Let's hope he brings common sense to the table, not just a rubber stamp.

Of course, the NRA answer is that we don't have enough guns in the country. If only we allowed concealed weapons at schools, nursing homes, work, bars, airports and just about anywhere else you can imagine.

An idiot Republican legislator, Rep. Jason Murphey of Guthrie, filed a bill to allow students to carry weapons on college campuses. That so outraged college presidents and law enforcement agencies that the bill died.

The Washington state case is a good example. Would that father really have been able to kill his four young daughters and his young son without a gun?

You can be a gun owner and still favor reining in the permissive gun culture in America. Those who are against any kind of restrictions may reap the whirlwind.

I get the allure of it. It's fun and empowering – until someone gets their head blown off. It's madness that almost anyone can stroll into a gun store and walk out with a deadly weapon.

Guns should be the hardest things to get in America, not the easiest. When will a sizable group of politicians have the courage to step up and demand tighter regulations of firearms in this country?

I had a personal experience. I came home from school one day to find the dining room splattered with blood. My brother Johnny had picked the gun cabinet lock and was practicing fast draws with friend Pat Pezzeti.

Johnny's gun went off, blowing off one of Pat's hands.

Have we reached the tipping point? And if not, what will it take? How many more mass murders do we have to go through before we realize our collective stupidity?

INVEST IN AMERICA

Buy A Congressman

# Sally Kern Wants U.S. To Emulate Somalia?

By Lori Nelson

Rep. Sally Kern authored a House Concurrent Resolution condemning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a document that among its many provisions recognizes that a child "for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding ..."

The resolution ultimately passed both the House and the Senate, and a copy is to be distributed to every U.S. senator.

Rep. Kern was peppered with questions after explaining the resolution. Virtually all of the questioning centered on her contention that if the convention is ratified by the Congress, it would subject Oklahoma's parents to international law regarding the rearing and discipline of their own children.

## ANTI-UNITED NATIONS RHETORIC

Rep. Kern stated that parents, not the United Nations, are best equipped to decide what is best for their children. Among her arguments was that the 18-member United Nations committee that oversees the convention had the audacity to criticize parents in Ireland for too frequently relying on corporal punishment for child discipline.

I will concede that I have no idea whether Irish parents spank their kids too much. Unlike Rep. Kern, I will leave scholarly legal debates to constitutional law experts. As an Oklahoman, however, I do have a number of my own unanswered questions for her.

Rep. Kern, were you aware that Oklahoma leads the nation in the number of deaths from child abuse? Do you believe those parents knew what was best for their children?

Did you know that Oklahoma leads the nation, possibly the world, in the number of incarcerated women, a significant number of whom have children? Does an imprisoned woman know what is best for her children?

Did you also know that Oklahoma leads the nation in the number of grandparents raising their grandchildren? Haven't those parents, by relinquishing their responsibilities, essentially admitted they don't know what is best for their children?

## 11,000 CASES OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT

Did you know that Oklahoma's DHS system confirmed more than 11,000 cases of child abuse and neglect in 2008? When an overwhelmed state agency is forced to intervene in a home, wouldn't you agree that the parents in those homes probably don't know what is best for their children?



Rep. Kern, given Oklahoma's embarrassing record when it comes to the treatment of children, shouldn't we as a state be standing up and applauding efforts to ratify the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child, in a proactive step to show we are committed to solving the problems that exist in our state?

Do we really want our nation to be one of only two U.N. member nations refusing to ratify a convention that established minimum standards for the treatment of children, just as previous treaties has established standards for human rights and treatment of prisoners of war?

If the United States does not heed your resolution and ratifies this treaty, in the spirit of "love it or leave it" could we convince you to move to the only other nation that has refused to ratify it? Do you think you'd enjoy living in Somalia?

- The author lives in Oklahoma City

# An Education In Logic For OCPA, Lawmakers

By Sharon Martin

A friend of mine gushed about how much she enjoyed reading Ayn Rand's novels. What about the political views Rand expresses? My friend hadn't thought about that.

Rand's idea is that no government is the best government, and that the only people who deserve anything are those who go out and make it happen. Selfishness is the only logical policy, she said in a 1959 interview with Mike Wallace. It's the same logic of survival of the fittest employed by the rightwingers who don't believe in evolution.

Brandon Dutcher at the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs evidently shares many of Rand's beliefs. I'm still looking for his logic, too.

## WHAT'S THE POINT?

In a recent article Dutcher cried that President Obama was leading us toward European-style social democracy. Since many European countries have a higher standard of living than the United States - healthier citizens and lower infant mortality rates, for example - I had to wonder what point Dutcher was making.

He argues that government-run schools are destroying future generations. I've been to India. The middle class children in school uniforms are not begging on the streets. Those who cannot afford an education often are. And their children will be. And their children.

Ask the people squatting around fires on the sidewalks at night about the value of public education.

## UNEDUCATED POSE REAL THREAT

Perhaps it is OK with Dutcher if only some children receive an education. The uneducated, however, pose a real threat to civilization.

People who have no options often turn to crime, so we are less safe when we don't educate our citizens. People who aren't trained are less productive. They have no money to spend on items that the educated produce and they contribute less to the tax base. This affects everyone.

Public education is not an expense but an investment. If we are willing to educate our citizens, we spend fewer dollars fighting crime and we put more money into circulation. That's logic. If only Dutcher and the Oklahoma Legislature understood that.

- The author lives in Oilton

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## Raising Rightwingers

# Homeschooling As A Breeding Ground

By Frosty Troy

There is nothing revolutionary about homeschooling. Children sit during class, listen to mother and do their homework.

Are some parents using homeschooling as a cover for chronic absenteeism, physical or sexual child abuse and for indoctrination purposes?

Sen. Jim Wilson, D-Tahlequah, introduced legislation that would have required a check on homeschooled children. He was immediately the victim of verbal abuse and telephone harassment. A Republican-controlled committee did not grant him a hearing on the bill.

Homeschooling is largely based on the traditional curriculum and has been put together to suit the mother's competence and the children's desires.

Homeschool parents will never let you forget that a homeschooled child won the national spelling bee. The flip side is the case of a child in Little Axe, where homeschooling was a cover for his murder.

### THEIR MAIN ARGUMENT

Champions of homeschooling argue that the main advantage is the teaching of Christian principles and personal morality.

Schools, even private schools, are deemed to be harmful because of the "poor values" they transmit such as the theory of evolution. Homeschool parents decry the progressive dogma, social diversity, lack of discipline and real sex education.

By 1994, homeschooling was legalized in all 50 states, but Oklahoma remains the only state where there is zero check on the children. Public school teachers say some homeschooled children are well prepared, while others are as much as two grade levels behind.

### JAMES DOBSON LED THE WAY

Champion of the movement is radio evangelist James Dobson and his Focus on the Family organization. He has spent thousands of hours over the years defaming public education.

It is one thing to homeschool, but many homeschool parents are among the most brazen fabulists about what goes on in the average public school. They are hardly the dens of iniquity evoked in the media.

The myth of playground depravity flourishes and has convinced hundreds of Christian families every year to remove their children from "government schools" with their "unstable environment" contaminated by "state ideology."

### HOMESCHOOL NUMBERS GROWING

The number of families overall who have removed their children from school [or refused to put them there] has grown from 850,000 in 1999 to more than 1.8 million in 2006.

One 15-year-old interviewed by a British newspaper said, "When you think that Mao and the Nazis used state schools to spread their propaganda, I think homeschooling is a good alternative."

"We don't want the state to influence our children's ideology," said homeschooler Sharon Colvins. She is a former student from the University of California-Berkeley turned libertarian who wants to abolish the U.S. Department of Education. Shades of Ronald Reagan!

### PARENTS SAY WHY THEY HOMESCHOOL

According to a recent survey by the U.S. Department of Education, 31% of parents keep their children out of the public schools for reasons of safety, drugs and negative peer pressure.

The second reason, for 30% of parents, was a desire to indoctrinate their children with "religious or moral instruction."

The third, for 16.5% of parents, was dissatisfaction with "the academic instruction available." Children with special needs [7%] or with physical or mental health problems [7%] were also mentioned.

An Oklahoma public school critic and homeschooler is Brandon Dutcher, vice president of the far right Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs. He wants homeschooling parents given the same amount of money spent on public school pupils.

### DELAYED EDUCATION PROMOTED

In their 1975 book *Better Late Than Early*, Raymond and Dorothy Moore, both rightwing Christians, summed up their research: schooling starts too early, it is detrimental for children physically, morally and intellectually, and bad for their socialization. Children should not start school until they are between eight and 10, or even possibly later.

In 2001 George Bush's No Child Left Behind act [NCLB] was passed with an overwhelming majority of both Democrats and Republicans. The law put schools in competition, makes access to private schools easier, and institutes an education "market" fed by school vouchers.

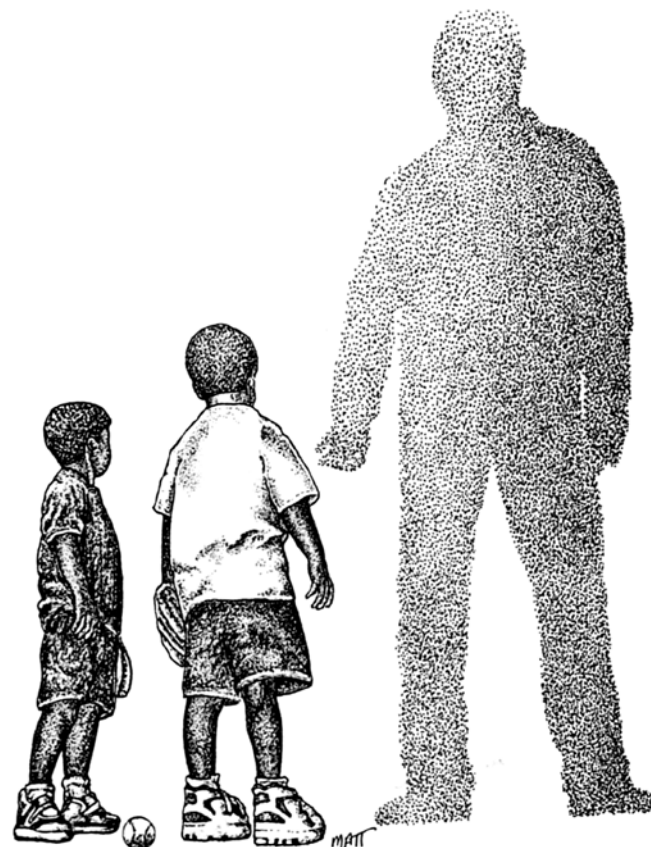
NCLB has made school more rigid and increased inequalities between pupils, establishing speed of learning as the only educational criterion. President Obama wants to rewrite the law.

### FEW STANDARDS FOR PARENTS

Administrative procedures for parents wishing to teach their children?

None are required in Oklahoma. In most states they need only to have completed high school.

In most states parents must notify the authorities at the beginning of the year, provide their intended curriculum and undertake to give their children at least



900 hours of classes during the school year.

Mandatory subjects include reading, writing, geography, civics, math, science, health and fire prevention.

In the absence of testing there is no obstacle to claiming that a subject was taught even if it was not. According to the one critical administrator of a high school, "In theory, Oklahomans could keep their children away from school quite legally, pretend to teach them at home and do nothing all year."

A California court of appeals ruling has clamped down on parents without teaching credentials – 166,000 homeschoolers became illegal and parents liable for criminal prosecution. The decision is on appeal.

### THEY MISS CRITICAL COMPONENTS

The influences to which these future citizens are subjected, by remaining solely in their family environment, do not open them up to thought and the diversity of opinions implied in a democratic society.

If children's interaction with people of different races, different economic situations or different intellectual levels are restricted by their parents, when their time comes to take part in the democratic process they will tend to reject any opinions that differ from their own.

Homeschooling can also be a hotbed of political extremism. Many were hauled to the tea parties – thinly veiled racism aimed at a new president.

Aimee Howley, a researcher in education science, believes that homeschooling will reach its own limits.

"Teaching your children requires too much energy on the part of parents, and notably the mother. Few people are ready to make the intellectual sacrifices of a full-time educator," she said.

Homeschooling has grown but it remains marginal. Traditional schooling continues to improve, with the majority of parents [95%] continuing to send their children to public schools.

