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## A Billion-Plus Budget Hole Send In The Clowns

By Frosty Troy

It is ironic that the three people most responsible for a billion dollar-plus shortfall in this year's state budget are the people who reached agreement on how to handle the monstrosity.

Gov. Brad Henry, House Speaker Chris Benge and Senate President Pro Tempore Glenn Coffee said they will use a combination of targeted cuts and reserve funds to balance the Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

If you think this year is a disaster, wait until next fiscal year when the shortfall is conservatively estimated at \$1.6 billion.

These are the same so-called leaders who pumped out \$771 million in tax cuts, mostly for the affluent, at a time when the state had a stack of unpaid bills.

There are more than three clowns in this legislative circus. Always looming above them is the State Chamber where greed trumps kids and the mentally ill.

They stand by tax incentives that have produced no jobs – an estimated \$2 billion out of \$5.5 billion on the books.

In an effort to protect some priority areas, a handful of agencies in education, health and public safety will receive additional appropriations to supplement their budgets this year and reduce their share of the overall reduction.

The fiscal blood is running ankle deep in state government but some Republicans smugly say it's a perfect chance to do what rightwingers have always wanted to do – gut government.

Because the level of cuts is not



sufficient to fill the \$1 billion shortfall, state leaders also agreed to use reserve dollars from the Rainy Day Fund and the state stimulus account to help balance the budget.

The only passing grade the governor deserves is that he proposed a constitutional amendment four years ago to raise the Rainy Day Fund from 10% of collections to 15%.

The GOP-controlled Legislature thumbed its nose at him. He's asking again this session.

The popular governor attempted to put a kind face on the budget hole. If baloney were snow, he'd be in a blizzard.

His remarks: "By accessing reserve funds set aside for times of emergency, we are doing our best to protect priority areas such as education that are so critical to the state's economic recovery.

"Even with the use of those resources, however, we will still have to implement significant reductions to state programs, and unfortunately, Oklahomans will feel the pain of those cuts.

"Given the magnitude of the crisis we face, there really were no good options available to us."

Hardly! The spendthrifts played Santa Claus session after session after the GOP took the House and later the Senate. Henry went along with the inevitable disaster with seldom a murmur of opposition.

Legislative leaders also commented

on the agreement but failed to praise President Obama for his stimulus package. Without it, Oklahoma would have had to close up shop.

"Just as every family in the state of Oklahoma is making hard financial decisions around their kitchen tables, so too is the State of Oklahoma facing the tough choices in this difficult national economy," Coffee said.

Then he hires a high-priced "policy analyst" whose bloated salary would feed hundreds of elderly at closed nutrition centers.

He was practically breaking his arm to pat himself on the back – while keeping one eye on the Ethics Commission where he is being investigated.

Republican House Speaker Chris Benge put spin on the black hole.

"This agreement maintains more than half of our state's total reserve dollars for fiscal year 2011 and beyond and also puts in place significant and strategic cuts that will reduce the size of government to better match state collections," Benge said.

He failed to mention that he's sitting on a \$6 million-plus slush fund that would go a long way toward feeding hungry seniors at closed nutrition centers.

How is that for painting a false face on a leadership dummy?

"It remains unclear when state revenues will rebound, which will continue to influence our decisions as we try to pinpoint an ever-moving target, and budget accordingly," Benge said.

It is more than "unclear." Estimates are at minimum a \$1.6 billion hole next year thanks to the poor stewardship of the Turgid Trio.

When revenues failed to meet estimates last summer, state leaders first agreed to reduce monthly allocations by 5%, but ultimately decided to raise the monthly cut to 10% in December when collections showed no improvement.

The latest agreement calls for the 10% cuts to continue for the remainder of the fiscal year, resulting in an overall reduction of 7.5% for the 12-month period.

Drug treatment programs are gone.  
See CLOWNS Page 19

# Observations

## Justice Denied

We consider Republican Bob Anthony the finest Corporation Commissioner we've covered. That doesn't mean we agree with him on every issue but we always acknowledge that his is a principled stand.

One of the travesties he had to endure was a brief period when corruption reigned supreme.

The case he wants to reopen happened 24 years ago – a case involving AT&T – which was corrupted by then Commissioner Bob Hopkins.

Hopkins took a bribe in the case where AT&T was required to spend \$30 million to upgrade the Oklahoma service and network.

Anthony was the only yes vote, but whistle blowing by Anthony resulted in prison for Hopkins who had conspired with a telephone company attorney, Bill Anderson, who was also convicted.

Yet, the case was never reversed, although Anthony tried repeatedly to get a new hearing.

Third member on the Corporation Commission at the time was J.C. Watts. Anderson testified that he had also given Watts money but Watts said it was just "walking around money."

As it turned out Watts had a fan who was acting U.S. attorney and he declined to take the Watts case to the grand jury. Anderson was the fall guy.

As for the telephone company employees involved – none were prosecuted and they were subsequently transferred out of state.

AT&T mouthpiece Andy Morgan says the case was reviewed three times and is closed. Yes, thanks to the powers that be. Anthony is betting on a three-Republican Corporation Commission.

The fact that it remains a burr under Anthony's saddle speaks to his resolute pursuit of the case in which justice is yet to be done.

And by the way, Bill Anderson, who delivered the various bribes, told the Observer on his deathbed, "Funny

isn't it. I go to prison and J.C. goes to Congress."

## Classless Coburn

Where was Sen. Tom Coburn when the Bush Administration cut benefits to veterans in a number of areas?

In addition to excluding some vets from VA care, the conservative-led Congress in 2006 cut funding for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, which plays a critical role in treating mental health issues that result from brain injuries.

The Bush VA also tried to cover-up the fact that 1,000 vets were attempting suicide every month, and it urged doctors to fudge diagnoses so fewer vets would qualify for PTSD treatment.

More recently, Coburn, R-OK, put a hold on a major veterans health benefit bill to make a political point about the economic recovery plan, drawing heat from at least 13 major military and veterans groups.

President Obama pledged to vets that "America will not let you down" and indeed, he and the new VA chief have taken dramatic steps to restore the "sacred trust."

On health care, the Obama Administration has made strides to once again make all vets eligible for VA care, while providing a "permanent fix" to the unpredictability of the VA's health care budget.

On mental health, Obama and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki have made PTSD a top priority – with programs to provide more treatment and fight the stigma surrounding mental health issues – and launched a major push to tackle homelessness.

To help veterans return to civilian life, Obama announced a major new employment program that will help them secure jobs in federal agencies.

He also signed into law a new GI bill in June that provides the most comprehensive educational benefit pack-



age since the first GI bill passed in 1944.

As for Coburn, he has not lifted a finger to help the vets. He's been too busy being the biggest showoff that Washington has seen since Mickey Mouse visited the Capitol.

He's also a liar, claiming he has only voted for one supplemental appropriation since he was elected. In fact, MSNBC provided proof that his statement was false.

## Never

Former U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook and his wife Judy continue to suffer the sins of their son Chad, facing six charges in Cleveland County for six different crimes.

They share the fate of the late Kirksey Nix, powerhouse attorney and chief of the Court of Criminal Appeals.

Nix and his first wife had a son, Kirksey Nix Jr., who once headed the Dixie Mafia, and was eventually sentenced to life in prison.

Nix and his wife split when their son was an infant and he was raised by his mother.

Yet every time Kirksey Nix Jr. committed another crime, he was blazoned in the media as "the son of Kirksey Nix."

At what point does a parent stop being headline fodder for an errant offspring? The answer is never.

## Lukewarm

Those familiar with the Head Start program know that it often winds up being a baby-sitting operation when, in fact, those young brains should be exploding with information.

A congressionally-mandated study on the impact of the 2002-03 Head Start program showed that at the end of one program year, access to Head Start positively influenced children's school readiness, but when measured again at the end of kindergarten and first grade, Head Start children and control group children were at the same level.

The study measured the cognitive and social/emotional development, health status, and behavior of approximately 5,000 three- and four-year-olds randomly assigned to either a control group or a group with access to a Head Start program.

In the wake of the report, Secretary of Health and Human Services [HHS]

Kathleen Sebelius announced that her department is now in the process of raising Head Start performance standards and increasing program accountability by only renewing grants for high-quality, constantly improving programs.

Also to be required: improving classroom practices by providing higher quality training for classroom teachers, staff, and program directors; improving technical assistance to grantees looking to improve their programs; and convening a research advisory committee to gather insights from the Head Start Impact Study and other relevant research to ensure continuity of quality programs.

Raising standards may help a little but the most important missing item: Parents. Where there is no follow-up at home the inevitable loss begins.

## Mistakes

Want to know one of the reasons nearly 100,000 people a year are killed by hospital mistakes?

Time magazine cites a study showing doctors in training, required to work 30-hour shifts in America's intensive care units, make 36% more serious mistakes than those working 15-hour shifts.

There's a reason they are called residents – some practically live there.

The Institute of Medicine calls for new guidelines limiting shifts to 16 continuous hours if no rest is granted and mandating five hours of rest for all longer shifts.

More than 18,000 people were killed by bacteria last year that could have been eliminated by the simple act of washing hands.

Never go to the hospital alone or stay alone – have family, friends, fellow employees, church members present, anyone who will question any procedure that is undertaken.

A subscriber in Norman said her husband had to spend the night for a simple procedure the next morning. She decided to stay with him. A nurse came in and started an IV drip.

She asked what it was all about. The nurse said it was routine for the kind of surgery he was to undergo.

But, she told the nurse, my husband isn't here for that kind of surgery.

The nurse looked at her paperwork again, and said, "Oops! Wrong room."

Always have an advocate with you. If all else fails, ask the hospital to assign someone to you.

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

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

# Observerscope

**Laurel:** To Tulsa's St. John Hospital recognized in the top 5% of hospitals in America for nursing excellence and patient care.

It's a sad day for America when a split U.S. Supreme Court unleashed endless corporate money into political campaigns. The Roberts' Court will live in infamy.

**Dart:** To Public Service Co. of Oklahoma lining up financially behind Republican Tad Jones for Labor Commission, a sorry excuse for a legislator.

Democrats have a superb candidate to replace retiring State Treasurer Scott Meacham in Jon Robison, a CPA with more than 30 years of accounting and financial expertise.

**Laurel:** To Jason Nelson, R-OKC, for House Bill 3393 addressing the needs of a waiting list of 5,300 developmentally disabled children. Most could be served at home without any increase in taxes and scholarships would aid many.

Rep. Charles Key, R-OKC, is using a phony "poll" from the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs for House Bill 2814, pushing more civics in public schools. Key is mindful of Grandma's saying: "The higher a monkey climbs the more you see of his ass."

**Dart:** To the chronic invasion of people's private lives by Republican Reps. Mark McCullough and Sally Kern - he's for making marriage more difficult, she's for making divorce more difficult. A solution for both? Eliminate poverty.