Most public schools are safe, teachers are well educated and most do a better job than charter schools.

Long live public education.

## Senate Honors Two Top State Teachers

The State Senate honored two of Oklahoma's outstanding teachers, the 2008 Milken Educator Award winner Ronia Davison and the 2009 Oklahoma Medal of Excellence winner Georgie Chapuis. Both teach at the Sadler Arts Academy in Muskogee.

The Milken Educator Award was established in 1987. Each year, around 80 teachers across the U.S. receive the award. Their expenses are paid to attend the National Education Conference and they receive a \$25,000 prize.

Davison, a third-grade teacher, was the only Oklahoma teacher to receive the award in 2008.

Davison is a National Board Certified teacher who mentors other Sadler teachers who are seeking certification. She also serves as a faculty member at the Oklahoma Fall Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain.

She earned her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education in 1996 and a master's in reading in 2008, both from Northeastern State University.

She is currently taking courses to earn a master's degree in School Administration and is part of the Aspiring Administrators Academy.

Each year, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, which was founded and is chaired by OU President David Boren, honors five outstanding educators from the state's public schools, and Chapuis was among those this year.

Chapuis is an eighth-grade teacher who has taught at Sadler Arts Academy for 13 years. Like Davison, she is also a National Board Certified teacher who demands excellence in her classroom and gets it as every year all of her students pass the reading and math portions of the Oklahoma Criterion Reference Tests.

## PUBLIC FORUM

# Proven Alternative To Prison Is Being Ignored

By Philip B. Lorenz

In these times of distress over an adequate budget for the state prison system, it is worth giving more emphasis to some of the alternatives to incarceration. Three programs that are low in cost and high in effectiveness are Community Sentencing, Drug Courts, and Mental Health Courts.

All are, of course, applicable only to nonviolent offenders. I can report from personal involvement with Community Sentencing.

It is notorious that Oklahoma's prison population has soared from 4,500 in 1980 to around 23,000 today. The annual cost of "warehousing" these offenders is \$16,000 to \$21,000 per inmate [depending on the security level]. The average annual cost for Community Sentencing is \$1,800, a 90% savings.

But is it effective in protecting the public and reducing criminal behavior? The answer is yes!

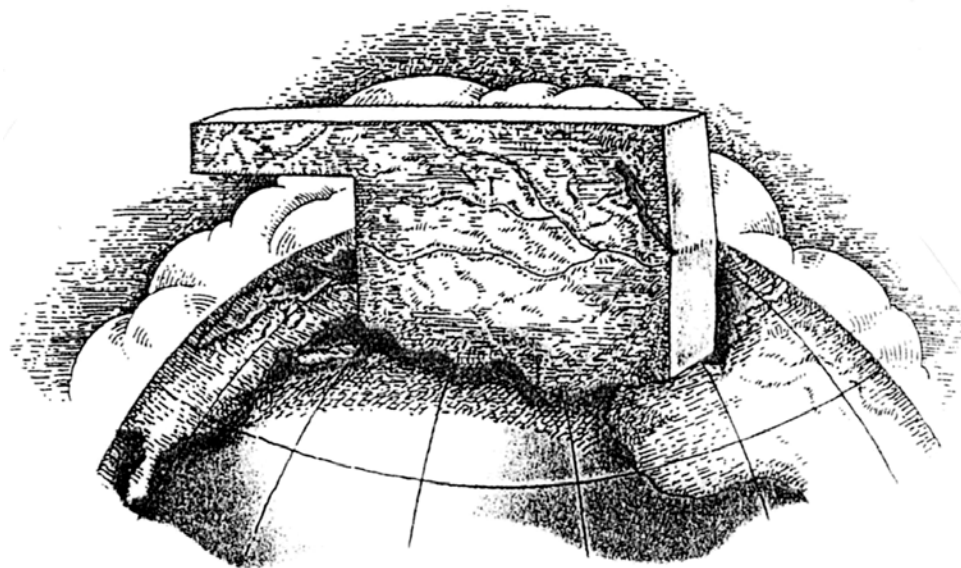
Since the program's inception in 2000, 13,981 offenders have received Community Sentences [out of 54,910 non-violent prison receptions]. Success is measured by the number who complete the sentence mandates [normally in three years] and continue as law-abiding citizens.

### NEARLY 8 IN 10 SUCCEED

Overall, the success rate has been 80%. This compares with 46% for prison inmates released after serving a full sentence, and 62% for those released on standard parole.

Here is how Community Sentencing is carried out: After careful screening, the offender lives in the community with his family, earning a livelihood [most of the time], and undergoing therapy [for which the offender shares the cost]. Candidates are those who have been convicted of a non-violent felony [close to 70% of the cases have been related to substance abuse].

The offender must undergo an examination called a "Level of Service Inventory," administered by a professionally trained agent. Those with a high score are eliminated, posing a risk by remaining in the community; and those with a low score are eliminated because this suggests that therapy is unnecessary and



not cost-effective.

About 59% of those tested over the years have been in the moderate range. The judge then has the option to rule a Community Sentence.

The offender is monitored intensively for three months, with a detox program if needed, home visits at least once, random drug testing, enrollment in an appropriate therapy program, and sometimes subject to curfew. Offenders who are compliant then remain on moderate monitoring for three years before "graduating."

### LEGISLATURE IGNORED AUDIT FINDINGS

In 2007 the state Legislature spent \$844,000 for an audit of the Department of Corrections. In respect to Community Sentencing, some key recommendations were:

- make a careful study of the program's cost-effectiveness in reducing prison commitments;
- expand the eligibility requirements [to allow for more cost-saving];
- several suggestions for better administrative efficiency.

The legislators have taken no action to implement any of the recommendations of the audit.

They know that voters are inclined to be wary of being "soft on crime." But we need to ask ourselves whether vengeance is worth the cost, when there are low-cost options that are just as effective – or more!

– The author lives in Bartlesville

# Help Is Sought From Congressman Boren

By Mary Francis

Dear Congressman Boren:

Please co-sponsor HR 1458. This would extend Medicare coverage of immunosuppressive drugs beyond the first 36 month after transplant – a much cheaper option than returning to Medicare covered dialysis or receiving another Medicare covered transplant.

Organ transplant recipients must take immunosuppressive drugs daily for the lifetime of their transplant to reduce the likelihood of organ rejection.

Failure to take these drugs significantly increases the risk of rejection, in which case they would return to Medicare covered dialysis or receive another Medicare covered transplant, a much more expensive option.

While the cost of immunosuppressive drugs is expensive, ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually, it represents a fraction of the cost of dialysis.

Dialysis services cost the program over \$67,000 per-patient annually and a transplant costs an average of \$100,000 per recipient – much more expensive

than providing immunosuppressive drugs.

Thousands of patients receive a Medicare covered kidney transplant each year. They are eligible for Medicare benefits for the first 36 months following their transplants, including the coverage of their immunosuppressive drugs.

Thereafter, these people are often left uninsured and rely on a patchwork of state and pharmaceutical assistance programs to receive their immunosuppressive drugs.

This places their transplant at greater risk of rejection, forcing a return to the much more expensive Medicare covered dialysis.

It simply makes sense to provide the much cheaper drugs to maintain kidney support.

Please co-sponsor HR 1458, legislation that would extend Medicare coverage of immunosuppressive drugs beyond the first 36 month after transplant.

– The author lives in Heavener

# Economic Rx? Start With Transportation

By Bob Axworthy

As we are searching for a financial fix to our current economic dilemma, no one seems to be talking about the 800-pound gorilla in the room.

For almost 50 years we have been buying more than we've been selling around the world ... and it has been getting worse.

The billions of dollars worth of automobiles [and fuel we import to feed them] has been strangling us but we have been borrowing enough to keep from choking. If it weren't for the obvious creeps in our greedy financial system to blame, which we should, we would see the bottom-line culprit: transportation!

Please read [and believe] the following:

Of the energy in a gallon of gasoline, about 74% is lost as heat; 53% in exhaust gas; 40% in the coolant system, and about 7% in general friction in the average automobile engine. [This from MIT's Technology Review, October 2008]

Of the 26% of the fuel used to power the vehicle, 10% of this is lost in the automobile's friction and the net fuel used to actually move the vehicle is about 23%.

Since the car weight is about 3,000 pounds and I weigh about 150 pounds, simple arithmetic reveals that only about 1% of the gasoline in a typical automobile is actually moving the payload: ME! The other 99% is wasted, contributing to the garbage in the air but doing no useful work.

Can we honestly say that we are so technically impoverished that we can't move people around more efficiently?

Americans won't use trains, buses, streetcars, subways, or [fill in your own transit mode]? Of course they will when it's faster, cheaper and more hassle-free

than driving a conventional car. That is the challenge!

Just as President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System has made massive contributions to our economy for the past 50 years, a high-speed rail system would have a similar impact on new generations.

Computerized Personal Rapid Transit [PRT] systems could attack city congestion with similar efficiencies. Transportation can aid the economy it has almost destroyed. We don't have to settle for 1% travel!

All automobile travel started out as recreational travel. Somewhere along the line, it has become essential to our very lives. How often in the last week did you use your car just for transportation, not pure fun? And how often was that transportation a hassle – too much traffic, inconsiderate drivers, damn trucks. And how much of your disposable income went into car insurance, gasoline, car payments, car fees, parking fees, toll fees ...?

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

## One Track Mind

A daddy teased his little daughter by suggesting she liked a certain boy in her kindergarten class.

The little girl was quite indignant. "No, daddy, I don't like him. He's only interested in one thing."

Shocked, the daddy cautiously asked what that one thing might be.

"Power Rangers, of course," said the toddler.

# Indian Lad Wins Luck Of The Draw

By Bob A. Smith

I do not gamble or understand how the games are played. I have a great appreciation for those who visit our tribal casinos and bring money into our treasury.

This money benefits our tribal members. I do not believe in luck and yet my life has been directed by the luck of the draw [LOTD].

I grew up poor in southeastern Oklahoma and never believed that I could afford to advance my education beyond high school.

LOTD stepped in. I received a small scholarship, and with a cardboard box containing my worldly possessions, I was off to one of our state universities.

## DRAFTED BY THE ARMY

After two years with a global conflict raging, I left school and moved to Texas, where I worked for two years. I was then drafted into the U.S. Army. Completing basic training in Virginia, I was prepared to deploy to the war zone. LOTD again stepped in, and I was assigned to duty in France.

After 21 months of service and touring the continent, I received an early out and returned to the university courtesy of the GI Bill.

I graduated, and since I had benefits remaining I entered law school. At the same time, I got a civil service job with the federal government.

On the first day of my discharge from the Army, still in uniform I applied for a loan at a credit union to purchase an automobile.

## MARRIAGE, CHILDREN, LAW SCHOOL

The woman who managed the credit union and processed my loan became my wife two years later. By the time I graduated from law school and passed the bar, we had two children. We later had two additional children.

My first appearance in court was representing a man in a divorce. His wife had retained a well-known divorce attorney, and my client had been advised to retain someone of equal stature.

He kept me as his counsel, and we appeared in court. The judge, a stickler for protocol, began. I knew enough to rise when addressing the court while opposing counsel remained seated.

"Mr. X," the judge said, "stand when addressing the court."

## SELECTED AS ONE OF THE FEW

I thought. I have this sucker won. Mr. X asked the judge, "What about my fee?" The judge replied, "She retained you, she pays you."

My client was a mail clerk in the facility where I worked. One day he brought

# Sooners Survive Economy's Crash

The economies of 10 states, including Oklahoma, are outperforming the U.S. economy as a whole, according to a just-released study by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government.

Contrary to their hype, it hasn't resulted from those running the Legislature.

Two biggest reasons, say the authors of the report, are that most of these states have economies that benefited through much of 2008 from high and rising oil and natural gas prices.

Their real estate markets have not suffered the bust to the extent seen elsewhere.

"As for lessons for other states, they're not too easy to emulate," says Donald Boyd, co-author of the report. "Have a lot of oil, and don't run your real estate prices up into the stratosphere."

## NO REAL ESTATE BOOM

Boyd and other analysts say that the 10 states – Oklahoma, Alaska, Wyoming, Louisiana, Nebraska, Texas, Iowa, New Mexico, Utah, and South Dakota – did not enjoy the real estate boom seen in places like California, Arizona, and Nevada and therefore have not gone bust to the same degree.

That's because banks did not practice what Bob Denk of the National Association of Home Builders [NAHB] calls the "grotesque deterioration of lending standards" which fueled housing demand and produced rapid price increases.

"There was a lot of wacky lending practices everywhere, and so it's just a matter of degree how overheated any of these markets got," says Denk.

Markets on both coasts started with "the noble goal of trying to extend home

# VETOES

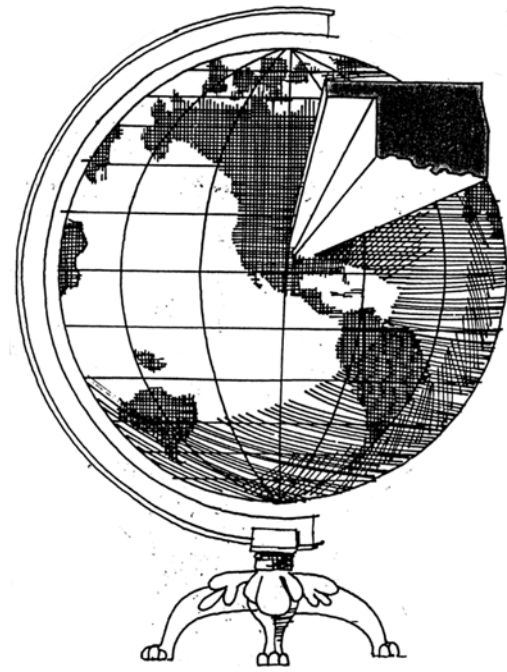
From Page One

declaring Oklahoma's sovereignty under the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, conceived by the black-helicopter, John Birch Society crowd that fears a conspiracy to create a one world government.

It wasn't a flawless session for the governor. He signed off on the so-called Tort Reform compromise package, hailed by big business and trial lawyers alike. The real losers are Oklahoma taxpayers who'll foot the bill for a scheme that both limits corporate liability and ensures trial lawyers can collect big judgments.

In addition, he embraced a state budget that – on the surface – seemed to give common schools and higher education a slight increase, while most other state functions are averaging a 7% cut. The reality is different: The governor and legislative leaders effectively are using one-time federal stimulus money – designed to be icing on the cake, not the cake itself – to disguise the real reason for Oklahoma's budget shortfall: \$720 million in ill-advised tax cuts in recent years.

What will happen next year when there's no stimulus pot of gold as a bailout?



me an announcement showing that the government would select 20 employees throughout the country for five years and send them to an eastern university for graduate-level training.

Those selected must change geographic locations and field of employment. The idea was to make specialists into generalists. I applied, was investigated for security purposes by the FBI – but not selected.

The next year LOTD appeared, and I was selected. Soon my family and I began our travel to Washington, DC, for orientation and then to upstate New York for entry into the graduate school.

## GREAT LOVE FOR OKLAHOMA

Following graduation I was employed in Washington, DC, back to Oklahoma City and then to Seattle. Wherever we lived, our children had this great love for the state of Oklahoma.

One Christmas we traveled from Seattle to Oklahoma. At 2 a.m. outside of Mingo we had a flat tire. Our oldest son and I unloaded the luggage and Christmas gifts from the car, retrieved the spare tire, jacked up the car – which immediately fell into the sand.

There was no traffic and then LOTD brought the only vehicle of the morning over the hill. It was a truck with a wench on the front.

The truck driver raised our car while we put on the spare, reloaded and were soon on our way to grandmother's home. LOTD can be pretty amazing.

– The author is chief judge of the trial court for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. This article first appeared in the Oklahoma Bar Journal.

ownership to those who might not qualify under stricter rules" he says.

In 2001, only about 1% of the nation's housing loans were in the sub-prime category, the national average now is 5.5%. Nevada is now at 12.5% after dropping back from 13%. California and Arizona are in the 8% range, Denk says.

## THERE IS NO GREAT MYSTERY

"I don't think there is a great mystery here," says David Merriman, professor of public administration at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"These are states that had less boom and so have less bust. They are relatively favored by industrial composition."

Where jobs are stable, housing remains more stable as well, point out other economists. A lower cost of living makes a difference, too.

"Insurance, fuel, food, recreation are all examples of categories where we enjoy lower costs compared to other larger markets outside of the Midwest," says Doug Burnett of Burnett Realty in Des Moines, IA.

"That is more attractive to employers that need workers, and it is a factor when someone is making decisions about staying put or moving away."

Burnett says it will not shock most people to learn that the middle of the county tends to be more conservative in everything from their investments to their clothing purchases – and buying homes is no different.

Jill Harrison of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce also says that Oklahoma learned its lessons after going through the oil bust of the 1980s.

"Everything we have done since then has been careful and calculated," she says, "so that we would survive in a time just like today."

## BOOKS

# Prince Of Publishing Flourishes Against Odds

By Susan Estrich

### A DIFFERENT LIFE

*Growing Up Learning Disabled and Other Adventures*  
By Quinn Bradlee with Jeff Himmelman  
PublicAffairs  
240 pages, \$24.95

You expect some people to write a book. You see their name when you're scrolling titles or actually looking at books, and you say, of course he or she would write a book.

That was not my reaction when I saw that Quinn Bradlee has a new book out.

Quinn Bradlee? I remember a little boy who was always sick and very hard to understand. How many Quinn Bradlees could there be?

The one who wrote *A Different Life: Growing Up Learning Disabled and Other Adventures* describes a childhood in which he was always sick and his parents' friends struggled to understand him. Same one.

### A PRINCE OF PUBLISHING

Quinn is by birth a prince of publishing, as close to Washington royalty as there was until the Obamas moved to town. Quinn's father is legendary Washington Post former Executive Editor Ben Bradlee, and his mother is the equally legendary writer, critic and professional party-giver Sally Quinn. For Quinn, growing up, Washington was a small town in which, if he got lost, someone would surely point the way for Ben and Sally's son.

The title of Quinn's book is a play on his father's autobiography, *A Good Life: Newspapering and Other Adventures*. Ben suffered from polio as a child, so it's not as if he always had it easy. But as he is the first to admit, he had a great run.

"I think a lot about the fact that I'm 60 years older than he is," he says in an interview in his son's book. "Ultimately, I want him to be safe, and I want him to find a way to become a productive member of society without us. ... I don't know where he will end up. I've had a wonderful run in my life, but there isn't much more I can do. I love him with all my heart."

### HARDLY AN IDYLIC CHILDHOOD

Quinn grew up rich and privileged, but as his heartbreaking, life-affirming memoir makes clear, being rich and privileged doesn't protect you from the polite stares of the adults who can't understand you or the kids who are angry and jealous. Quinn writes of going to boarding school for learning-disabled boys and, lonely and scared, bragging about his famous family, only to be hazed about it for all the years he was there. He writes about always being alone, never having

## Canyon A Microcosm Of U.S. Water Policy

By Mike Nobles

### RESURRECTION

*Glen Canyon and a New Vision for the American West*  
By Annette McGivney with photos by James Kay  
Braided River  
174 pages, \$29.95

There have been literally hundreds of books written about Glen Canyon, the Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell near Page, AZ. Unfortunately, given the critical importance and controversial nature of the subject, most are not really worth the reader's time. This book is an exception.

The book is important for a variety of reasons. For example, it contains 125 full-color stunning, gorgeous images of the area that Robert Redford says is "... an ecological miracle occurring in the American Southwest ..." He is referring to the resurrection of Glen Canyon that was inundated when the floodgates of Glen Canyon Dam were closed and the Colorado River began filling Lake Powell in January 1963.

I have read, and indeed own, many books with photos of the area but none are as faithful to the subject or as revealing of this "miracle" as noted photographer James Kay. He spent five years documenting this unprecedented occurrence on film and it has to be his masterpiece.

### CONTROVERSIAL FROM THE START

The text that accompanies the photographs is by noted author, lecturer, and Backpacker magazine's Southwest editor Annette McGivney. In her customary clarity, conciseness, and highly readable style she provides pertinent background on the dam controversy, the reappearance of Glen Canyon, and a must-read overview of water issues and politics in the American southwest.

Glen Canyon Dam was controversial from the start. The Bureau of Reclamation famously labeled the dam and resultant Lake Powell as The Jewel of the Colorado. Edward Abbey called it Lake Foul and a Sewage Lagoon. There have been repeated calls to have the dam dismantled.

A highly regarded Glen Canyon Institute was formed to advocate just such an action and hearings have been held in Congress to review what many claim to be

See **GLEN CANYON** Page 19

a friend, and his parents trying that old trick of inviting him to bring a "friend" on family vacations.

Quinn was born with a hole in his heart. Then there were the seizures and the speech problems and the learning issues. No one knew what was wrong with him until he was 14, when Sally finally found a doctor in New York who gave a name to what Quinn has: velocardiofacial syndrome [VCFS], a disorder that ranks second only to Down syndrome in terms of the frequency of its incidence. Giving it a name, of course, didn't make it go away.

I remember Sally once telling me that because Quinn was her only child, she didn't have anyone else to constantly be comparing him to, no fixed idea of how a child of a certain age "should be." Maybe that made it easier, she thought, for both Quinn and her, since he wasn't forced to confront a sibling who could do things he couldn't. Maybe. But the truth is, it wasn't easy for either of them. In between the lines of Quinn's story is his parents', and it is, in its way, just as touching.

There is Sally, as tough a fighter as I've met in life, fighting the one battle that matters most, the one she can never totally win, no matter. She fights doctors and schools and bullies, but she also, God knows how, pushes her son to go away to school, to find adventure, to live next door with his friends and not in his bedroom upstairs.


### A FAIRY TALE ENDING

The funniest story in the book may be the one about Quinn losing his virginity in a brothel in St. Martin, and then going back there the next day with his mother, who insisted the woman be tested for HIV. [Ben's reaction was to ask if it felt good. As my friend Rose would say, a father is not a mother.]

In the final chapter of his book, Quinn "adopts" four new godparents, recognizing that two of the original four - Ed Williams and Art Buchwald - are gone, and that he may need help when his parents are gone. But the real "ending" is better.

Recently, newspapers reported Quinn Bradlee's engagement to his girlfriend, Pary Williamson. The ring is said to be a family heirloom.

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# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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## Oklahoma Projects

# Impact Of Obama's Economic Policies

By Gannet Tseggai

Facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, President Obama started his presidency with decisive action – proposing and quickly passing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA].

Since the bill went into effect, the ARRA has already helped put money back in the pockets of 95% of working Americans, created and saved jobs across the country and made key investments in our community to help kick-start the economy.

To ensure that the funds are spent efficiently and effectively, President Obama tasked Vice President Biden with overseeing the implementation of ARRA, and projects have already begun to come in under budget across the country.

Here's a look at how his policies impacted Oklahoma in the first three months of his administration.

### WORKING FAMILIES

- The President's tax-cut – which covers more Americans than any in history – is putting more than \$700 million back in the pockets of more than 1.3 million hard-working Oklahoma families;

- \$30,158,651 to support child care for working families.

### ENERGY IS A PRIORITY

- \$27,172,500 in block grants to foster energy efficiency in building, transportation, and a wide range of other improvements.

- \$60,903,196 to support the weatherization of homes, including adding more insulation, sealing leaks and modernizing heating and air conditioning equipment.

- \$46,704,000 to the State Energy Program, available for rebates to consumers for energy saving improvements; development of renewable energy projects; promotion of Energy Star products; efficiency upgrades for state and local government buildings; and other innovative state efforts to help save families money in their energy bills.

### EDUCATION

- \$896,103,804 potentially available to Oklahoma to lay the foundation for a generation of education reform and help save thousands of teaching jobs at risk due to state and local budget cuts.

### HEALTH CARE

- \$7,800,000 to fund six new Community Health Centers, which will serve an estimated 42,640 patients and create a projected 315 jobs.

- \$3,216,626 to expand services at 17 existing Community Health Centers, which will expand service to an additional 30,136 patients and create or save a projected 79 jobs.

- \$1,170,545 to provide meals to low-income seniors.