Latest rumor: Gov. Brad Henry was sniffing around that Tenth Circuit Court vacancy but says he's not interested. He found out he would actually have to take a position.

**Laurel:** To Rep. Dave Dank, R-OKC, for the reminder that it was Speaker Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, who authored legislation to grant tax exemptions for those creating new jobs - \$5.5 billion at last count. Only problem? Nearly \$2 billion created no new jobs.

State law makes it a misdemeanor to use an American flag in advertisements and a felony to burn it. Neither has ever been enforced. The latter was stricken down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Laurel:** Tom Henry Wallace, 2010 winner of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence mentoring award. His work with Hugo's Little Dixie program is without parallel.

One of five kids goes to bed hungry in Oklahoma, many seniors are missing their only hot meal at closed programs - but the House has published a fancy color brochure with pictures to tout its 2010 agenda.

**Dart:** To Rep. Mike Sanders, R-Kingfisher, who would make child abuse convictions a 50-year minimum sentence. No wonder we have inmates coming out of our ears - first in women in prison.

It got insufficient media play but the national 2010 Quality Counts survey ranked Oklahoma among the best in public school teachers and accountability. Only failing grade? Lack of sufficient funding for public education.

**Laurel:** To First Lady Michelle Obama, using a national forum to praise Oklahoma City's campaign to lose weight. Speaking at a meeting of the nation's mayors she urged them to do likewise.

U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin will have more competition in her race for the GOP nomination for governor. Robert Hubbard of Yukon says he is tired of professional politicians.

**Dart:** To Koch Industries CFO Steve Feilmeier telling a Tulsa audience how dangerous the debt burden is. If the Koch moneybags would quit funding Obama's goofy opposition we could bring the change the nation needs.

Despite being an American leader in divorce, domestic abuse and teen pregnancy, Oklahoma is one of the most religious states - 69% say it is important in their lives. [Pew Poll]



**Laurel:** To President Obama for saying he is determined to kick the banking pigs away from the trough. Bush bailed them out and now they're paying billions in undeserved bonuses.

The governor has signed an executive order forbidding state employees driving state cars to text while driving. You realize how incredibly stupid some people are when it takes an order to stop it.

**Dart:** To those who say the first to go should be school administrators. We will second that motion when the funded and unfunded mandates cease - 32 in Oklahoma! Who will manage those problems?

When will the wallpaper warriors realize there is no "victory" in Afghanistan? From William The Conqueror forward, no foreign force has pacified that country - and never will if there's a drop of blood left to shed defending it from outsiders.

**Laurel:** To Sen. Kenneth Corn, D-Poteau, who refuses to give up on his battle to restore senior nutrition centers decimated by the Republican leadership.

OU President David Boren is raking in \$631,000 a year, counting his perks. OSU President Burns Hargis comes in at \$436,000.

**Dart:** To a leadership so callous that drug treatment programs are being dropped statewide. Look for crime and domestic abuse to surge.

The Ethics Commission has no choice. It has to pull its rule prohibiting corporations and unions from spending directly on political campaigns. A corrupt U.S. Supreme Court majority gutted a century of precedence.

**Laurel:** To a State Supreme Court majority for an opinion holding that three fees assessed against court cases but not going for court-related matters are unconstitutional. Bravo to Attorney Jerry Fent.

The Bible says by their fruits shall you know them: There are 239 millionaires in Congress - 44% of all members of Congress. Only 1% of Americans are millionaires.

**Dart:** To the GOP, pretending to be the "family values" party while electing a new senator, Scott Brown, who posed nude for Cosmo magazine.

MAPS for saps - a sales tax increase any way your parse it - carried because the OKC Chamber spent a whopping \$2 million for a program that mostly favors poor little Devon energy.

**Laurel:** To AARP for a national survey showing that insurance companies are 29% more likely to deny coverage to someone 60-64.

Think football isn't big business. Forbes says OU's current football value is \$83 million, current revenues \$60 million, profit of \$40 million. OSU is worth \$47 million, revenue of \$56 million, and profit of \$35 million. [1.18.10 issue]

**Dart:** To the Tulsa World for a badly flawed Oklahoma Poll, ostensibly testing the public's reaction to whether judges are soft on crime. It was gift-wrapped for the GOP Legislature.

State Rep. Wallace Collins, D-Norman, is back with House Bill 2705 to place Oklahoma's six veterans centers under the Nursing Home Act where they belong. Don't hold your breath until the GOP Legislature does the right thing.

**Laurel:** To our overworked American law enforcement, presiding over a 1.9% decline in overall crime. The bad news: Murders topped 17,000.

Sen. Kenneth Corn apparently had this dream - the Legislature would prohibit lobbyists from donating to those holding or seeking legislative or statewide office. Passage of his SB 1348 would be a welcomed miracle.

**Dart:** To Oklahoma, given an "F" for its campaign to reduce smoking. The state Health Department reports that tobacco companies are spending \$213 million a year in the state to promote smoking. Hey, it should be a crime!

Tulsa World editorial writer Wayne Green wandered all over a page bemoaning the OEA's State Question 744 to bring Oklahoma teachers to the regional average over three years without once mentioning \$771 million in recent GOP tax cuts.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

While fighting 8-year, trillion-dollar wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, America and its so-called "alliance of many nations" are at the same time sending millions of dollars in aid to the earthquake victims in Haiti. The former is an overwhelmingly tragic misjudgment and the latter is just tragically overwhelming.

Here's a question that interests me: what would be happening RIGHT NOW if an earthquake had destroyed the capital and crushed 500,000 victims in Afghanistan? Would the same people who are waging war now sponsor medical, nutritional and housing aid to the victims they call "enemy"?

Would actors, musicians, politicians be putting together instant live-aid fundraisers? Would nearly every satellite TV network run continual crawlers with hundreds of new websites that are collecting donations?

Which would cease first: the inhumanity of war or the humanitarian invasion of aid? Would so-called "patriots" label the recent compassionate efforts of former presidents Bush and Clinton treason if aimed at Afghanistan instead of Haiti?

It boils down to this: how does one reconcile the violent dismantling of one country with the absolute pathos toward another?

Who gets to decide the value of a human life, whether it began in Haiti, Iraq or Afghanistan? Or America? Who makes that decision?

I'm just asking.

Jim Wilcox  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Are you as tired as I am of hearing daily that the senior citizens in a city are no longer being helped with their one hot meal of the day? Or that school children will be losing teachers and having larger classes because of additional cuts in the state budget? Or that occupants of prisons are being released because there is not enough money to pay for feeding them or paying for the guards? Or the homeless are not to be aided because there is no money for housing them or feeding them? Let the churches do it? Why should my taxes be increased because these have needs? Next we'll be told those in facilities for the mentally handicapped have been closed ... oh, I forgot that has already been done with a bang and a whimper.

What is the matter with our Oklahoma Legislature? Don't they realize state services are to be provided. Don't

they understand that even though it may hurt my bottom line, certain state services are actually needed. They are not luxuries, but they are needed. Jesus told us to feed the poor and to help the needy. I'm here to say that the needy are our responsibility. Just as the Good Samaritan is lauded in the Bible, so is it placed before you and me that we must provide certain state services.

It is nearly criminal the cavalier way in which our legislators have dismissed serious problems by simply expressing, "We'll just have to reduce our state workers because we can't afford to pay them when we are nearly \$1 billion over our budget." It isn't that easy.

We have cut our taxes so much as to be hurting. Although it is not popular, we need to raise taxes. Our taxes are apparently too low! Raise income taxes to the level they were about two years ago and take care of the needs of the state. Take care of those for whom self-help is nearly impossible. Remember our charge from Jesus: Care for those in need!

How many new business owners are lining up to start a new business in a state without adequate state services?

Carolyn Deatherage  
Norman

Editor, The Observer

Why do we continue to let the Republicans explain our programs, such as our "health benefits for everyone" to "another monstrous government agency" while we just sit back and whimper?

I believe our president is a fine person and with some experience could have made a final successor to Hillary. It is like comparing him to vegetables - you do not harvest them until they are ripe.

Mr. Obama is still green, but was looking good - but he got harvested too soon.

Gale Maxwell  
Stigler

Editor, The Observer:

In various places, including The Observer, I have read that the number of those who claim to be religious is declining and the number of atheists is growing. Your paper stated that a Pew study revealed that many people are turning off organized religion. These are hopeful signs, I suppose, but of little comfort to those of us who live in Oklahoma - a virtual theocracy. Consider the following:



1. Last year's Legislature voted to erect monuments to the Ten Commandments on our State Capitol Grounds. This blatant insult to the U.S. Constitution is applauded by a majority of Oklahomans.

2. This year's Legislature has before it at least 16 proposed laws that would further inject religion into the public sphere, especially public schools. They propose to have Bible classes offered in public schools. They demand prayer return to the public schools. And they resolve that Oklahoma's motto be changed to "In God We Trust." Furthermore, they have proposed a large number of measures, all based on their religious beliefs, which would further diminish the rights of women.

Actions at the federal level also continue to foster religion at the expense of our Constitution. In short, America is gravely endangered from within by people who are convinced that they are in touch with the truth from God. Although this plea will fall on deaf ears, I urge every American citizen and all lawmakers to study the sad condition of the nations whose laws are based in religious dogma, and I urge lawmakers to revisit their oath to uphold our Constitution.

Billye VanSchuyver  
Chickasha

Editor, The Observer:

State Rep. Jason Nelson has introduced a bill [HB 3408] to classify as a felony a pastor's "solemnizing the rites of marriage" of persons prohibited from legal marriage in Oklahoma. While a majority of Oklahomans disapprove of gay marriage, this bill seems a violation of the religious freedom of churches or houses of worship willing to sanctify such a relationship [even though the marriage would not be recognized by the state of Oklahoma]. Should not gays and lesbians living in committed relationships have the right to a religious ceremony celebrating their decision, in houses of worship comfortable with that action?

Nathaniel Batchelder  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I'm beginning to wonder if all the folks in Congress are either stupid or paid off. Is it just a pipe dream that we Americans think our votes count? My personal opinion is that when the people pay scant attention to what our Congress is actually doing, then our Congress caters to the ones who are, and those who are, have very fat wallets.

We have lost and we deserve to be ruled by fat cats if we care so little. I still think it's a shame and will be a stain on our generation when future voters-to-be discover they have been lied to and are not living in a free Republic but rather a dictatorship run by corporate money.

Darla Reynolds-Sparks  
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Oklahoma House Speaker Chris Bengé should be impeached for elder abuse.

His opposition to limiting increases in my property valuations is too much for this old grandma to take.

My property taxes go up 5% every year.

Also going up are [1] my Medicare health insurance, [2] my prescription drug insurance, [3] my AARP supplemental insurance, [4] my GRDA electric bill, [5] my groceries, and [6] my gas.

And I didn't get a raise on my Social Security.

So, how does Speaker Bengé think I can make ends meet on a fixed income?