- \$174,758,013 made available in Federal Medical Assistance Percentage [FMAP] to protect health care for the families hit hard by the economic crisis and some of the nation's most vulnerable citizens.

- \$2,153,981 in vaccines and grants to ensure more underserved Americans receive the vaccines they need.

The President announced the release of \$155 million authorized by the huge stimulus package he signed into law last month. That money will support 126 new health centers across the country.

### TRANSPORTATION

- \$464,655,225 in highway funds to help build and repair roads and bridges.

- \$39,163,565 to repair and build public transportation infrastructure.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

More than \$26.1 million for state and local law enforcement assistance available through the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant [JAG] Program. The JAG Program supports a variety of efforts such as hiring and support for law enforcement officers; multi-jurisdictional drug and gang task forces; crime prevention and domestic violence programs; and courts, corrections, treatment, and justice information sharing initiatives.

The Recovery Act also will help weatherize 400 Oklahoma homes. Part of the money from the federal economic stimulus package has reached Enid already. Cheri Ezzell said the weatherization program operated by Community Development Support Association [CDSA] for 20 years will have much more money this year than it has in the past.

### MORE MONEY PER HOUSE

While the program could only complete about 20 houses a year in the past, she said, this year it will be able to complete about 400 and will be able to spend more money on each house.

About \$500,000 will be dispensed in Enid this year as part of \$5 billion contained in the stimulus package for national projects like CDSA's weatherization program.

Stimulus funding will weatherize as many homes in one year as CDSA has in its entire history.

Ezzell said she is excited about it because CDSA has weatherized about 400 homes in the past 20 years and will be able to do 400 homes in one year with the additional funds.

### FORTIFYING OKLAHOMA DAMS

Oklahoma will use federal stimulus money to help repair seven high hazard dams. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission says Oklahoma will get about



\$14 million to repair the dams and the state will provide a 35% match. High-hazard dams are those that – if they break – would kill people.

Three of the dams to be repaired are in Pontotoc County, two are in Caddo County and one each is in Adair and Kingfisher counties.

### HELP FOR LOW INCOME ELDERLY

Oklahoma received \$1.2 million in stimulus aid to help feed elderly, expanding the SNAP Program.

“The White House has released almost \$1.2 million to help provide meals to low-income elderly Oklahomans as part of the federal stimulus package,” said George Johnson, a spokesman for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

The money will be dispatched to area aging-services agencies, which contract to provide meals to the elderly in their homes and at senior citizens centers and other locations.

Johnson said the funds would allow an expansion of services in some areas and help agencies deal with rising costs. He said about 17,000 meals a day are currently being served statewide under the program.

“We have a growing elderly population in Oklahoma so this program will probably only expand as the number of people who need ... meal services increases over the next several years,” he said.

### MORE BUYING POWER

The state agency also has announced that because of the stimulus, Oklahomans served by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will have more buying power at the grocery store.

The federal law raised maximum allotments for SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, by 13.6%, or about \$6.5 million in Oklahoma. “This is good news not only for the families who receive the benefit, but also for Oklahoma retailers and the state's economy,” said Kathie Wright, the manager of the program.

Tinker Air Force Base and other Oklahoma military installations will receive \$74 million in stimulus funds for maintenance and construction projects and upgrading anti-terrorism programs.

Tinker will get more than \$44 million in federal stimulus funds to make a variety of repairs and improvements.

Overall, Tinker led the state's military installations in projects approved by the Department of Defense, which got \$7.4 billion to spend in the \$780 billion stimulus package. Of the 67 projects in the state, 42 are at Tinker.

They range from roof repairs to anti-terrorism protection upgrades for buildings and at base gates. Ron Mullan, a Tinker spokesman, said the projects selected by the Defense Department came from a list of 71 submitted by base officials.

– The author works in the White House Office of Media Affairs

# Senators Mock True Health Care Debate

How many police does it take to silence the voice of the people?

That's a question a despot might ask in a totalitarian police state. But the Senate Finance Committee thought it was a hilarious joke as they ejected one brave activist after another.

They were protesting that not even one spokesperson for single payer health care was being allowed to sit at the hearing table.

Yes, Sen. Max Baucus, D-MT, who had preemptively declared that consideration of a single payer option was off the table, actually joked, "We need more police." The rest of the Senate panel just laughed their heads off.

It's time for the U.S. Senate to get the message that we the people are not just a joke to be laughed off. Why is it that not ONE senator on that Democratic-dominated committee has the integrity to stand up for an even-handed debate of health care issues? Why should any of them be elected to public office ever again?

## IGNORANT LEVEL OF DEBATE

So let's see a show of hands. How many of you would like to sign up now for a commie Marxist national health care system ... such as Canada, England and other pinko Bolshevik countries like that?

How stupid do they think we are, to try to reduce the terms of the debate to such an ignorant level?

Meet the new mass media scare label, "socialized" medicine. As opposed to the ANTI-social corporate medical insurance industry we have now, where patients have no role except to be cash cows, by design never to be actually cured?

If you or anyone in your family has ever been seriously ill, and as we ALL will be someday, you know the medical industry will pick your bones clean of every dime you ever earned in your life, just in time to drop you into the cheapest possible pine box.

## PROTECTING CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTORS

Why are members of Congress fighting so hard to keep single payer health care out of the public debate? Because there are no fat profits in it for their special interest corporate campaign contributors, who maximize their profits the sicker we are.

They cannot compete with a low overhead, efficiently run government program,

# Oklahoma Disability Agency Tops In USA

By Jody Harlan

The Oklahoma agency responsible for determining medical eligibility for Social Security Administration [SSA] benefits is the only Disability Determination Division [DDD] in the U.S to earn national recognition for accuracy in four critical categories.

In 2008, Disability Determination staff processed and cleared 54,185 cases for Oklahomans who applied for disability payments from two federal programs, Social Security Disability Insurance [SSDI] and Supplemental Security Income [SSI] benefits.

Disability Determination Division, which is 100% federally funded by SSA, is a division of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services [DRS].

## EARNING NATIONAL HONORS

"In spite of our heavy workload, the accuracy of claims decisions earned national honors," Disability Determination Administrator Noel Tyler said.

"This means we made the right decisions about applicants' allowance or denial for benefits – something that is critically important to them."

Oklahoma Disability Determination Division achieved an accuracy rate of 96.5% on initial claims for disability benefits, which was fourth highest in the nation.

# State's Health Among America's Worst

The Oklahoma State Board of Health released its 12th annual State of the State's Health Report, and the news was virtually all bad.

The 2008 report reviews 33 key health indicators including heart disease deaths, cancer deaths, unintentional injury deaths, asthma prevalence, diabetes prevalence, fruit and vegetable consumption, smoking, and immunizations, among others that contribute to Oklahoma's overall health status.

The report offers very little good news. [Oklahoma's adult smoking rate dropped in 2008 to a historic low of less than 25% – still one the nation's worst.]

One of the few bright spots is in the area of childhood immunizations, where Oklahoma's child immunization rates rank among the top half of the U.S.

Many Oklahomans who previously could not afford coverage have now gained health insurance through the Oklahoma Health Care Authority's Insure Oklahoma program.

Even so, significant health disparities exist for those Oklahomans who earn \$25,000 per year or less and among those with a high school education or less – both critical social determinants of health that the report says should not be overlooked.

## SECOND BEHIND MISSISSIPPI

The report notes that Oklahoma still leads most of the nation with deaths due to heart disease, with only Mississippi having higher rates.



"I'M TELLING YOU, FOSTER, IT'S A VICIOUS CYCLE!!"

just like we have NOW with the existing proven Medicare system.

Instead, they will line up a bunch of corporate lobbyists and stooges to tell bald-faced lies. Just like Kentucky GOP Sen. Jim Bunning himself who asserted that Canada and England had tax rate of at least 60% to support single payer.

They don't even want anyone around to even have a chance to call them out on their willful and malicious lies.

Yes, all those who love to preach to the rest of us about the free market and competition are shown to be only interested in a rigged market and a rigged debate. Baucus may put on a face of being slightly chastened, but he still will not allow any honest testimony on single payer.

But we can beat them. This is the pivotal moment. We have been speaking out for HR 676 [Medicare for all] for years. And now eight incredibly brave activists have been hauled away because they would not remain silent. By putting their own bodies on the line, they have shown the current "debate" for the total sham that it is.

Oklahoma's accuracy rate was second in the nation at 98.3% for their reconsideration workload, which requires a complete review of evidence by different staff than those who did the original review.

The division was third in the nation with 99.4% accuracy for cases that are periodically reviewed to determine any change in status of disability.

## A SUPERB ACCURACY RATE

Overall, Disability Determination Division achieved net accuracy of 97.8%, compared to a nationwide average of 96.6%.

DRS Director Mike O'Brien, EdD, credits a dedicated and innovative staff for the division's frequent recognition for accuracy and other accomplishments.

"Disability Determination employees are tops in the nation on speed and accuracy," O'Brien said. "They are honored every year by the Social Security Administration for outstanding production. Here in Oklahoma, we are very proud of them because their dedication to serving citizens makes a positive difference in thousands of Oklahomans' lives every year."

SSDI is a disability insurance program funded by a portion of the FICA tax a worker and employer pay on the worker's earnings over a qualifying period of

See **DISABILITY** Page 19

Of particular concern are heart disease deaths and cerebrovascular disease deaths among African-Americans, whose rates are higher than for any other ethnic group in Oklahoma.

Another critical health indicator for Oklahomans is diabetes prevalence, with significant disparities seen among the Native American and African-American populations in the state.

The report emphasizes that in a difficult economy, it is more important than ever to tackle Oklahoma's poor health status indicators, otherwise Oklahoma risks growing a new generation whose health is at greater jeopardy than their parents' health.

In the county-by-county section, the report offers several examples of collaborative work occurring in Oklahoma communities to move key health indicators in a positive direction.

"We are finally reaching critical mass where many partners working toward creating a state of health are beginning to make positive impacts. It will require long-term commitment and sustained effort, but the tide can be turned," the report states.

The report, along with previous years' reports, can be found on the Oklahoma State Department of Health web site: <http://www.ok.gov/health/pub/boh/state/index.html>.

# GOP Revival Won't Be Easy This Time

By Mickey Edwards

There are optimists within the Republican Party. They look at the wreckage left behind after last year's elections, and recall 1964. That was the year that Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for president, was so badly trounced that pundits proclaimed the GOP dead. But it was also the year that a new breed of conservative activists, myself among them, brought a new energy to the party that eventually reshaped it and led to years of Republican domination of the executive branch.

The whistle-past-the-graveyard crowd imagines that this year's doomsayers have simply forgotten history: Four years after the 1964 disaster, they remind us, Republicans won the presidency. We'll just do it again, they say. But the Republicans' defeat last year was far different from their 1964 loss – and it will be a lot harder to come back from.

In 1964, Goldwater was seen as an anomaly. He was not representative of his own party, and, to a large extent, was rejected by it. The conservatives voters so soundly rejected in 2008 are seen not as anomalous but as representative of the larger party.

## OVERCOMING MEMORIES OF BUSH

The Richard Nixon who won the presidency in 1968 had been vice president under Dwight Eisenhower, who left the White House with his popularity intact. The GOP candidate in 2012 will have to overcome the nation's memory of the previous Republican in that office, George W. Bush, who was less popular in most of America than the New York Yankees are in Boston.

There will be no "glorious days of Republican leadership" to hark back to unless the party's candidates continue to dredge up memories of Ronald Reagan, who left Washington two decades ago, before a good many younger voters were born.

When Republicans rebounded in 1968, they were a national party, helped to victory by strong support in areas where, today, the party wanders in a political wilderness.

## TOO MANY GOP WASTELANDS

There are now large chunks of the country almost without a Republican presence. Draw a map of the east side of the U.S., from the tip of Florida to the Canadian border, and see how many Republican senators or governors you find.

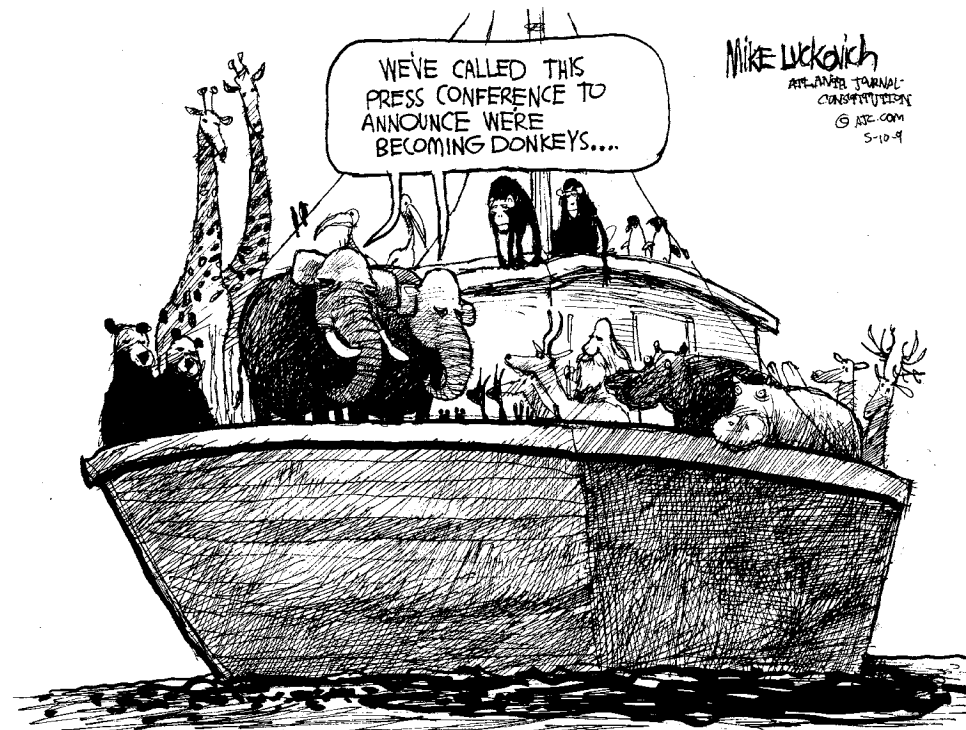
In 1969, by contrast, the GOP held both Senate seats in New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Vermont; there were Republican senators from New Jersey, Michigan, Maryland, even Massachusetts. In the House, Republicans held three of the six Connecticut seats, five of 12 in Massachusetts, both in New Hampshire, 15 in New York, seven of 10 in Wisconsin. You get the idea.

What can you say about the Republican Party in 2009? That it has Alabama locked up? Well, that's not even true: Democrats are far more competitive in the South than Republicans are in much of the country.

## IMPORTANCE OF SPECTER'S DEFECTION

It's certainly true that to some degree Arlen Specter's defection from the Republican Party was opportunism. Specter, after all, became a Republican in the first place not because of any particular political point of view but because, in 1966, when both Republicans and Democrats were trying to recruit him to run for district attorney in Philadelphia, the GOP promised more support. Specter himself has said that he's now a Democrat because that's the best way to get elected again. To Specter, party has never mattered much.

But there's more to the story. While Specter will not march in lock step with



Democrats any more than he did with Republicans, he will vote with them on many procedural issues, and in the Senate, that's no small matter.

So the loss matters. And that's why Republicans need to take seriously the fact that Specter was not so much seduced by Democrats as driven away by a GOP that has become increasingly intolerant of disagreement within its ranks and seemingly incapable of putting forth an appealing platform.

## ONCE UPON A TIME ...

At one point, Republicans put forth a coherent, idealistic vision of America, one that summoned it to greatness. There was a profound belief in the dignity of the individual, a reverence for the Constitution and the founders who proposed it, a belief in doing whatever it took [including spending tax dollars to build a military second to none] to preserve the peace. Republican platforms preached prudence and the virtues of small business.

Today, the Republican belief system has degenerated into an embarrassing hodgepodge that worships political victory more than ideas; supports massive deficits; plunges the nation into "just-in-case" wars without adequate troops, supplies or armor; dismisses constitutional strictures; and campaigns on a platform of turning national problem-solving over to "Joe the Plumber."

It's hard to see how all that points the way to a reawakening of voters to trust in the GOP.

## FREEDOM DEPENDS ON CHECKING POWER

This may suggest, of course, that the party should just toss in the towel, accept its designated role as the Whigs of the 21st Century and leave governance to its betters. But American freedom depends on power checking power. If Democrats control the legislative and executive branches without meaningful opposition, the country will be the weaker for it. Some of President Obama's initiatives would dramatically shift the boundaries between public and private, reshape the relationship between citizens and government and alter the lens through which America views its international commitments. These are serious matters and deserve serious, and constructive, engagement.

Merely attacking administration proposals and labeling Obama a "socialist" will only ensure that instead of rebounding, as the GOP did in 1968, the party will slip even further into irrelevance. And that will not be good for America.

– The author is a former U.S. representative from Oklahoma, a lecturer at Princeton University and the author of *Reclaiming Conservatism*

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# Five Senators Are Not 'Real' Catholics

By Frances Kissling

So says Catholic convert Sen. Sam Brownback who earlier this year signed a fundraising letter for a conservative Catholic advocacy group called "Catholic Advocate." The letter seeks funds to fight the Freedom of Choice Act [FOCA], a bill which would codify the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

While pro-choice advocates have despaired that the bill is unlikely to be introduced or passed, Catholic anti-choice groups from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to the Knights of Columbus have made the bill a centerpiece of their anti-choice agenda. For smaller groups like Catholic Advocate, it is a fundraising ploy.

Brownback's opposition to FOCA comes as no surprise, but his explicit condemnation of five Catholic Senate colleagues who are co-sponsors of the bill is viewed as a breach of Senate ethics and has resulted in a complaint to the Senate Ethics Committee by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

## A DEAL HUDSON PRODUCTION

Catholic Advocate and the controversial Brownback letter are initiatives of Deal Hudson, whom many readers will remember as the Catholic outreach advisor to President Bush's 2004 re-election campaign.

Hudson was flying high as the lead Catholic in Washington circles, buddy-buddy with Karl Rove and gatekeeper to seats in the convention sky boxes until an August 2004 National Catholic Reporter expose disclosed that he had "resigned" his faculty post at Fordham University in 1994 after an 18-year-old student accused him of getting her drunk and having sexual relations with her.

Hudson was forced to resign his post as editor of the conservative Catholic magazine *Crisis*, but friends in the conservative community set him up in the Morley Institute, a non-profit that owned the magazine.

From that perch, he has continued to defecate on liberal Catholics, particularly those who are pro-choice on abortion, family planning or stem cell research. On the death of the Jesuit Robert Drinan, Hudson blogged:

## DAMAGE TO THE CHURCH?

"The pro-abortion priest is dead ... His last public act was delivering the homily at the Jan. 3 Mass for Nancy Pelosi at Trinity University. I can't think of a single priest who did more damage to the Church in this country than Fr. Drinan."

The five "evil" Catholic senators are John Kerry, Barbara Mikulski, Bob Menendez, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell. His staff initially claimed they had never seen the letter, but Catholic Advocate provided an email that proved that they had, in fact, signed off on the letter.

The five non-negotiables in the Catholic Church are abortion, euthanasia, fetal stem cell research, human cloning and "homosexual marriage." Real Catholics can't vote for candidates – Catholic or non-Catholic – who favor any one of the five non-negotiables.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER ON-LINE

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# Will Obama Tackle Marijuana Mess?

By Joshua Holland

Fully 80% of Americans approve of the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, and fewer than one in five favor locking up non-violent adults who use pot in general. But since the inception of the disastrous "War on Drugs," politicians from across the political spectrum have found that being a dedicated drug warrior is an easy way to appear "tough on crime" without much political risk.

The result of that divide is a truly schizoid patchwork of laws regulating the use of cannabis. Several states have decriminalized the possession of small amounts of weed – most recently Massachusetts this year – and 13 states have legalized medical marijuana.

Yet each and every year we continue to lock up three-quarters of a million Americans for possession of marijuana and waste an estimated \$14 billion on our misguided prohibition of a cash crop that's worth more than wheat and corn combined.

## OBAMA'S MIXED SIGNALS

The Obama Administration has sent markedly mixed signals about whether it would continue the most regressive element of the "Drug War" – George W. Bush's policy of going after medical marijuana providers in the states that have legalized the industry.

Bush turned federal law-enforcement into a de facto White House veto over state-level drug laws [and, often, over the will of the people – eight of the 13 states that permit the use of medical marijuana got there through a referendum process].

It's clichéd to describe the more labyrinthine corridors of our legal system as "Kafkaesque," but the way Bush did it would draw a knowing sigh from old Franz.

Officially, in states where they're legal, the federal government only goes after medical marijuana operations when they violate both federal and state law. Officially. But after the DEA raids these shops, their owners are prosecuted in federal courts, and they need only be charged under federal laws.

## STATE, LOCAL LAWS IRRELEVANT

And here's where it goes from bad policy to simple insanity: thanks to a 2005 Supreme Court decision in *Gonzalez v. Raich*, defendants are prohibited from entering evidence at trial that they were in compliance with local and state laws when they were busted.

Then, if convicted, these operators of businesses that are legal in their respective states face harsh mandatory drug sentences in the federal justice system – long minimums that Congress required in the 1980s ostensibly to deter "drug king-pins."

That's the situation Charles Lynch is looking at. Lynch is facing up to 20 years in prison after being convicted under federal law for running a medical marijuana clinic in Morro Bay, CA. Before DEA agents busted him, Lynch had been in busi-



ness for 11 months.

According to the Los Angeles Times, the clinic had "the blessing of the city's mayor and other public officials" – including the city's Chamber of Commerce. Morro Bay City Attorney Rob Schultz said that he had received only one complaint about Lynch's operation in that time – and that was from someone griping about the quality of the pot Lynch sold.

## LYNCH HELPED BONE CANCER VICTIM

The town's mayor, Janice Peters, described Lynch as "polite, compassionate," and at an April 23 sentencing hearing Steven Beck, the father of a 17-year-old suffering from bone cancer who, following the advice of his oncologist, had bought marijuana from Lynch's clinic to treat the side-effects of chemo-therapy, told the court that Lynch had often given the boy pot for free. After describing how the teen "could not eat. He could not sleep. His personality became dark and angry," Beck added, "I never felt as though Charlie was there for the money."

Federal prosecutors charge that Lynch violated California's medical marijuana law because he wasn't a primary care-giver, but Joe Elford, chief counsel for Americans for Safe Access, a medical marijuana advocacy group, said, "There is not even any evidence that state law was violated."

Elford added, "It's disingenuous to accuse people of state law violations and then prosecute them under federal law, thereby denying them an adequate defense in federal court."

## COMPLIANCE A 'MITIGATING FACTOR'

While medical pot operators can't use their compliance with state laws as a

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# Look Who's Begging For Regulation

By Jim Hightower

"Regulate the health insurance giants," chanted the reformers.

"Stop denying coverage to sick people," they demanded. "Stop jacking up premiums," they cried. "Health coverage for all," they bellowed.

It was an impressive show the health care reform movement put on at a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee. It was especially impressive because those doing the chanting, demanding, crying and bellowing were not aggrieved outsiders, but the ultimate insiders – the health insurance giants themselves!

When the dogs begin demanding leashes, you know something unusual is afoot.

## PUBLIC IS FED UP

Indeed, two things are afoot. First, the public is fed up with our country's insurance-dominated health care system, which cares first about corporate profits and only secondarily about the health needs of America's people. As a result, we pay more for health coverage than any other country, yet the quality of care we get ranks 37th in the world [below such countries as Malta, Morocco, Chile and Dominica].

Insurance companies maintain a massive money-sucking bureaucracy that exists essentially to say "no" to policy-holders who need approval for treatment and to say "hell no" to anyone who can't afford the ever-escalating price for those policies. In the richest country in the history of the world, 47 million Americans are uncovered, and many millions more have "coverage" so thin that it leaves their families out in the cold for most ailments. This is why 76% of the people said in a March poll by the Pew Research Center that our health care system either needs "fundamental changes" or needs to be "completely rebuilt."

## AMERICANS DEMANDING CHANGE

Which brings us to the second factor in play: political change. Americans have been angry about the insurance-run system for years, but neither party produced results. Bill Clinton botched reform in the early '90s, spooking Democrats so badly that, for years, they wouldn't even attempt major reforms. George W. Bush and congressional Republicans never met an insurance company they wouldn't hug, take money from and serve faithfully, so they've simply ignored the people.