We, po' folks, have no lobbyists to treat him like a little king.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
Wagoner

Editor, The Observer:

Hidden money funding, whether foreign or domestic, is the new poison that the U.S. Supreme Court has injected into the system by its expansive decision in Citizens United when it ruled that corporations can support candidates without limit.

Billions of dollars could flood into our elections from ARAMCO, the Saudi Oil corporation's U.S. unit; or from the maker of "New Order" fashions, the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Or from Bin Laden Construction corporation.

It's not just un-Americans we need to fear but also the Polluter-Americans, Pharma-Americans, Bank-Americans and Hedge-Americans that could manipulate campaigns while hidden behind corporate veils. And if so, our future elections, while nominally a contest between Republicans and Democrats, may in fact come down to a three-way battle between China, Saudi Arabia and Goldman Sachs.

The solution is for candidates to announce they will accept only citizen funding of elections as they have in Maine and several other states.

Frank P. Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

## Frosty Troy's Who Killed Free Enterprise?

*For more than 50 years Frosty has covered the Legislature. He tells the truth - fact for fact - about the so-called free enterprise system in Oklahoma.*

**Call Frosty at 405.760.1843 to book a speech.**

## **Merit Pay Myths**



**FROSTY TROY**  
Founding Editor

Education Secretary Arne Duncan says paying public school teachers based on their performance is his "highest priority," and he plans to dole out hundreds of millions of dollars to states and school systems that embrace the idea.

In Oklahoma, the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association, largest affiliate of the Oklahoma Education Association, has endorsed the idea if teachers are involved in the plan.

School reformers have been trying unsuccessfully to introduce performance pay in public education for decades. If today's reformers want to break the deadlock, they're going to have to let go of several myths hanging over the debate.

The logic of performance pay is compelling: Paying teachers based on the college credits they've amassed and the years they've taught – a practice introduced in the 1920s to counter

salary disparities between male and female teachers – means bad teachers draw the same paychecks as good ones.

That, in turn, seemingly makes it tougher to recruit and retain talented teachers, meaning students end up with inferior instructors. No surprise, then, that people have been pushing merit pay for a long time.

"Every effort must be made to devise ways to reward teachers according to their ability without opening the school door to unfair personnel practices," a commission urged President Dwight Eisenhower in 1955.

But over the years, there have been few long-term performance pay experiments in public education, so we don't know for sure whether the change would indeed improve the teaching profession.

Some evidence linking merit pay to higher student test scores has trickled in from Kenya and Israel.

Patrick Schucermann at Vanderbilt's Peabody College and James Guthrie at the school's National Center on Performance Incentives, funded by the George W. Bush Administration to study performance pay in education, have surveyed U.S. research and warn that there's no conclusive evidence on "the power of financial awards in promoting more effective teaching and elevating student performance" or on "the long-term effect of performance awards on the supply of effective teachers."

Nor, they write, do we know the "effects of group awards relative to individual performance" or the "preferable mix of financial and non-pecuniary awards" – important secondary questions.

Yes and no. The last big push for performance pay came in 1983, when a national commission, headed by Ronald Reagan's Education Secretary Ted Bell, recommended it in "A Nation at Risk."

It was a sweeping and wholly fallacious 1983 indictment of public education. This led to performance pay experiments in Tennessee, California, Florida, Texas and a host of school systems elsewhere. The new models didn't last because even parents thought it was a sorry system.

Virtually all teachers – union or not – fought the effort because the merit pay plans were, at bottom, capricious.

In many instances, they offered teachers the possibility of small additional amounts of money, not enough to mean much to those who got it. The number of teachers receiving the rewards shifted with annual appropriations, regardless of how many teachers were rated high enough to receive them.

With many of the plans undermining teacher morale and suffering the wrath of the parents, funding dried up, and the experiments withered away.

Local, state and federal spending on public school teacher salaries and benefits has reached an estimated \$220 billion a year, yet the typical teacher evaluation in public education consists of a single fleeting classroom visit by a harried



principal who is often more interested in classroom behavior than quality of instruction.

The result is reflected in statistics such as those in Chicago, where the non-profit New Teacher Project found that 88% of the city's 600 schools did not issue a single "unsatisfactory" teacher rating between 2003 and 2006.

The absence of credible systems of evaluating teachers' performance is a major barrier to successful performance pay plans.

It seems hard to argue with using students' standardized test scores as part of a teacher evaluation process: It's inexpensive, easy and seemingly measures what matters most – student achievement.

The Obama Administration and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is planning to spend upwards of \$500 million on performance pay and other teaching innovations, are pushing for the use of test scores in evaluations.

Such scores are part of a new teacher evaluation system that Chancellor Michelle Rhee has just unveiled in the District of Columbia.

While the plan is not yet implemented, the superintendent relied heavily on the judgment of principals in 226 layoffs.

But standardized test scores pose as many problems as they solve. Less than half of public school instructors teach subjects or grade levels in which students are tested, eliminating the prospect of a system that applies fairly to all teachers.

Most standardized tests measure a narrow band of low-level skills – such as recalling or restating facts – rather than the ability to analyze information and other advanced skills.

As a result, the tests privilege low-level teaching leaving the best teachers, those with wider repertoires and the ability to move students beyond the basics, at a disadvantage.

Comprehensive evaluations are especially important for making key decisions such as granting tenure, and they're critical to winning teacher support of performance pay. In surveys, only a tiny fraction of teachers are willing to have student test scores play a role in pay levels. But their opposition to performance pay drops significantly when ratings are based on evaluations of how well teachers plan, teach, test, manage and motivate.

Experiments with performance pay would help determine whether it improves teaching and learning, but expectations should be tempered. When asked, teachers say higher salaries are less important to them than a work environment in which they feel respected and receive help to improve their craft.

A national study by the nonprofits Public Agenda and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality found that, if given a choice between two otherwise identical schools, 76% of secondary teachers and 81% of elementary teachers would rather work in a school where administrators supported teachers strongly than at a school that paid significantly higher salaries.

If it is done correctly, merit pay may contribute to a more professional culture in public school teaching. But it surely isn't going to transform the profession by itself. Today's problem is the fact that public education in Oklahoma and across America is hemorrhaging billions, not starting new experiments.

## **How To Live In 2010**

Here's a recipe for life in the New Year. I have no idea who sent it to me but it's the only way to live and be happy.

Drink plenty of water. Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a beggar.

Eat more foods that grow on trees and plants and eat less food that is manufactured in plants. Live with the E's – Energy, Enthusiasm and Empathy. Make time to pray. Play more games.

Read more books than you did in 2009. Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes each day. Sleep for seven hours. Take a 10-30 minute walk daily. And while you walk, smile.

Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about. Don't have negative thoughts of things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.

Don't over do. Keep your limits. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does. Don't waste your precious energy on gossip. Dream more while you are awake. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.

Forget issues of the past. Don't remind your partner of his/her mistakes of the

past. That will ruin your present happiness. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone. Don't hate others. Make peace with your past so it won't spoil the present.

No one is in charge of your happiness except you. Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn. Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class but the lessons you learn will last a lifetime.

Smile and laugh more. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree. Call your family often. Each day give something good to others. Forgive everyone for everything. Spend time with people over age 70 and under age 6.

Try to make at least three people smile each day. What other people think of you is none of your business. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends will. Stay in touch.

Do the right thing! Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful. God heals everything. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.

No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up. The best is yet to come. When you awake alive in the morning, thank God for it. Your inner most is always happy. So, be happy.

# Ever-Present Strains Of The Leadership Waltz



ARNOLD HAMILTON  
Editor

So House Republicans already have designated Shawnee's Kris Steele as speaker-in-waiting. And Senate Republicans aren't going to elect a new president pro tempore until after the November general election.

Sort of drains all the political drama out of the 2010 session, eh?

Not exactly.

The fact that Senate Republicans postponed their leadership contest until the fall indicates that hard feelings forged over the last couple of years haven't begun to soften.

And even though House Republicans have their 2011 speaker in place, this session has the potential to be so contentious that Steele's ascension to power could be a bumpy ride indeed.

In the Senate, Pro Tem Glenn Coffee clearly wanted his handpicked successor to be unveiled last fall but antipathy toward the GOP leadership team – especially former general counsel and senior policy advisor Fred Morgan – doused any hopes of a coronation.

Months of arm-twisting and negotiating – even Morgan's departure – failed to end the deadlock, prompting the announcement on the session's Opening Day that the matter would be shelved until November.

Trying to put the best face on embarrassing internal discord, caucus Chairman John Ford of Bartlesville issued a brief written statement, insisting "we will spend this session concentrating on the business of the state, and the significant fiscal challenges that face us today."

I think there's a better chance the Tooth Fairy will make an appearance at the Capitol this spring than Senate Republicans will be able to set aside the pro tem battle for 10 months.

What sparked the leadership tussle was that an increasing number of Republicans in both houses despised Morgan, a former six-term state representative who became Coffee's Karl Rove after a failed congressional bid.

Morgan was widely viewed as a master puppeteer pulling the strings in both the Senate and the House. Though his influence probably wasn't that grand, perception is reality in politics, and he seemed nothing if not omnipresent.

His mere presence was a flashpoint in the battle over Coffee's successor [Coffee is term limited]. In fact, much of the back-and-forth came to focus on which of the contenders would – or wouldn't – keep Morgan aboard.

Six days before the session, Morgan walked away from his \$140,000 a year Senate salary and signed on as president and CEO of the State Chamber of Commerce. He was replaced immediately by former GOP Sen. Jim Williamson, a Tulsa attorney forced from office in 2008 because of term limits.

Morgan's departure has the potential to alter the dynamics of the legislative process far more profoundly than even the state's billion-dollar-budget crisis.

The question is, what's in it for the Chamber, arguably the state's most powerful special interest?

In Morgan, the Chamber gets a smart strategist and articulate insider who knows the players, their weaknesses and strengths, and the issues. But surely Chamber leaders also recognize that Morgan is a lightning rod, with plenty of enemies – with long memories – as well as friends.

The Chamber, though, wields so much power because it unites the state's deepest pockets. As a result, the House and Senate leadership is uniformly corporatist, making little effort to conceal the fact it carries the Chamber's rich-get-richer agenda. Even with the Chamber's financial hammer in hand, Morgan no doubt will discover that many legislators have long memories.

Williamson's selection is less curious. Perhaps best known as the point man on anti-abortion legislation, Williamson's theocratic tendencies were countered by a straight-forward, no-nonsense approach to legislating.

What's fascinating, though, is that Coffee and Co. evidently felt the need to shore up their [religious] right flank by hiring Williamson for the session – at a salary of \$65,000 for the four months.

Four Republicans expressed interest in becoming pro tem, but it was essentially a two-man race between Sapulpa's Brian Bingman and Seminole's Harry Coates.

Coates is the one who gives Coffee the most heartburn. He is a Dewey Bartlett [the former governor and U.S. senator, not the current Tulsa mayor] Republican who is fiercely independent and doesn't take marching orders from anyone. Coffee and Co. seemed determined to stop Coates, no matter what.