Last year, though, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Dennis Ku-

cinich and other Democratic presidential contenders raised the reform flag high, ultimately carrying it into the White House. Today, redoing the health care system is on Washington's front burner, including plans for a public insurance option to extend coverage to middle-class working families. This public entity would provide a missing level of competition, lower costs and instill some honesty in companies that had been gleefully profiteering on the present system.

Like vampires, health insurance corporations shrink from sunlight, so they have rushed an army of lobbyists to Washington in a desperate attempt to stave off this public option. However, they recognize that they are widely despised across the land and that even some Republican members of Congress will no longer stand for the status quo [as one Democratic leader noted, "Status quo is Latin for 'The Mess We're In'"].

## WELCOMING NEW REGULATIONS

Thus, we're being treated to the delightfully dizzying sight of insurance executives begging Congress to harness them with new regulations. "We are comfortable with that," said the head of America's Health Insurance Plans [AHIP], the industry's chief lobbying group, which heretofore has ferociously opposed any and all protections for consumers.

Of course, AHIP members are wily masters at slipping out of regulatory harnesses – remember, these are the people who hire roving packs of lawyers trained to write and enforce incomprehensible insurance policies that boil down to this: "Thank you for paying us to do our damndest to stiff you."

In exchange for accepting such "regulation," AHIP wants Washington to require everyone in the country to buy health insurance from Aetna, Humana, United Health or its other members – with taxpayers covering the annual premiums of those who can't afford the policies. In other words, these private corporations would get a government-guaranteed market. What industry wouldn't be "comfortable" with that?

In the interest of America's health, insurance giants should never be made to feel comfortable. At the very least, real reform requires a public insurance option to assure competitive integrity – and to put some "care" back in health care.

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# *It's Time For An American Awakening*

## **Why Obama's Economic Plan Deserves Our Support**

*By Roger B. Rensvold*

The 41st chapter of Genesis tells the story of how Joseph, a Hebrew prisoner in Egypt, rose to power by interpreting the Egyptian pharaoh's dreams. The dreams foretold seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine.

Acting on this interpretation, the pharaoh taxed the people during the good years, and filled his warehouses with grain. The famine came as forecast, the grain was redistributed, and Egypt was saved.

This story can be interpreted as straight history, as a parable about the wisdom that God bestows upon his servants, or as lesson in management. While not disparaging the first two interpretations, I'd like to expound on the third.

The lesson is simple: During good times, save and pay down debt. During bad times, spend savings and take on debt. When good times come again, as they always do, save and pay down debt. Sound reasonable?

### **SIMPLE KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS**

When families follow that plan, it's called common sense. When governments follow it, it's called Keynesian economics, and a lot of people don't understand it. George W. Bush certainly didn't.

He came into office during years of plenty, when the government was running a surplus. Rather than save and pay down debt, he used the money to buy political capital for the Republican Party by distributing billions of dollars in tax refunds. By doing so, he made the present crisis worse.

Hard times always come. They can be triggered by high oil prices or a banking crisis or a housing bubble, but sometimes they just come. The underlying cause is the so-called business cycle, which in turn is caused by the immutable fact that supply and demand take turns in leading and lagging each other, like two dogs on a bungee cord.

### **REGULAR BUSINESS CYCLE**

Here's an example. Suppose I see a pent-up demand for new houses in my town. There's a shortage of sellers, an excess of would-be buyers, and prices are soaring. I become a builder, and start slapping up new houses as fast as I can. But other people are doing the same thing. Because I have imperfect knowledge about the market and the competition, and because I'm an optimist, and also because I'm not Joseph and can't see the future, I build too many houses. So does everyone else. Soon there's an excess of supply, and a shortage of demand – too many houses, too few buyers.

Prices fall. Builders go out of business. Recent buyers are dismayed to discover that their houses are no longer worth what they paid for them. Because the owners suddenly feel poor, they stop spending, and every business in town slumps. Money drains out of the economy.

Extend this example to thousands of businesses, all across the economy, and you've got yet another downturn in the business cycle. They've been happening for centuries.

### **SHORTENING THE DOWNTURN**

Let's continue with the example. Suppose the city government has a couple of large, expensive, labor-intensive projects on the drawing board. They're worthwhile, but the time for them has never been quite right – until now.

The city taps some savings, sells some bonds, and starts construction. People go back to work, money flows back into the economy, and the downturn is made shorter and less severe.

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## **Self-Interest Can Break Special Interest Vice-Grip**

*By Edwin E. Vineyard*

More than 50 years ago, H. L. Mencken wrote: "Nobody ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American people." Mencken also wrote: "No one in this world has ever lost money underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of plain people. Nor has anyone ever lost public office thereby."

While one might chafe a bit at the cynicism of Mencken's humorous truisms, it would be difficult to dispute their validity.

Perhaps one might say: "Never overestimate the intelligence of the American voter." Or conversely, "Never underestimate the ignorance or the gullibility of the American voter." Time and again we have observed this to be true.

The question before us: Will this prove again to be the case with President Obama's agenda of change?

### **VOTING AGAINST SELF-INTEREST**

This amateur pundit has written several times about the infinite capacity of the American voters, and Oklahoma voters in particular, to vote against their own best interest as citizens and consumers. Regularly, voters go to the polls and elect public officials who do not serve them or their peers, but openly take positions and sponsor measures detrimental to the welfare of the common citizen. This continues to be the case.

It must be difficult to understand that the working person's interests and those of the wealthy are not always congruent. It must be difficult to comprehend when politicians are serving their donors rather than the public. Even when faced with the ever-recurring facts, people fail to comprehend the power of lobbyists in comparison with the power of the voters.

The average voter, who normally is a worker, will vote for candidates who offer "workers' comp reform" as a subterfuge to undermine his own rights in favor of his employer. The average citizen-consumer may have his suspicions of lawyers nurtured and expanded to the extent that he will vote for people who will fix the laws to deny him his day in court when wronged by businesses, medical providers, or insurance companies.

### **EXAMPLE: HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Does anyone remember Harry and Louise? These were the conversational TV ads sponsored by the health insurance companies that scuttled President Bill Clinton's universal health insurance initiative. The gullibility of the American voters to such attack advertising sponsored by those with monetary interests adverse to the public interest is alarming.

Since Obama is seriously pushing the health coverage part of his agenda, there are already advertisements of the same nature as Harry and Louise appearing on television. Sponsored by the insurance companies, these ads attempt to frighten the public with the notion that a "government bureaucrat" will be interfering with the decisions of the patient and the doctor.

Actually, it is now the private HMO or health insurance company bureaucrat who is interfering most with the doctor and the patient's treatment decisions. Who has not seen those horror stories or even experienced such frustrations personally?

### **ALARMING THE PUBLIC**

There is another quote from H. L. Mencken which says: "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed [and hence clamorous to be led to safety] by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them

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defense, it can be brought up at sentencing as a mitigating factor.

On April 23, District Court Judge George Wu, a Bush-appointee, said that he was inclined to impose a sentence less harsh than the mandatory minimum, but it wasn't clear that the law would allow him to do so [there is a so-called "safety-valve" in the mandatory sentencing scheme that allows judges leeway in certain circumstances, but Wu was unsure whether Lynch's case qualified].

"If I could find a way out, I would," Wu said. He gave lawyers until June 2 to file briefs on the matter.

Lynch's case is seen as a test of whether the Obama Administration will reverse the Bush Justice Department's policy towards medical marijuana, and so far the signals have been decidedly mixed.

### **A SHIFT IN ENFORCEMENT**

In March, the New York Times reported that Attorney General Eric Holder had "outlined a shift in the enforcement of federal drug laws, saying the administration would effectively end the Bush Administration's frequent raids on distributors of medical marijuana."

Holder said the "Justice Department's enforcement policy would now be restricted to traffickers who falsely masqueraded as medical dispensaries and 'use medical marijuana laws as a shield.'"

A week later, a San Francisco dispensary was raided by the DEA. In early March, the Los Angeles Times reported, "the U.S. attorney in Los Angeles sent a confidential memo to prosecutors last week ordering them to stop filing charges against

medical marijuana dispensaries, then abruptly lifted the ban."

The conflicting signals prompted Judge Wu to ask for guidance from the Justice Department before proceeding with Charles Lynch's case. The DOJ responded with a memo saying, "the Office of the Deputy Attorney General has reviewed the facts of this case and determined that the investigation, prosecution, and conviction of defendant are entirely consistent with the policies of DOJ and with public statements made by the Attorney General with respect to marijuana prosecutions." But, again, Charles Lynch wasn't charged with violating California law.

### **CONTRADICTIONS ABOUND**

If this seems a mess of contradictory statements and actions, that's because it is. Yet marijuana reform advocates caution that it's premature to judge the young administration's policies.

Carey Woodson of Americans for Safe Access told the Drug War Chronicle, "I think it's confusion – it's important to remember that we aren't even close to having the appropriate Obama officials seated at this point." [This was before the San Francisco raid].

But in a country that imprisons hundreds of thousands of people each year for simple possession – for a "crime" that four out of 10 adults have committed – it bears close scrutiny.

So far, we haven't seen the change that we were promised.

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# Casual Use Weakens Power Of Word 'Rape'

By Mikki Halpin

In a video on the New York Times web site, the young actor Taylor Kitsch of Friday Night Lights describes bombing an audition as "being raped."

"Raped in pilot season!" he says ruefully, almost nostalgically, while shaking his head and smiling at the camera. "It was so bad."

Clearly this was not a fun experience for Kitsch, and you feel for him. Doing badly on an audition sucks. But it does not suck as much as sexual assault, something that happens every two minutes in America.

My dictionary defines rape as "The unlawful compelling of a woman through physical force or duress to have sexual intercourse," is experiencing a dangerous shift in meaning.\*

## USED TO DESCRIBE ROUTINE EXPERIENCES

Increasingly, rape is used to describe experiences such as a sports loss, a poor score on a video game, or being on the losing end of a business deal.

Again, these are all unpleasant experiences, but none rise to the level of what rape truly means. Not since Alanis Morissette's Isn't It Ironic ruled the airwaves has a word been so drained of its original value and power.

"Rape is something specific," says Michelle J. Anderson, dean of the CUNY School of Law and a former member of the board of directors and policy chairwoman for the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence. "It is a deeply personal experience of humiliation and degradation. Using the term 'rape' for these experiences not only wildly mis-describes them but also removes personal violence from our understanding of rape."

## DESENSITIZING PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS

The meaning of the word must maintain its integrity, Anderson argues, in order to preserve our appropriately horrified response to sexual assault. The casual use of terms like "rent rape" desensitizes us to a subject that women's rights and victims-advocates groups have fought for years to bring into the public consciousness.

"The more we dilute this word, the more we play down the power of sexual violence," says Angela Rose, founder and executive director of Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment, a group devoted to education and action surrounding rape. "It actually adds to the silence surrounding this issue because it diverts attention."

Rose worries about what she calls "the bystander effect" – as rape is used casually, and actual rapes begin to seem less serious, the less the citizenry will realize they have a stake in ending sexual assault. Women are already told to yell "fire" instead of "rape" when they are being attacked because of a lack of community interest in violence against women – this can only add to the problem.

## FURTHER DEMORALIZING VICTIMS

Ironically, it may be the attention-grabbing power of rape that lends itself to its new use as a descriptor of everyday events.

"People use the word 'rape' to hype an experience, such as Jon Stewart's political critique of Jim Cramer's financial predictions," says Anderson. "The hype may grab attention, but it belittles rape."

This demoralizes victims, whose traumatic experience is now ranked along with a poor performance review or a hefty cell phone bill.

Rose agrees, saying, "The more we dilute this word, the more it will alienate and isolate the victims of sex crimes, who are often already additionally traumatized by sexualized reporting of rape in the media and a blame-the-victim attitude on the part of some members of law enforcement."

## SEXUAL ASSAULTS ON DECLINE

We in America are lucky: Sex-based crimes are declining in number. According to the FBI, the estimated number of forcible-rape offenses in this country dropped

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Extend this example to the federal government, and you've got a Keynesian intervention.

Of course, when the cycle turns upward again, the debt will have to be paid off. It would also be a good idea for the government to save some money, in anticipation of the next downturn. That means that taxes will have to go up, and stay up, until the treasury is flush. And that's the hard part.

## FIXING THE PROBLEM

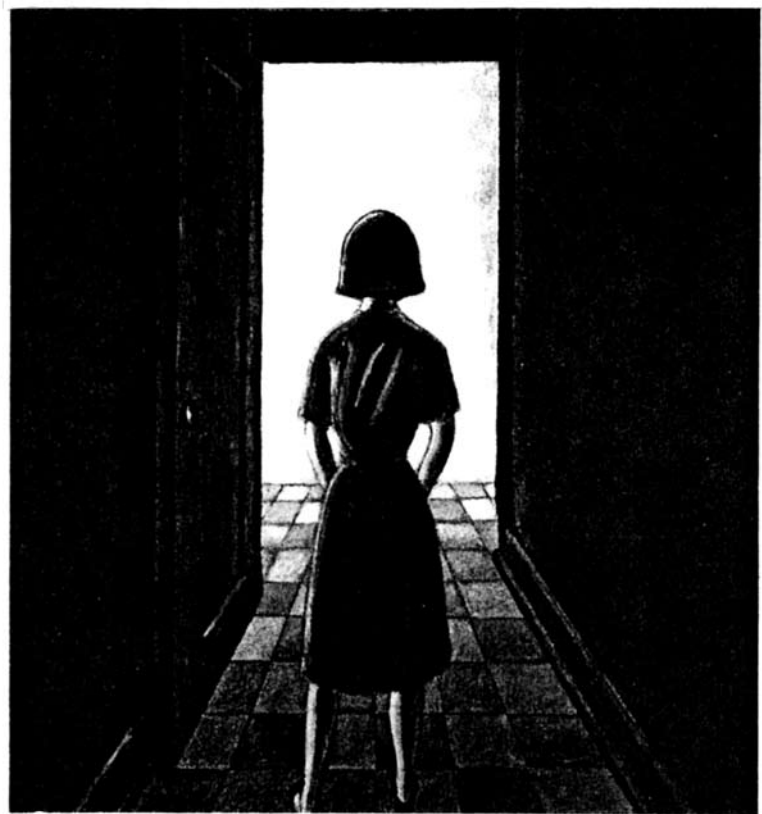
Pharaoh didn't have any trouble raising taxes: during the fat years, the Egyptians gave him 20% of their harvest, with no deductions. Democratically elected officials have a bit more trouble.

They have even more trouble in Oklahoma, whose voters not only have a visceral aversion to taxes, but also have hobbled the Legislature with the requirement that all tax increases be put to a vote of the people.

So the challenge facing Americans is to comprehend the nature of the problem, understand how to fix it, and then find the will to pay for the fix. Ben Bernanke isn't Joseph, and Barack Obama, thank God, isn't Pharaoh – although there may be some superficial physical similarities.

But, by the grace of God, they seem to be on the right track to restore this country to greatness. They need and deserve our support.

– The author lives in Oklahoma City



2.5% last year, part of a multiyear downward trend. Sexual assault is down nearly 80%.

But let's not pat ourselves on the back just yet. At the same time that we are merrily introducing rape to casual conversation, rape is being used in increasingly horrific ways worldwide.

In the Balkans, rape was an official war strategy and "rape camps" were set up as part of a program of ethnic cleansing. In the Congo, rapes are so brutal that many victims require surgery afterwards – their organs have been literally torn apart. In Rwanda, women who have contracted HIV as a result of being raped during that country's genocide are still seeking justice. And along the border between Mexico and the United States, so-called rape trees, trees hung with bras and women's clothing, mark where members of drug cartels and other criminals have preyed on female border crossers.

## 'IT WAS JUST A JOKE'

The common response to objections regarding this new use of the word rape is to claim, "It was just a joke." The specters of humorless "feminazis" and the PC police are raised. The damn joke about feminists and the lightbulb hovers unsaid. One is expected to back off, earnest and uncool.

Sexist language is not benign. A recent study at Western Carolina University found that such phrasings allow men to become comfortable with prejudice and express it without fear of negative consequences. [The research project only studied male responses to sexist language.]

Thomas E. Ford, the professor of psychology at WCU who led the study, said, "The acceptance of sexist humor leads men to believe that sexist behavior falls within the bounds of social acceptability." A joke is not just a joke.

## IT SHOULD MEAN ONLY ONE THING

And rape means rape. When someone says, "I was raped," there should not be multiple competing interpretations to the statement.

Once more: "The unlawful compelling of a woman through physical force or duress to have sexual intercourse."

This is not a word that should be diluted, diverted or disambiguated. It is a specific word to describe a specific, horrific act. Let's keep it that way, while working to reduce the need to use it at all.

\*Men are victims of rape as well, of course. That is the second definition in my dictionary.

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imaginary."

Such were the tactics used by the past Republican administration after 9/11 to justify pre-emptive foreign wars, to keep the American people placid while their civil rights were compromised, and to justify torture of captives against the law of the signed Geneva Conventions.

Now we see over and over the specter of socialism raised to frighten people about Obama's efforts to save the economy, change a tax system which favors the rich, and bring needed health insurance coverage to the millions of uninsured. The monetary supporters of the Republicans are escalating their efforts to picture Obama to the voter as a big spending profligate, ruining the country by taxing the rich and the corporations who move their jobs and their bank accounts out of the country.

In this state and all over the country, the public needs to wise up to what is transpiring in the political arena. Average voters must look out for their own interests. Those with money to donate to campaigns and put lobbyists in Capitol halls are unlikely to be trying to benefit the common person.

The political game has been one of symbiosis of moneyed special interests and politicians. The game needs to change.

– The author, AKA The Militant Moderate, lives in Enid. His commentary also appears regularly on-line at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net).

## U.S. Ranks 40th

# 536,000 Women Die In Childbirth

By Allison Stevens

On the day that President Obama unveiled his budget for the upcoming fiscal year, a bipartisan group of lawmakers and advocates gathered to press Congress to do more to prevent an everyday event that causes millions of needless deaths: childbirth.

When mothers survive childbirth, they give birth to healthy families, healthy communities and healthy nations. In the world's poorest regions, a woman's lifetime chance of dying in pregnancy is 1 in 7.

Worldwide, 536,000 women die from complications in pregnancy or childbirth, which averages about one woman every minute of every day, according to a 2005 estimate by the Geneva-based World Health Organization.

Theresa Shaver, president and executive director of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, a global organization based in Washington, DC, chaired a conference to kick off the campaign.

### BABY'S PROSPECTS DIM

When a mother dies in childbirth, her baby is less likely to survive infancy, and her other children are more likely to drop out of school, lose access to health care and even die, according to the alliance.

If she survives, she is more likely to raise healthy, educated children, which in turn helps stabilize her country's economy. The recent event launched a campaign called Mothers Day Every Day to spur U.S. lawmakers to put more money in foreign aid to reduce maternal mortality.

### THEY SET GOALS

Specifically, they hope the United States will be a greater force in a global initiative to reduce maternal mortality by 75% and to provide women around the world with universal access to reproductive health services by 2015.

Obama's fiscal 2010 budget included a \$634 billion plan to overhaul the nation's health care system and \$10 million in family planning funding for the United States over the next two years.

The House approved a budget for the remainder of the current fiscal year that included \$545 million for family planning and reproductive health programs for fiscal 2009.

### FUNDS ARE RESTORED

It included \$50 million to restore funding to the United Nations Population Fund, which operates family planning and maternal health programs in over 150 countries around the world. Former President George W. Bush had scrapped the aid.

While progress has been made on health issues like treating and preventing HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality rates have remained stubbornly high. Between 1990 and 2005, the global maternal mortality rate dropped less than 1%.

In the United States, about one in 4,800 women die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-



vention in Atlanta.

### AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN HIT HARDEST

Death rates are especially high for African-American women, who are almost four times as likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth complications as their white peers.

These statistics put the United States behind 40 other countries – including Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Czech Republic – in the global maternal mortality ranking. The United States tied with the eastern European country of Belarus in the latest ranking.

### LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH

The vast majority of these deaths occur in developing countries, where pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for young women.

Providing pregnant women with universal access to skilled health care providers during and after childbirth could reduce the global maternal mortality rate by 80%, according to the World Health Organization. Giving women more access to drugs can help prevent post-partum hemorrhage and pre-eclampsia, Shaver said.

Obama repealed the so-called global gag rule, the policy that barred overseas organizations that receive money from the U.S. government from performing abortions, providing abortion counseling or lobbying their governments for fewer restrictions on abortion.

– The author is Washington bureau chief for Women's eNews

## Senate Stiffs The People, Cheers Wall Street

By Jim Hightower

Sam Rayburn, a longtime speaker of the U.S. House, once said, "Every now and then, a politician ought to do something just because it's right."

Recently, 45 U.S. senators dodged an excellent chance to do just what Mr. Sam advised. At issue was a straightforward, common-sense amendment proposed by Dick Durbin, D-IL. It would have allowed bankruptcy judges to help hundreds of thousands of financially strapped homeowners who now find themselves trapped by exploding, exorbitant interest rates that bankers had attached to their loans.

Here was a conspicuous opportunity for even the most ethically blind of our Congress-critters to take a principled stand, for Durbin's bill practically had a flashing red-and-yellow neon arrow attached to it, declaring, "Vote Here for the People Against Greedy Bankers."

### IT WOULD HAVE HELPED BANKS, TOO

Actually, even GBs would've benefited, for the bankruptcy provision would have allowed families to stay in their homes and keep making monthly payments to banks [albeit in reduced amounts]. Also, banks could still make a profit [though not a killing], and there would be far fewer vacant homes going on the market, thus giving a badly needed break to America's depressed housing market.

What a sensible idea! So, naturally, the Senate stomped it to death.

The members were prodded to do so by Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase, and other upstanding members of the hyper-aggressive GB lobby. These are, of course, the same banksters who for years speculated rapaciously on people's homes, created a housing bubble that has since burst and shattered our economy, reduced their own financial fiefdoms to insolvency, then rushed to Washington to unscrew the Capitol dome and help themselves to a taxpayer bailout that is nearing \$3 trillion.

### NO BREAKS FOR BANKRUPT FAMILIES

Yet, the very idea of allowing bankrupt families to get a small break in bankruptcy courts has caused Wall Street elites to squawk like a banty rooster choking on a peach pit.

They dispatched hundreds of well-connected lobbyists to Congress, to the White House and to key government agencies to nix Durbin's amendment [which,

ironically, would've been attached to a bill that awards even more billions of taxpayer dollars to the banks].

Among the influence peddlers hired by bailout recipients were more than 100 former lawmakers, top congressional staffers, White House aides and agency officials. Goldman Sachs alone has more than 30 ex-government officials in its lobbying army, including former House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt and the former top staffer to house banking chairman Barney Frank.

The first and chief target of this furious lobbying blitz was a guy who had long backed the homeowners protection plan, promising again and again last year that he would lead the fight to pass it: Barack Obama. The banker lobbyists were aided in this effort to back off Obama by two White House insiders who have shown themselves to be shameless Wall Street softies – Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and top economic advisor Larry Summers. Timid Timothy reportedly argued that even a small, tightly targeted bankruptcy provision for common folks would create "uncertainty" for big investors in Wall Street banks.

### TEAM OBAMA DUCKED

Never mind that millions of homeowners are facing crushing uncertainty over their mortgages, Obama and team promptly disappeared from the legislative fight, abandoning Durbin.

This let Wall Street's hired guns go after pusillanimous, bank-financed Democrats. Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana, for example, was a swing vote, counted on by Durbin. But with no pressure from Obama, Bayh was free to sidestep principle and vote his own political pocketbook. Up for re-election next year, Bayh's top campaign donor is Goldman Sachs.

Needing 60 votes for passage, Durbin got 45. In all, a dozen Democrats gave Wall Street a big wet kiss by voting against Durbin's amendment, which also was a vote against America's hard-pressed homeowners – and against Mr. Sam's sage admonition.

"The banks are still the most powerful lobby on Capitol Hill," sighed Sen. Durbin afterward. He added this sobering note: "They frankly own the place."

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# Education Blame Game Never Stops

By Sharon Scranage

I teach at one of the poorest school districts in Southern California, with a predominately English Language Learner student base.