At least 22 of the Senate's 48 votes, though, are largely beyond Coffee's control – they belong to Senate Democrats, who have indicated a willingness to support Coates. Add just two Republican votes to Coates and the Democrats and Coates is the next pro tem.

It remains to be seen whether Morgan's switch to lobbying and Williamson's return to the legislative sausage-making help smooth out what seems certain to be a contentious session – especially with a \$1 billion-plus hole in next year's projected budget.

Coffee can only hope so. Otherwise, four months will have never seemed so long.

Across the rotunda, Steele's yearlong ascension to power unfolds just as the

House Republican caucus shows signs of splintering – the most obvious example a very public dispute between House Speaker Chris Benge and OKC Rep. David Dank over Dank's proposed property tax cap.

Dank, of course, demanded that Benge "step up" and support the tax plan or "step down and let someone else lead the House." Benge accused Dank of "political grandstanding at its worst."

In the middle sits Steele, a genial, bespectacled 36-year-old Methodist minister whose ascension to power could be short-circuited if he is unable to help preserve caucus harmony and if notions of a palace coup take root.

Steele's position is especially tricky because he currently serves as speaker pro tempore – the House's No. 2 position. This isn't a mostly ceremonial job like lieutenant governor or vice president. The pro tem actually sits in the speaker's chair every day, wielding power over who speaks and who doesn't – and for how long. He also is routinely called upon to interpret murky, arcane House rules, a power all but certain to produce bruised egos and short tempers.

Not surprisingly, the speaker pro tem is rarely the most popular guy in the House Chamber – and on occasion may well be the most despised.

Dank has made clear he won't back off the property tax fight. And he has more than a few allies in the Legislature. Indeed, many of the newer House members have more in common with the Tea Party activists than with the corporatists who run the House as a wholly owned subsidiary of the State Chamber.

They may be registered Republicans, and they may share much of what has become the GOP worldview – especially when it comes to religion and knocking down the wall separating church and state – but the reality is that they identify less with their party and more with ideology.

They don't play by the old rules of party discipline that allow disagreements behind closed doors, but demand lock-step unity in public.

Which brings us back to Steele's tricky position.



House Republicans may have decided by acclamation last fall that he would be speaker-in-waiting, but there's nothing to prevent unhappy – or ambitious – members from staging a coup before he can grab hold of the gavel.

If Steele, Benge and other House Republican leaders can't figure out a way to manage the personalities and issues, and if the House ends up in open revolt this session, it could cost Steele dearly.

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## PUBLIC FORUM

# Services Wanted, But Who'll Pay For Them?

By Ruth Askew Brelsford

*An Open Letter to Gov. Brad Henry, Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, House Speaker Chris Benge, and the rest of those sitting in Oklahoma City with a desire to take advantage of this opportunity to "downsize government:"*

I have always depended on government. Call me naïve, but I was taught by my hard-working, pro-Labor grandparents and by my father – who learned this first hand when he was stationed in the Pacific when little more than a teenager – that if we all worked together we could do more than any one of us could do by ourselves.

I know that it is an old-fashioned idea, but I never minded paying taxes. I do like for them to be used efficiently, but I always figured there were some things I couldn't do by myself. Like keep the lights on in Tulsa. I was up there the other night; I couldn't believe how dark, creepy, and dangerous those expressways are. It was odd because the lights were on in Broken Arrow and Sand Springs. Better managers, I guess.

Oh well, I don't care about those people anyway. I don't even know them. I guess I'll just go to Oklahoma City to do my shopping until they turn the lights back on in Tulsa.

I'm sure they won't turn the lights off in Oklahoma City since you all do have to get to work every morning ... or at least some mornings ... and home in the evenings ... or at least some evenings.

### OLD FASHIONED THINKING

I realize that I am talking about city taxes, state taxes, and federal taxes, but it seems that we are ready for a paradigm shift in America today: We want the lights on, but we don't want to pay for it.

Anyway, since my old fashioned ideas are obsolete, I have been thinking about what we can do to "downsize" government and still do what we are charged to do by our Christian faith since we pride ourselves on being such a strong God-fearing state with the Ten Commandments proudly displayed and everything.

[I don't know why our women are so mean in this God-fearing state. I do know that if they went to church more they wouldn't be so poor and wouldn't get beaten by their husbands and wouldn't have children who need childcare and stuff.]

I have a few ideas:

Gov. Henry, Sen. Coffee, Rep. Benge: how many children are you going to be able to supervise who are in the system because their parents can't/don't take care of them? I probably can manage to see 10-12 a week, but you have a lot more time than I do since I teach school and run a farm for a living and don't have a staff and you all have staff and you Legislators only work from Feb. 1 until May 28 this year.

### PUTTING STATE OFFICIALS TO WORK

Maybe you can manage to see 150 children each week since we have nearly 10,000 in out-of-home care right now and countless more receiving services.



You may actually have to squeeze in more than 150 kids a week at this rate. And since 103,000 families are living below the poverty level in Oklahoma you may have to buy some groceries, too! But your salary should cover that.

Let's see nearly \$40,000 divided by three months on the job equals \$13,000 a month plus the rest of the year to do your real job. That's not counting the stipend you get for your positions as leaders of the House/Senate. And Gov. Henry, you make more than \$100,000 a year. Not too shabby.

Now, Gov. Henry, I realize that you are in a different party, but from where I sit, it's kinda hard to tell. Sorry.

### HELPING OUT INMATES

Gov. Henry, Sen. Coffee, Rep. Benge: there are many inmates, who have honestly made changes in their lives and want to get an education and get out of prison and get a job and take care of their families so they won't have to receive food stamps which kind of sounds like a cost-saver to me, but what do I know? [I told you that I am naïve]

How many will you be able to help get their GED's? I do what I can, and I know a lot of real Christians [you know the ones who remember that Jesus said, "Judge not, lest you be judged" and "Love your neighbors." "Course you people probably don't have "that kind" of neighbors!]. These Christians donate a lot of time, but they just can't keep up so maybe you can take on a few students.

The Department of Corrections will have to cut programs because with their budget cuts we won't be rehabilitating these guys and gals. On second thought, let's just lock 'em up. Most of them are serving 85% of their time and I read, Sen. Coffee, where you think that we will all be safer if we just lock them up and throw away the key. Actually, that's a paraphrase of what you said, but I am pretty sure that is what you meant.

And, of course, Gov. Henry, I know that you are way too busy [71% too busy since 2001, I believe] with your other duties to look at all those parole recommendations in a timely manner which that million-dollar audit claimed would have saved Oklahoma taxpayers \$2.9 million dollars last year! But, of course, we do believe in private enterprise and we taxpayers, therefore, need to subsidize

See SERVICES Page 9

# State Lawmakers Work To Usurp Fed Laws

By Carol Ruth

There are many espousing the "I am mad as hell and not going to take it any more" rhetoric concerning political issues. Individuals frequently discuss national issues while ignoring the Oklahoma Legislature. Most state legislators are unknown outside of their home districts.

However, the actions of the state House and state Senate have a major impact on our day-to-day lives. In addition to making laws, the Oklahoma Legislature is tasked with deciding the funding for, among many other issues, education, public safety, and elder and child care programs.

There are many legislators who work hard and try to do what they believe is right for their constituents. This year, they have filed 2,235 bills and 59 resolutions on top of the 1,051 bills and 86 resolutions left over from the 2009 session. While many of these bills and resolutions are concerned with the business of Oklahoma, a number of these bills are proposals to take away rights or to give special rights to a select few.

Many Oklahomans would be shocked if they knew what was in some of these proposals.

### NO LAUGHING MATTER

Buried in the pile, there is a plethora of nullification – also called 10th Amendment – bills and resolutions proposed this year.

Nullification is no laughing matter. This philosophy holds that state legislators have the capacity to invalidate federal laws that they do not like. History has shown that when nullification comes to the forefront, the most elemental issues of our Constitution are at stake because states cannot handpick which Federal laws they want to follow and expect to maintain a "more perfect union."

Our founding fathers did not give us a salad bar of rules. To be a part of this Republic, it is all or nothing.

In 1913, the 17th Amendment passed to move the election of United States senators from a state legislative selection to a vote of the people. Rep. Charles Key, R-OKC, is proposing via HJR 1063 that the selection of United States Senators be given to the legislative branch.

Using the 10th Amendment as justification, Key argues that 1] The states had harmony with the federal government prior to 1913; 2] United States senators should report to the state legislators, not the people; and 3] the current process of electing United States senators by popular vote is defective.

Oklahomans should be angry that a legislator has even considered taking away any rights to vote.

### KEY AND THE CONSTITUTION

Interestingly, Key also submitted a bill [HB 2814] which mandates high school students spend more time studying history and the Constitution.

Perhaps that class will include cautionary information that 2% of the population died during the Civil War as a direct result of nullification actions of states. Virtually every American lost a friend and/or family member.

The Senate leader, Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, along with the Speaker of the House, Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, has proposed a resolution [SJR 64] to sue the federal government via nullification, to keep Oklahoma out of any national health care program.

Conversely, these same leaders are advocating several tort reform bills to limit individual rights to the courts to sue. Effective leaders guide by their actions.

### KEEPING AN EYE ON GRANDSTANDERS

As long as any legislator grandstands instead of goes about the business of our state, their actions must never be left unchecked.

Being a well-informed citizen requires more than repeating mass media sound bites. We should demand that our leaders focus on the business of Oklahoma, not tear at the very fabric of our democracy.

It requires due diligence to ensure our Constitution remains effective, and legislation designed merely to flame the fires of political discontent should not be part of our Oklahoma legislative process.

It is wasteful and destructive.

We are a far, far better state than that.

– The author lives in Yukon

## PUBLIC FORUM

# Dear Kim: Time To Educate On Single-Payer

By Ron du Bois

*An open letter to state Insurance Commissioner Kim Holland:*

There is much wisdom in world literature, Greek thought, Shakespeare, etc., that tell us we can be looking at the truth and not know, see, or understand it.

If Oklahomans insist on retaining private for-profit medical insurance as the "best in the world" they will prove once again the truth of Winston Churchill's observation that, "Americans will usually get it right ... but only after they've tried everything else."

They won't get it right until they are ready to put in place a single-payer system. In Oklahoma that would mean that all medical insurance would be paid for through public taxation and all medical bills paid by a single office – the Oklahoma Department of Health. It means for-profit medical insurance would be trashed.

### IT'S ALL ABOUT PROFITS

And why not? Their motivation is profit at the expense of the health of the nation. They are part of the problem, not the solution. They flood the nation with lies about universal health care so they can continue to sell policies that 50 million Americans can't afford.

The emergency room system must be trashed. It is part of the problem. With medical access to all from birth to death regardless of ability to pay outcomes are superior and billions are saved. Every other industrialized nation is testimony to this.