With the help of classroom strategies used expressly for students from poor families, students were able to surpass expectations on their standardized tests, performing at grade level or above in both language arts and math. More important, they learned not to underestimate themselves.

The No Child Left Behind Act has received criticism from educators and policy pundits, primarily because of unrealistic goals that often stigmatize schools and the teachers connected with them as “underachievers.”

In the quest for accountability, unattainable benchmarks of quantitative success have replaced the more reasonable and humane goals of qualitative growth and improvement.

## PUNISHED FOR THEIR EFFORTS

Despite tremendous student progress in many schools, the inability to meet API standards often leaves teachers and staff frustrated, humiliated and punished for their efforts.

The humiliation stems from the assumption that teachers are the sole reason behind underachieving schools; the punishment comes in the form of increased “policing” through top-down programs dispersed by the state and the school districts.

Adding insult to injury, the teachers are asked to be part of the planning process for upcoming years after “falling to make the grade.”

## TEACHERS CARRY FULL LOAD OF BLAME

Again, the onus of responsibility for student success seems to rest entirely on the teachers. In taking this approach, the school districts have a built-in escape clause should the teachers’ “future plans” fail, which they inevitably will, once again making the teachers the cause for failure and the ultimate scapegoats in the blame game.

There are schools that meet their goals and do not experience this phenomenon. However, in low-income schools where there is a constant influx of newcomers and second-language learners, this scenario continues to repeat itself. Superior achievement is determined solely through “data” goals, which fail to take into account true student learning and achievement.

This approach makes it impossible to properly support the essential curriculum and innovative classroom strategies that teachers and their students re-



quire for successful learning.

## TESTS ARE NOT THE ONLY INDICATOR

Imagination and ingenuity will not raise test scores; therefore, schools are often unable to support the equally valid goals of talented students who do not test at a certain level.

Developing the hidden and even obvious gifts of a student body is often overlooked in lieu of promoting tested skills.

This philosophy has permeated most public schools, but the tragedy for children in impoverished areas is a lack of access to extracurricular activities and experiences that would contribute to their academic achievement and talent development.

Without these opportunities, many children will leave school without any of the tools they need to build upon their innate talents and abilities.

Until a school and its teachers are allowed to set goals above merely quantitative “data” measurements, we will be destined to continue the cycle that No Child Left Behind has promoted.

Until then, even with its impending threats, our educational system will remain mediocre and it will continue to blame other parties for its lackluster results.

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# Search For Justice Down To Bare Essentials

By Danny M. Adkison

Had you been in the U.S. Supreme Court chamber recently, you might have left red-faced. After a discussion of girls’ underwear and an admission that resulted in the public in attendance laughing at him, Justice Breyer did. But first, this just in.

It appears Justice Souter has had enough of Washington, DC. Souter will leave the Supreme Court at the end of its current term [June], but not because he doesn’t love his job. He does. He just can’t stand Washington, which I once heard described as a city with Northern charm and Southern efficiency.

What difference will Souter’s departure make in the court? Probably none. Souter typically votes with the liberal block.

## APPOINTEES CAN BE UNPREDICTABLE

If history is any guide, President Obama will seek to replace him with a justice who would bring the same ideological temperament to the court. If so, Souter’s vote will go unchanged. But you never know. After all, keep in mind that President Bush 41 appointed Souter.

The best example of how unpredictable an appointment to the court can be is President Eisenhower’s selection of Earl Warren.

Now, back to the recent actions of the court.

Here is how the New York Times introduced the case referred to above: “The United States Supreme Court spent an hour on Tuesday debating what middle school students are apt to put in their underwear and what should be done about it.”

## TEENAGER STRIP SEARCHED

This case began with a 13-year-old eighth grade girl living in Safford, AZ [let’s call her Sue]. When one of Sue’s classmates told the school she had prescription strength ibuprofen pills in her possession, they decided to search her. In essence, they strip-searched her [down to her underwear].

But that’s not all. They made her “shimmy” so as to shake her bra, and pull on the sides of her underwear [since she couldn’t shake hard enough to reveal what they might conceal]. The school officials witnessing this were both male and female. By the way, no pills were found.

How did the justices react to this? Did they react the same way the lawyer defending Sue did – there is a certain ick factor to this – or would they see this as SOP for public schools? Was there any precedent for the court to view this as acceptable behavior on the part of school officials?

## ASPIRIN A SERIOUS THREAT?

Since Justice Souter is in the news, let’s start with him. The New York Times quoted him during the debate as stating, “At some point it gets silly – having an

aspirin tablet does not present a health and safety risk.”

Justice Scalia, on the other hand, said once you had searched her locker, backpack, and what have you, “By God, the drugs must be in her underpants.” He said that in response to the individual in court representing the Obama Administration, a lawyer from the Solicitor General’s office, who had argued the school’s search of Sue was unconstitutional.

It was Justice Breyer who caused the chamber to erupt in laughter. Here is what he reportedly said: “In my experience when I was 8 or 12 years old – we did take our clothes off once a day – and in my experience, too, people did sometimes stick things in my underwear.”

Not only was there a roar of laughter, but also apparently the justice took offense.

Justice Breyer may have caused his own embarrassment because of Justice Scalia. That’s because Justice Scalia has, in previous cases dealing with suspicion-less searches of students, said almost exactly the same thing. He has, in leading the court to uphold suspicion-less searches of students, argued that such searches shouldn’t embarrass the students because they routinely undress in front of each other.

## ONE CASE FROM OKLAHOMA

One such case originated in Oklahoma and upheld requiring students who participated in school activities like the Chess Club or choir to be forced to urinate in front of school authorities even though there was absolutely no evidence that they might be using drugs.

If the court will uphold that kind of search without any suspicion concerning the student, this makes it fairly easy to predict how they will rule in Sue’s case.

In fact, let’s end with another comment made by Justice Souter during oral argument in Sue’s case. In spite of the fact that Justice Souter is considered a liberal and conservatives will, no doubt, criticize President Obama’s praise of his record, Souter is a good example of how ideological labels can mask the subtle nuances of a justice’s thinking.

Souter noted, “I would rather have the kid embarrassed by a strip search, if we can’t find anything short of that, than to have some other kids dead because the stuff is distributed at lunchtime and things go awry.”

If this is the voice of a liberal, it is easy to understand why conservatives seem so extreme in their thinking. It is enough to make a Republican want to change political parties.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University. His essays also appear occasionally on-line at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net).

# Make Preparations For Senior Travel

Vacations for some families include traveling with grandparents. When traveling with older adults, senior health experts urge families to do some extra planning.

"I think it's important for seniors to plan and prepare for travel," said Dr. Bob Salinas of OU Physicians Family Medicine.

He added the first step is to check with the person's physician and other health care providers to get their recommendations for safe travel. Most concerns can be properly addressed with a little help from the family physician.

Specifically ask if there are any contraindications for certain medications the person is taking, especially if flying or if there will be sun exposure, or if any types of travel or activities are restricted.

## REMEMBER THE MEDICATIONS

Check to see if certain immunizations or prescriptions for motion or altitude sickness might be needed.

"For example, if they are going to be traveling for a few weeks away from home, I think it's important for them to take all of their medications as well as a list of medications and medical conditions they may have," he said.

Dr. Salinas suggested that families consider completing a pre-travel checklist. He said for seniors that list would include such items as:

- Making sure they have all of the medications they take in adequate supply and carry them onboard with you if flying.
- Bringing along a list of those medications, with dosages, and the number for the pharmacy where they were filled just in case the medications are lost.
- Taking a list of the person's medical conditions and health history, including allergies.
- Taking reading glasses, hearing aides and any special supplies the person uses.
- Bringing along their physician's phone number and instructions on how to reach him or her should there be a true medical emergency away from home.

## REMEMBER AIRPORT SECURITY

Angela Bradway, RN, the director of nursing at Grace Living Centers in El Reno, adds that it's best to keep the medications in the original bottles when going through airport security; then put them into a medication planner case after arriving at your destination.

She adds that copies of documents regarding medical care such as an Advanced Directive, Power of Attorney and DNR orders should be brought, too, in case the person requires treatment while traveling.

Taking along a wheelchair, a cane or a walker to use while sightseeing may be



helpful to the elderly or health-challenged person.

Also bring a hat and sunscreen, and clothing for both warm days and cool indoors or nights as the person may be more sensitive to temperature changes.

"Remember to keep the person well hydrated with water, not with drinks that are sugary or high in sodium," says Bradway. "The same goes for snacks – keep them healthy like soft pretzels or trail mix."

## REMEMBER TO PLAN REST STOPS

Bradway says to pace the trip and activities so no one gets overheated or too tired. In addition, she suggests planning out rest stops on the trip route so regular breaks are taken for stretching and bathroom stops.

"It's important to move around when traveling so a blood clot doesn't form from sitting too long," said Bradway. "Wearing elastic circulation stockings can also help with this."

Just like the rest of us, an older adult can become bored if traveling a long distance without anything to do. So she suggests it is important to bring along DVDs or audio books, which can be rented from the library, to keep everyone entertained while in transit.

By taking a few steps to better prepare and by keeping everyone's needs in mind, you can have a comfortable vacation and set the stage for wonderful family memories.

For more information on this subject go to the Senior Center at [www.ouphysicians.com](http://www.ouphysicians.com). You may also contact your local American Association of Retired Persons [AARP] or you may go to the American Automobile Association.

# GLEN CANYON

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a foolish, unthinkable act. The Sierra Club weighed in with a classic book titled *The Place No One Knew*, designed to lament the destruction of Glen Canyon and to advocate its restoration by dismantling the dam.

## POTENTIAL NEVER REALIZED

Glen Canyon Dam has never lived up to its potential as originally intended. Lake Powell is slowly but surely drying up. Due to a number of circumstances, some unexpected and some perhaps known by the builders but dismissed as minor, it is becoming a stagnant reservoir.

Due to a high evaporation rate, a decade long drought, and various states taking more water from the Colorado River than it can provide, the reservoir is dropping at an alarming rate. In fact 1999 was the last year the reservoir was at capacity. It is now less than half of capacity and the predictions are it will never return to the glory year of 1999.

# DISABILITY

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time. Certain family members can also receive benefits based on a worker's contributions.

## SSI IS INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM

SSI is an income support program with payments based on financial need. Children may be eligible for SSI if they are unable to do age-appropriate activities and their families have limited income and resources.

For adults, disability payments under the Social Security system are based on inability to work. Individuals are considered "disabled" if they are unable to do any kind of work for which they are suited and their disabilities are expected to last for at least a year or to result in death.

During the medical review process, Disability Determination examiners and consulting physicians or psychologists review applicants' medical and vocational information and work records to decide whether or not applicants qualify as disabled or blind according to federal guidelines.

The team evaluates applications for children based on medical evidence and their ability to perform age-appropriate activities.

Oklahomans may apply for disability benefits by phone, by mail, over the Internet or by visiting a Social Security office. To locate the nearest office, see the blue government pages of the telephone book or visit the Social Security website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). Social Security's toll free number is 1.800.772.1213.

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All of these issues and more are covered in this book.

The lowering of the lake has provided a rare look, 40-plus years in the making, of Glen Canyon, a canyon many say is as awesome in its own way as the Grand Canyon. A number of the images are so very interesting because they compare an area when it was flooded and the way it appears now.

They also document the famous "bath tub" ring left by the high water mark and the many instances where the elements have combined to slowly but surely restore the canyons to their former state and erase or reduce the stain.

Photos of the former Hite Marina are a real eye-opener and provide an almost unreal documentation of the slowly receding reservoir.

## WORLD'S MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY

Many experts in the U.S. claim that given the critical water shortage worldwide the next world war will be fought over water, not ideology or territory.

The people living in the American Southwest have a very high stake in U.S. water policy and would be well advised to read this book and ponder the results of what clearly was a misguided decision in the early 1960s.

Is the proposal to dismantle the Glen Canyon Dam another misguided idea or do the proponents of such an action have a proposal worth considering?

You be the judge. Regardless of your political or ideological leanings this is an important book worthy of your time. The photos alone are worth the price. Throw in the first-rate text, a helpful selected reading list, a bonus hiking guide, and an index all at a reasonable price and you have a bargain book on an extremely important subject.

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

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