As you said in your Stillwater presentation, "There is no place for politics or self-interest when it comes to health care."

You say the "Americans psyche" is not ready for a single-payer system. But you need to explain that our lack of readiness is emotionally based. "Our eyes see and our ears hear what is already in our minds."

### FOR-PROFIT INSURANCE IMMORAL

In your excellent public presentations you present the case for universal health care with passion but fail to state that lower costs can only be accomplished by the same means as other nations who have ousted the for-profit medical insurance industry. As one Canadian put it, "For-profit medical insurance is immoral."

I would hope you would state the case for single payer as the main reason why Canada covers everybody at half the cost. Other nations do the same for two-thirds less than Americans with our "pay or die" philosophy.

Of the 20 industrialized nations, the U.S. is the only one with no provision for maternity leave. Mainland China provides six months paid leave, Icelandic health care provides paid leave for both mother and father.

Ruling out single payer is not a good idea. Every person in Oklahoma who is Native American has access to public health care paid for through public taxation. Some were in the audience when you spoke in Stillwater.

Why can't public health care for Native Americans and Medicare be extended to everyone?

Please consider this paragraph from the February issue of the AARP Bulletin:

*"Compared to other industrialized nations, all of which have government-financed systems, the per capita health spending in the United States [\$6,159] is about twice as high as in Canada [\$3,165], France [\$3,159], Australia [\$3,120], or Great Britain [\$2,508], according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Yet our life expectancy is lower [77.5] and our infant mortality is higher [6.9 per thousand births] than in these other four industrialized nations. Still, any attempt to effect change has been derailed."*

Please read the following rational words from Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community:

### NEED FOR NATIONAL HEALTH PLAN

*Almost 50 million US citizens don't have health insurance. This is a national tragedy. Here is the solution: HR676, The U.S. National Health Insurance Act. The gold standard, the single payer bill introduced by Rep. Conyers. If it should become law, we could close up shop. It's often called Medicare for All, only it's much better: it includes all necessary care, including dental, vision, and mental health, without deductibles or co-payments, It's paid for by fair taxation, which will save almost all of us money. And it is completely non-profit. Good-bye, insurance companies and HMOs!*

Here's a hard truth: we're not going to get a single-payer national insurance program unless we exert sustained, overwhelming pressure on Washington. That's true of every other crucial issue, from global warming to Iraq.

There are no excuses. Get everyone you know to call their senators and representative. Your representative must vote for HR676 and your senators must introduce the bill. Call now! To find their phone numbers go to <http://www.visit.com/juan/congress/>

In your talk to the Democrats you mentioned something about a "Summit on the High Cost of Health Insurance" and forming a study group. If you are in a position to do so please appoint persons who are informed "out of the box" thinkers.

### CANADIANS WILLING TO HELP

I will try to get you connected to the Public Affairs Officer, Ministry of Health, Winnipeg, Canada. Her name is Julie Kentner. She can find a spokesperson who may be able to explain why single payer is essential to a reasonably priced universal health care system.

It has been my experience that Canadians are more than willing to help Americans "get it right." We should get over the foolish notion that we can't learn from other nations.

Some innovative thinking is in order when a state like Oklahoma ranks 44th in the nation in quality of health care and 50th in mental health care!

Finally, there are some forward thinking Oklahomans who are ready for a single-payer system. I invite you to visit the website for Oklahomans for Universal Health Care <http://oklahomansforuniversalhealth.org>

*– The author lives in Stillwater and is co-founder of Oklahomans for Universal Health Care*

## SERVICES

From Page 8

those private prisons. Silly me!

### LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIREIGHTING, HIGHWAYS

Gov. Henry, Sen. Coffee, Rep. Bengtson: I would really like to chase reckless drivers and speeders and give them a piece of my mind. I could issue a lot of tickets! But I don't know who would process them.

However, I can't really fight fires. Can you? Maybe we could pool our money and hire someone to fight them for us. Oh, no! That won't work! Too similar to paying taxes. Well, we will just have to cross that bridge when we come to it.

Speaking of bridges: could you work one Saturday a month and then we could organize the rest of the House and Senate to work the other weekends and perhaps we can shore up the bridges that are falling down in this state? I'm sorry; I can't help on this one [I am 60 years old!], but my husband does have a wheel barrow and a shovel and we will be glad to fill the pot holes in front of our property on Highway 270. Maybe you can get your staff to organize the rest of the state so that everyone who drives on a state highway must work a shift plugging potholes. But who will supply the rock and concrete? Oh, dear, another snag. This life without government is rather challenging.

My church is trying to work with those who have substance abuse problems especially since so many of the facilities that did serve them have been closed, but I think that this is going to work out all right since so many will end up in the prison system anyway and, hopefully, they'll get long sentences and have to serve that 85%! What a great law! Get those losers off the street.

### LIBRARIES, PARKS, EXTENSION OFFICES

I know a lot of people who love to read; maybe they can staff our libraries.

And my grandchildren love to go to the parks; maybe I can teach them how to mow the grass. I'm not so sure about the Nature Trails and Exhibits; they are kinda young.

I have lots of friends who like to garden; maybe they can man the OSU Extension offices around the state. The senior citizens in my small town are already working together to keep their nutrition center open. It was closed in the first round of budget cuts, so they are buying groceries and cooking them for each other. Isn't that nice?

Well, this is all the problem-solving I can manage today since I do have to work for a living. Of course, you people in OKC who aren't threatened with pay cuts or furloughs or down-sizing [I guess that the Senate and the House and the Governor's office are the only parts of government that we don't want to shrink!] have more time so you can let us know how we can all band together and not remain at the top or the bottom of every list that comes out about education, quality of life, number of women incarcerated, poverty, etc. Thank God for Mississippi and Louisiana! Let's keep our land grand!

*– The author lives in Red Oak*

## No Mercy

An attorney arrived home late, after a very tough day trying to get a stay of execution. His last minute plea for clemency to the governor had failed and he was feeling worn out and depressed. As soon as he walked through the door at home, his wife started on him: "What time of night to be getting home is this? Where have you been? Dinner is cold and I'm not reheating it." And on and on and on ...

Too shattered to play his usual role in this familiar ritual, he poured himself a shot of whiskey and headed off for a long hot soak in the bathtub, pursued by the predictable sarcastic remarks as he dragged himself up the stairs.

While he was in the bath, the phone rang. The wife answered and was told that her husband's client, James Wright, had been granted a stay of execution after all. Wright would not be hanged that night.

Finally realizing what a terrible day he must have had, she decided to go upstairs and give him the good news.

As she opened the bathroom door, she was greeted by the sight of her husband, bent over naked, drying his legs and feet.

"They're not hanging Wright tonight," she said.

He whirled around and screamed, "FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, WOMAN, DON'T YOU EVER STOP?!!!"

## BOOKS

# It's A Weird, Weird World For Sister Sarah

By Don Wilkey

### GOING ROGUE

*An American Life*  
By Sarah Palin  
HarperCollins  
432 pages, \$28.99

*Editor's Note: In December we took an in-depth look at Sarah Palin's national book tour – her wacky public utterances serving as the gift that keeps on giving for her political opponents. In this issue, regular contributor Don Wilkey reviews Palin's book, highlighting just a few of her bizarre "truths" about American life, politics and history.*

Sarah Palin's bestseller is a personal account of the Alaska native who gained national attention through her selection to run on the 2008 McCain presidential ticket as the vice presidential offering. Her warm, motherly charm and self-discipline reveal a rugged lady who carved out a life in a cold wilderness. She loves her family, the Alaska outdoors and Ronald Reagan – not necessarily in that order.

Her folksy connection to middle America is often contrasted to her disdain for liberals, journalists and Democrats. Sarah is the kind of woman who would shuffle between raising a family, serving as governor in a huge state so remote most citizens have limited access to the capital, and training to run marathon races all in the same day.

Through the dim light of an Alaskan winter, Sarah sees all of reality through the eyes of the narrow view of history offered by Ronald Reagan and his adherents. She even believes Reagan saved the country's face after Jimmy Carter let the nation down by his inability to free hostages in Iran.

### DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HISTORY

She appears to have little awareness of the fact that history records now that behind the scenes Reagan offered a ransom for the hostages in contrast to a national policy that claims to refuse terrorist demands.

Sarah writes that Reagan single-handedly ended the cold war without firing a shot. She also believes it was the evil American Civil Liberties Union that banned prayer from the public square.

Her economic policy is simple and to the point: Get government out of the way. She wants few if any federal regulations, outside of maybe a few environmental rules.

She even stated in her book she deplors regulation of bank loans. Her view is that the latest economic collapse is totally caused by poor people who could not afford houses for which they were given loans.

Wall Street and deregulating is let off the hook on the collapse and the fault lies totally with the welfare bums.

### NO RULES, JUST RIGHT[WINGERS]

Her simple solution for government economic programs is to have none. Her clear vision: Just practice laissez-faire policies and America will restore its economy. She argues that government interference in market cycles is dangerous.

Palin also wrote that the nation now suffers because the press refused to expose "legitimate fears that [President] Obama's past comments and associations with anti-capitalist radicals would influence his economic policy."

Palin has little use for most journalists, especially the scheming CBS anchor Katie Couric. Her preference for media is clear: She snuck in phone calls to her favorite news people, namely Rush Limbaugh, Laura Ingraham, Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly.

She agrees with this crowd of talk show hosts that the so-called "Fairness Doctrine" is an attempt to limit free speech.

Palin claims her famous interview with Couric was biased and Couric ambushed her. Apparently asking Sarah what magazines she read was a loaded question.

### THOSE EVIL DEMOCRATS

Palin's view on Democrats is summed up in her statement regarding the political party.

"Generally speaking, after decades of failed social policies and weak national security positions, the party doesn't have a strong base of success from which to win political arguments. So it targets people instead of ideas."

She ends her work claiming she became one of those targets.

What the Democrats did to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, they later did to her – accuse both of them of ethics violations with no basis.

Palin ends her book with some short solutions for what real citizens who love the country can do. They must stand up and fight and throw tea parties.

The governor did report Rick Warren tried to get in touch with her by phone. She did not seek him out. There is little if any mention of ministers with whom she had contact. The few mentioned are not given to being much more than a nuisance. She is apparently a woman of great faith.

You will not find connections to the Religious Right in the book she wrote.

### THE HEADQUARTERS 'TREATMENT'

Palin's title is *Going Rogue*. "Rogue," I assume, is a slang term for an animal that wanders apart from the herd. Her claim to wander on her own is her undoing.

She complains in the book about the treatment she received from "headquarters" – that is the McCain campaign staff. She states they forced her and her family to dress in expensive clothes. This led to unfair criticism from the press.

They not only dressed her, but told her when to go out and to whom to call. She was told where to stand and which family members could be on stage with her. She was given scripts on what to say at debates. She records that many of the answers she rehearsed did not even answer the question.

She regrets allowing herself to be regulated by this invisible organization. She now concedes it was a huge mistake to be forced to comply with the staff who sought to take away the individual contributions she could have made.

In claiming by her title to be a "rogue," she became her own worst compromise. She also regrets she never bucked this team of "experts" who actually might have cost John McCain the election.

### LOVE FOR MCCAIN

Sarah's adoration for McCain is obvious. She considers him her own personal war hero and found him without flaw. It is rather interesting that she never connected the dots to understand that the man holding strings to headquarters was her own hero.

Sarah found the warm Arizona desert a great place to jog. Whether or not she decides to leave the cold dark nights of Alaska to travel to the Lower 48 to engage in another kind of running is subject to debate.

My guess from the book is that she has had enough.

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

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# Hello Corporate America

## High Court Shreds U.S. Constitution

In a 5-4 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down several longstanding prohibitions on corporate political contributions, saying legislative measures to control such spending infringed upon corporate First Amendment free speech rights.

In other words, they handed the political process to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and members overflowing with cash to buy candidates.

GOP Sen. John McCain said he was disappointed by the Supreme Court's "lifting of the limits on corporate and union contributions."

### REPUBLICANS PRAISE IT

But many Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who challenged provisions of the McCain-Feingold Act in 2003, praised the court's decision.

The majority framed the decision, which will now allow corporations and unions to spend unlimited treasury funds on independent campaign expenditures, as essential to American democracy.

"Speech is an essential mechanism of democracy, for it is the means to hold officials accountable to the people," wrote Justice Anthony Kennedy, who authored the majority opinion joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Samuel Alito, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

"Political speech must prevail against laws that would suppress it, whether by design or inadvertently."

### 'PROFOUNDLY MISGUIDED'

Justice John Paul Stevens, who wrote the 90-page dissenting opinion, called the decision "profoundly misguided."

The 57-page majority opinion held that provisions of the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act [BCRA], otherwise known as the McCain-Feingold Act, prohibiting corporations from spending general treasury funds on "electioneering communications" and independent campaign advertisements, are unconstitutional.

In reaching the decision, the Court overturned the 20-year-old *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* decision, which held that corporations could be banned from using general treasury funds for political purposes.

"The government may regulate corporate political speech through disclaimer and disclosure requirements, but it may not suppress that speech altogether," wrote Justice Kennedy.

### 'HILLARY: THE MOVIE'

In the run-up to the 2008 presidential election, Citizens United, a conservative nonprofit corporation, wished to broadcast "Hillary: The Movie," a documentary that profiled various scandals that unfolded during President Bill Clinton's ten-

## Amendment Pushed To Reverse Court

A coalition of public interest organizations strongly condemned the U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowing unlimited corporate money in U.S. elections and announced that it is launching a campaign to amend the United States Constitution to overturn the ruling.

The groups - Voter Action, Public Citizen, the Center for Corporate Policy, and the American Independent Business Alliance - say the Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* poses a serious and direct threat to democracy.

They aim, through their constitutional amendment campaign, to correct the judiciary's creation of corporate rights under the First Amendment over the past three decades.

Immediately following the Court's ruling, the groups unveiled a new website - <http://www.freespeechforpeople.org> - devoted to this campaign.

### UNLEASHING A TORRENT OF MONEY

"Free speech rights are for people, not corporations," says John Bonifaz, Voter Action's legal director. "In wrongly assigning First Amendment protections to corporations, the Supreme Court has now unleashed a torrent of corporate money in our political process unmatched by any campaign expenditure totals in U.S. history."

"This campaign to amend the Constitution will seek to restore the First Amendment to its original purpose."

The public interest groups say that, since the late 1970s, a divided Supreme Court has transformed the First Amendment into a powerful tool for corporations seeking to evade democratic control and sidestep sound public welfare measures.

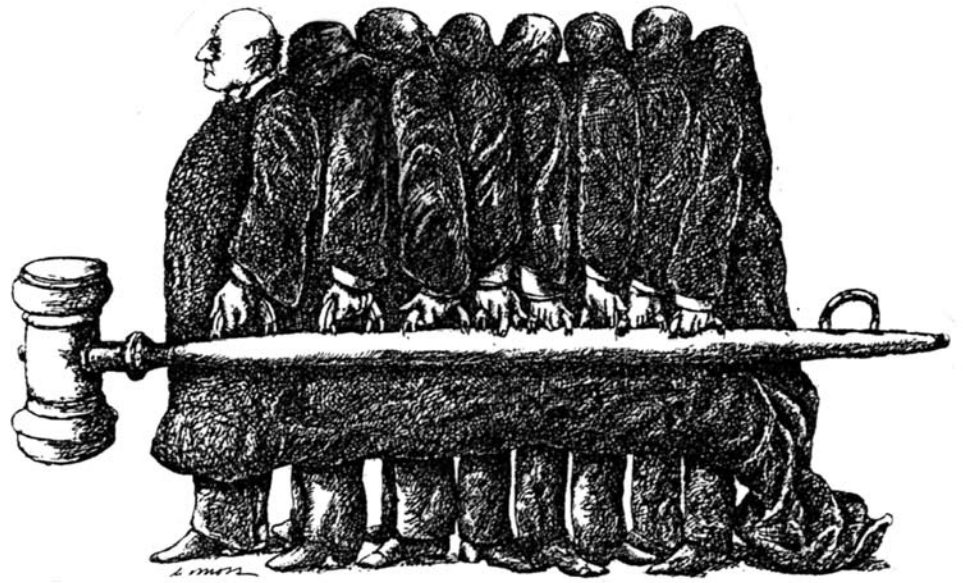
For the first two centuries of the American republic, the groups argue, corporations did not have First Amendment rights to limit the reach of democratically-enacted regulations.

### EXTREME CONCLUSION

"The corporate rights movement has reached its extreme conclusion in today's Supreme Court ruling," says Jeffrey Clements, general counsel to [www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org) and a consultant to Voter Action.

"In recent years, corporations have misused the First Amendment to evade and invalidate democratically-enacted reforms, from elections to healthcare, from financial reform to climate change and environmental protection, and more. Today's ruling, reversing longstanding precedent which prohibits corporate expenditures in elections, now requires a constitutional amendment response to protect our democracy."

In support of their new campaign, the groups point to prior amendments to the U.S. Constitution which were enacted to correct egregiously wrong decisions



ure in office and challenged Hillary Clinton's record in the Senate.

Citizens United had previously released the movie in theaters and on DVD, but wanted to broadcast the movie for on-demand viewers. Fearing that the broadcast would run afoul of the BCRA's prohibitions on corporate electioneering communications prior to elections, they brought suit in federal district court for an injunction against the law.

Because the movie was partially produced using corporate funds, a lower court ruled that it fell under the restrictions of the McCain-Feingold Act. Citizens United appealed that decision, and the case eventually wound up in the Supreme Court.

### NOT CHOICES FOR GOVERNMENT

"Some members of the public might consider Hillary to be insightful and instructive; some might find it to be neither high art nor a fair discussion on how to set the Nation's course; still others simply might suspend judgment on these points but decide to think more about issues and candidates," Kennedy wrote for the majority.

"Those choices and assessments, however, are not for the Government to make."

In a statement posted on Citizens United's website, David Bossie, president of the organization, hailed the ruling as a victory not only for his group, but for the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

### SPECIAL INTERESTS VS. CITIZENS

"The fault line on this issue does not split liberals and conservatives or Repub-

See SHREDS Page 12

of the U.S. Supreme Court directly impacting the democratic process, including the 15th Amendment prohibiting discrimination in voting based on race and the 19th Amendment, prohibiting discrimination in voting based on gender.

### AN INVENTED IDEA

"The Court has invented the idea that corporations have First Amendment rights to influence election outcomes out of whole cloth," says Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen.

"There is surely no originalist interpretation to support this outcome, since the Court created the rights only in recent decades. Nor can the outcome be justified in light of the underlying purpose and spirit of the First Amendment. Corporations are state-created entities, not real people."

"They do not have expressive interests like humans; and, unlike humans, they are uniquely motivated by a singular focus on their economic bottom line. Corporate spending on elections defeats rather than advances the democratic thrust of the First Amendment."

"With this decision, the Court has abandoned its usual practice of adjudicating non-constitutional claims before constitutional ones, a radical departure that indicates how far the Roberts' Court may be willing to go in order to serve the powerful 'business civil liberties' agenda," says Charlie Cray, director of the Center for Corporate Policy.

### A SURGE OF CASH

"While the immediate effect is likely to be a surge in corporate cash in election campaigns, this could also signal the beginning of a sustained attack on the rights and ability of everyday people to govern the behavior of corporations, which, if successful, could effectively eviscerate what's left of American democracy."

"American citizens have repeatedly amended the Constitution to defend democracy when the Supreme Court acts in collusion with democracy's enemies, whether they are slave masters, states imposing poll taxes on voters, or the opponents of woman suffrage," says Jamin Raskin, professor of constitutional law and the First Amendment at American University's Washington College of Law.

"Today, the Court has enthroned corporations, permitting them not only all kinds of special economic rights but now, amazingly, moving to grant them the same political rights as the people."

"This is a moment of high danger for democracy so we must act quickly to spell out in the Constitution what the people have always understood: that corporations do not enjoy the political and free speech rights that belong to the people of the United States."

Visit [www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org) for more information.

## PUBLIC FORUM

# Fighting Republicans And Corporatists

By Karen Webb

The Right Wing is correct on one thing: it is all about the Supreme Court, which is why we can't let the GOP win.

This is for any and all representatives and I am sending it to mine. We have already gotten a call from a rightwing idiot who is running against [U.S. Rep.] Tom Cole because Cole is too liberal. He thinks tea-bagging is the thing where the louder you scream to drown out everyone else's free speech the better it is.

The family values crazies who want more rights for fertilized eggs than for us and even fewer rights for gays are throwing away that baby with the bath water.

When born the baby will not have the health care it needs, especially not if it has special needs.

We have got to show up at Town Halls. If nothing else you need a sign that lists the family values of [Oklahoma Sen. Tom] Coburn, like, "This wealthy doctor does not think you deserve affordable or quality health care and that you should not have access to affordable redress even if they kill your mother. This wealthy doctor believes there should be no restraints whatsoever on corporate greed. This wealthy doctor does not believe you deserve a living wage. This wealthy doctor does not believe in free speech because it is damned expensive speech because you and I have to compete with corporations who control our very lives. This wealthy doctor believes it is alright to send jobs overseas so you can make more for the end product."

Even union bank accounts can't compete with health care giants and the proof

## SHREDS

From Page 11

licans and Democrats," Bossie wrote. "Instead, it pits entrenched establishment politicians against the very people whom they are elected to serve."

Not true, said President Barack Obama, who harshly criticized the decision and said he has instructed his administration "to get to work immediately with Congress on this issue."

"The Supreme Court has given a green light to a new stampede of special interest money in our politics," Obama said. "It is a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans."

### MASSIVE TILT

Michael Waldman, the executive director of the Brennan Center of Justice at New York University School of Law, which filed amicus briefs in the case, said the ruling means that "Exxon could spend Bloomberg-level money in every congressional campaign around the country."

Waldman was referring to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who tapped into his vast wealth and spent more than \$70 million of his own money on his first mayoral campaign.

Waldman added that the Supreme Court justices "chose to intervene in the political process in a way they didn't have to," which will now result in a "massive tilt in our democracy." He warned that the "impact of this case could dwarf the impact of this election."

Burt Neuborne, a law professor at NYU and a Supreme Court litigator, agreed.

### MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF MONEY

"[The decision] gives a green light for a massive flow of corporate treasury money into our democracy," he said, adding that the decision "changes the ground rules [of] our democracy."

Democratic lawmakers also reacted swiftly, calling the decision an historic mistake and a striking display of judicial activism, and vowing to pass legislation to restore the controls on corporate spending lifted by the Supreme Court.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-NY, chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, said he intends to hold a hearing in February to "examine the ways in which Congress might respond to ensure that our elections are not further corrupted by the influence of corporate money."

### WINNERS TO BE CORPORATIONS

Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-NY, was pointed in his remarks, saying the Supreme Court "has just determined the winners of next term's elections. It won't be Republicans. It won't be Democrats. It will be corporate America.

"I have not seen a decision that more undermines campaign finance, and it is probably one of the three or four decisions in the history of the Supreme Court that most undermines democracy," Schumer said. "We will regret the day that this decision was issued."

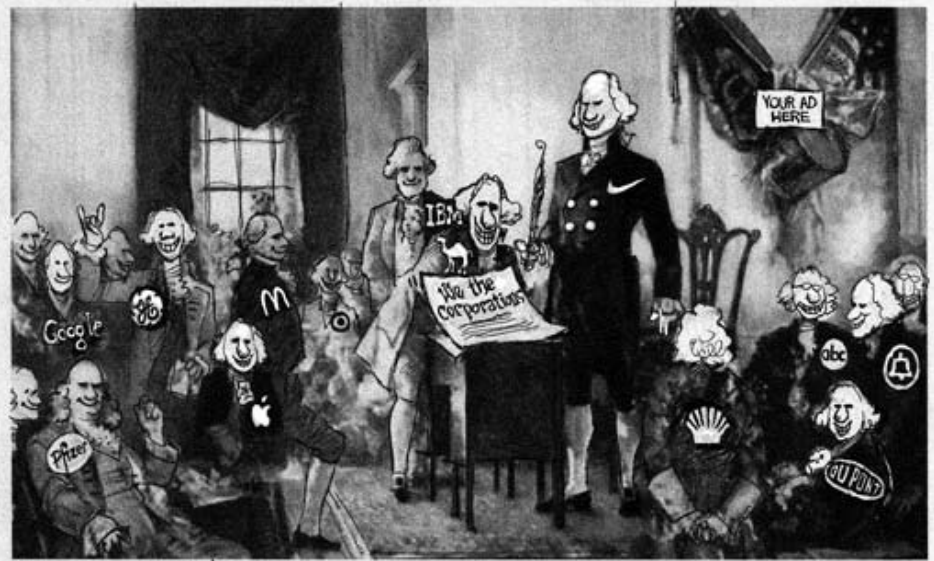
Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-RI, said he could not fathom how the Supreme Court has, in the past, "repeatedly upheld reasonable limits on corporate campaign spending" yet now ignores "settled precedent."

### DROWNING ORDINARY VOICES

"Five conservative justices have now rewritten the Constitution to permit corporate election spending to drown out the voices of individual Americans," Whitehouse said.

"Today's disastrous decision is a long step towards government of the CEOs, by the CEOs and for the CEOs. We need to carefully review the consequences of this decision, which threaten to further strengthen corporate interests at the ex-

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION UPDATED



is in who gets their way 100% of the time and you can't sue because they have more money and they have the GOP, including doctors, in their pockets. Even a guy who claims to be trying to get rid of pork will allow Wall Street and health care companies to do whatever they want. He is only interested in controlling your personal life.

- The author lives in Moore. More of her essays are available on-line at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net)

pense of ordinary Americans and, at worst, turn the keys of American democracy over to CEOs."

Sen. Russ Feingold, D-WI, who, along with Republican Sen. John McCain, co-sponsored the legislation that bears their name, said the ruling "was a terrible mistake."

Good government groups also came out forcefully against the decision.

Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21, said the ruling is a "disaster for the American people and a very dark day for the Supreme Court."

### MOST RADICAL IN HISTORY

"This is the most radical and destructive campaign-finance decision in the history of the Supreme Court," Wertheimer said. "With a stroke of the pen, five justices wiped out a century of American history devoted to preventing corporate corruption of our democracy. It's wrong for the country, wrong for the Constitution and wrong for our democracy."

Bob Edgar, president of Common Cause, said the ruling is the "Super Bowl of really bad decisions" and "returns us to the days of the robber barons."

"This decision allows Wall Street to tap its vast corporate profits to drown out the voice of the public in our democracy," Edgar said. "The path from here is clear: Congress must free itself from Wall Street's grip so Main Street can finally get a fair shake. We need to change the way America pays for elections."

### THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Chief Justice John Roberts, who during his confirmation hearings promised to bring "no agenda" and to remain faithful to the law, wrote specifically about the conflict between the weight of precedent and overturning Austin, arguing that the broad decision addressing the constitutional questions in the case was necessary, as a more limited statutory decision was impossible.

So much for his integrity.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, in the court's first major decision of the 2009-10 term, sided with the dissenting wing of the court, but did not write her own.

Attacking the majority for overruling Austin and damaging the policy of stare decisis, Justice Stevens said, "The only relevant thing that has changed since Austin and McConnell," when the Court first considered the constitutionality of the BCRA, "is the composition of this court."

Proponents argued that corporations should not enjoy the same First Amendment protections as humans, but the court disagreed.

The court further held, citing a string of other campaign-finance cases, that the government cannot equalize the relative voice of citizens and associations during political campaigns by prohibiting speech.

"All speakers, including individuals and the media, use money amassed from the economic marketplace to fund their speech. The First Amendment protects the resulting speech."

Justice Stevens criticized the decision for "rewriting the law relating to campaign expenditures by for profit corporations and unions" when it could have more narrowly dealt with the campaign-finance law and First Amendment doctrine related to nonprofit corporations.

"Although they make enormous contributions to our society, corporations are not actually members of it," Justice Stevens wrote.

"They cannot vote or run for office. Because they may be managed and controlled by nonresidents, their interests may conflict in fundamental respects with the interests of eligible voters."

Ouch!

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## PUBLIC FORUM

# Radio's Paul Harvey As Cold War Warrior

By Kenny Belford

We learned a little more recently about a former Tulsan that was revered as one of our favorite sons. It wasn't good news.

For years conservative Paul Harvey was a legendary broadcaster, a staple of the ABC Radio Network with his daily commentary programs. He was frequently given the same level of respect accorded to Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite and those that reached the lofty pinnacle at the top of their profession.

He was considered a man of great virtue, an individual that would deliver the news commanding a respect for his integrity. That was the image. It turns out the image was a little off the mark.

Paul Harvey was, in real life, a liar, a fraud, and a rat fink.

### **FBI DOCUMENTS UNSEALED**

In a Washington Post story published Jan. 22, they obtained a series of FBI documents through the Freedom of Information Act that revealed a side to Paul Harvey he carefully kept secret.

As he was climbing the broadcasting ranks in Chicago, Paul Harvey hatched a scheme he hoped would allow him to jump the pack. The Washington Post story states:

*The Cold War beginning of the Harvey-[J. Edgar] Hoover bond was an incident from 1951, when Harvey was 32. The son of a cop from Tulsa, OK, Harvey had already made a name for himself as a radio and TV commentator in Chicago, specializing in human-interest stories and strong opinions delivered in shirt-sleeve English.*

*He routinely hammered officials for being lax on security, in particular those in charge of the Argonne National Laboratory, which conducted nuclear testing 20 miles west of Chicago.*

### **BOOSTING HIS CAREER**

*After wrapping up his television broadcast on the evening of Feb. 5, 1951, Harvey set out to prove his case and make some career-enhancing headlines for himself.*

*Harvey guided his black Cadillac Fleetwood toward Argonne, arriving sometime past midnight. He parked in a secluded spot, tossed his overcoat onto the barbed wire topping a fence, then scampered over.*

*Breaking the law in an act of participatory journalism, Harvey planned to scratch his signature on "objects that could not possibly have been brought to the site by someone else," according to a statement later given by an off-duty guard who accompanied him.*

*The signature would stand as proof that Harvey had easily defeated the lab's security. But seconds after Harvey hit the ground, security officers spotted him, documents show. Harvey ran until, caught in a Jeep's headlights, he tripped and fell.*

### **THE GUARDS APPROACHED**

*As guards approached, Harvey sprang to his feet and waved. Guards asked whether Harvey realized he was in a restricted area.*

*"Harvey replied no, that he thought he might be at the airport because of the red lights," one report says. Harvey told the authorities he had been headed to a neighboring town to give a speech when his car died.*

*On the drive to the lab's security office, an FBI memo says, "every once in a while, Harvey would remark that his car was stalled out there and he would like to have a push."*

*Under questioning, Harvey eventually dropped his cover story but refused to elaborate, saying he wanted to tell his tale before a congressional committee.*

### **HE HAD IT ALL TYPED OUT**

*Guards searched his Cadillac and found a nickel-plated .380-caliber Colt au-*



*tomatic. It belonged to a Naval Intelligence officer whom Harvey had brought along as a witness. The search also revealed a four-page, typewritten script for an upcoming broadcast.*

*Harvey, it turned out, had planned from the outset to feed the nation a bogus account of his escapade: "I hereby affirm the following is a true and accurate account," the script began. "My friend and I were driving a once-familiar road, when the car stalled. We started to walk. We made no effort to conceal our presence. Suddenly I realized where I was. That I had entered, unchallenged, one of the United States' vital atomic research installations. Quite by accident, understand, I had found myself inside the 'hot' area. We could have carried a bomb in, or classified documents out."*

### **STUNT LEADS TO GRAND JURY**

*Word of the stunt soon made headlines. The U.S. attorney for Illinois empaneled a grand jury to consider an espionage indictment. The Atomic Energy Commission suggested privately that Harvey might avoid prosecution if he praised the commission's professionalism on the air, reports show.*

*A member of Congress worked to kill the investigation, and Harvey went on the air to suggest he was being set up. An FBI official noted in one memo that "this looks like a publicity stunt and I don't think we should carry the ball if we can avoid it."*

*Agents conducted interviews, kept tabs on developments and sent updates to Hoover and his deputies in Washington. But the bureau avoiding taking sides, apparently waiting to see whom public opinion would favor.*

*Two months after the incident, a federal grand jury officially declined to indict Harvey. Nothing in Harvey's file suggests Hoover did anything to help. But Harvey appears to have been grateful for something.*

### **FABRICATING A NEWS STORY**

*His plan from the beginning was to fabricate a news story, then present it as fact. Harvey's scheme was full of lies and he narrowly avoided having to face federal criminal charges for it.*

*For 20 years after that Paul Harvey maintained a close relationship with J. Edgar Hoover, and frequently submitted his news scripts in advance to Hoover for*

See HARVEY Page 18

# Only One 'Ism' Can Possibly Work

By James B. Townsend

An "ism" that's pure cannot endure!

Pure Capitalism works for a while, then, GREED and MONOPOLIES take over and destroy the opportunities of pure capitalism.

Pure Socialism works for a while, then, human nature comes into play as people refuse to shoulder their responsibilities and leaders take advantage of the opportunity to become dictators.

Americanism is the ability to combine the best qualities of all "isms" with checks and balances established in the form of government regulation and federal insurance of the banks, both products of the Great Depression of the 1930's.

As a result our economy has had its ups and downs, but survived very well until we begin to experience the political efforts to reduce the role of government regulation of the major industries in the 1980s.

The railroads were the first to be deregulated. As a result we have seen wholesale abandonment of railroads that provided service to the agriculture industry and rural America. The railroads were permitted to merge, creating mega-railroads that have become corridors of monopolies, serving only those they want to and charging their price for service.

The airlines were the next to be deregulated. In the deregulated environment almost every major airline has been operating on the verge of bankruptcy and

if you took away the multi-billion dollar government subsidies provided by the FAA for safety, it is likely there would not be a commercial airplane in the sky over America.

The trucking industry was the next to be deregulated, ending reasonable transportation costs for small businesses in communities of less than 10,000 populations.

The champion of deregulation in the 1980's was an economist, Milton Friedman. I suspect he was on the payroll of the industries that wanted to be free of the government regulation put in place after the Depression of the 1930's, designed to control greed.

Jesus Christ turned over the tables of the money lenders in an effort to give hope to the poor and depressed of that time.

Robin Hood robbed the rich and gave to the poor and the whole world loved him.

Americanism is the only "ism" that has an opportunity to work, but in order for it to work it must provide opportunities for the poor and the rich alike while accepting the challenge to develop a broad middle class that can support both.

- The author, a retired Democratic state Senator and Corporation Commission member, lives in Shawnee

## PUBLIC FORUM

# GOP Stresses 'The Audacity Of Nope'

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Who would have thought that a party, any political party, which had done nothing but say "No" to every positive action and proposal significant to the nation put before its delegation in Congress could possibly be laying a plausible claim to "winning" after a year of such negatives?

"Nobody would've thunk it," to use a Yogi Berra expression. That is so far from a winning tactic, it is difficult to imagine any success could come from it.

Well, it would likely have not been so, had there been a fair debate on the merits of the issues placed before Congress for consideration.

The Republican Party, and its various spin-off radical groups with heavy financial backing, had minions out in full force. They were in the mainstream media, their Fox channel, talk radio, the so-called town meetings, and the faux grass roots "tea bagger" movement sponsored by organized moneyed sources.

### WORLD'S MOST GULLIBLE?

The American people, regardless of the wisdom and credit lauded upon them by politicians, may well be the most gullible people in the world.

With control of talk radio and a right wing news channel, the Republicans have told the people, over and over and time and time again, that everything coming out of Washington is evil.

Of course, this is emphasized all the more during a Democratic administration.

Big business in this country has always preferred a laissez faire, deregulating government with an attitude that anything that is good for business is good for the country. Never mind that such an attitude usually results in hurt and catastrophe for the little people, and in the most recent case – the country's big banks and a near collapse of the nation's economy.

### TIRED OF STALEMATES AND GRIDLOCK

The country is indeed sick and tired of politics as usual in Washington. They are tired of stalemate and gridlock. They are tired of Democrats fighting among themselves and squandering their opportunity to accomplish something good.

They are tired of their welfare and their interests not receiving attention commensurate with the big banks and car companies. They are sick of losing jobs while our buying imports abroad increases.

The right-wing communicators in this country have taken advantage of all this pent up anger, and they have blamed it on actions that the Democratic leadership has taken to try to save the country from disaster and to help the people.

Hence the financial bailout bill was condemned as giving taxpayer money to big banks, which then gave their management big bonuses. The stimulus package, which has saved millions of jobs across the country, has been examined microscopically and a few seemingly dumb projects exploited in the mainstream, as well as the right wing media, to color the whole effort black.

### BUSY REFUTING GOP LIES

Mainstream media have assisted the nay-sayers in getting their message out.

## You Want Truth? Here's Some To Ponder

By Sharon Martin

I flipped through the channels, catching snippets of news from Haiti, and stumbled on Pat Robertson telling us his version of events. He relayed the message, as from God Himself, telling why He sent the earthquake.

My first impulse was to label this hatermonger a crazy old coot, but that was closely followed by realization ... and fear.

We have reason to be afraid of the noisemakers. If people hear something often enough, even an obvious untruth, they will come to believe it.

### SARAH PALIN'S RANTINGS

That is why a certain ex-governor continues to spread the lie that is too dangerous, like Valdemort, to name. Even after the St. Petersburg Times labeled her definition of end-of-life counseling as "pants on fire," she didn't retract.

Why? She knows that if you say something often enough and in the right places, it will be accepted as truth.

We need a spokesperson for the truth, one who shakes the truth like a fist in your face.

Whose version of the truth? OK, my version. I believe that all persons are created equal, that we are our brother's keeper, and that it is more holy to be tolerant than it is to hate, but there are other, verifiable truths.

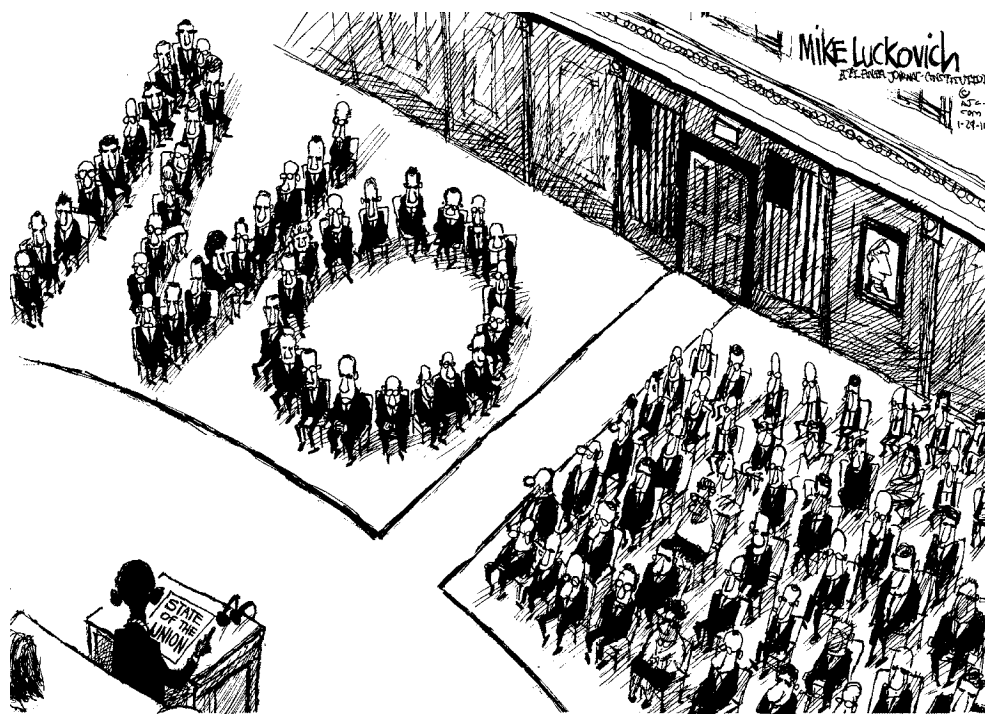
### THESE TRUTHS ARE SELF-EVIDENT

According to genetics, we are all one human race. You can sort us according to culture, religion, or genetic traits, but that doesn't alter the fact that we belong to a single race. That's a truth worth repeating.

According to economics, it costs less to educate a person than to incarcerate him or her. Another truth: a large percentage of people in prison are poorly educated. What if we used our tax money to give every citizen an excellent education? How might that change the future of our country? What news channels are covering this conversation?

Here are some truths according to history, which, alas, has its own truth management problems: prohibition didn't work. Rather, it ushered in an age of lawlessness and bloodshed. We are repeating history with our mismanaged war on

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In their constant search of controversy and audience interest-building for their own dollar inflow, mainstream media have given wide circulation to negative voices with nothing other than criticism to stir up questions and controversy. Apparently, critical remarks draw bigger audiences than do positive explanations of the better features of a proposed program.

More lies have been told about the president's proposed health care reform measures than any other. This has been demonized in every conceivable fashion, using every conceivable mass communications technique.

Kept busy refuting the falsehoods and distortions spread by Republicans and their fringe fanatics, those favoring changes for the benefit of consumers have simply been drowned out.

Those for positive change were always on the defensive, and it is terribly difficult to combat distortions, lies, and half-truths and to explain something complex at the same time.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO CRITICAL THINKING?

Indeed the party of "nope" has been winning, because the American people have been responding to emotion, to their pent-up frustrations, and to false and misleading information.

Members of the public have neither examined the logic nor the validity of information presented to them. They have been deluded into ditto-thinking according to what they hear. They have not been engaged in critical thinking for themselves.

Those of us with careers in education who thought we were teaching students to think critically have been proven to have a high rate of failures. Too few of our protégés have been practicing that logic. But on the other hand, there is always that "audacity of hope."

– The author, AKA *The Militant Moderate*, lives in Enid. More of his essays are available on-line at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net)

drugs.

Another truth: war can bankrupt a country. Sure, some industrialists manage to snag a few billion as the economy slides toward a black hole.

War kills innocents. It consumes. It leaves hatred in its wake. It may take generations for our country to recover from its costly foray into the Middle East. It will take longer for the Middle Eastern countries to recover.

### IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN YEAR TO RECOVER

Here is the truth that has consequences now: our current economic troubles are the result of years of mismanagement, greed, war, and lies, and it will take more than one year of a new administration to repair the damage.

I'm looking for a voice that can stand above the current loud nonsense and hateful rhetoric and speak so that the masses hear.

Until then, let my mouse squeak reach as many ears as possible: we are all in this together and we must work together – conservative and liberal, immigrant and native, Christian, Muslim, atheist – to survive as a nation and as an inhabitable world.

And, as Lily Tomlin would say, that's the truth.

– The author lives in Oilton

## Divine Guidance

A little boy was waiting for his mother to come out of the grocery store. As he waited, he was approached by a man who asked, "Son, can you tell me where the Post Office is?"

The little boy replied, "Sure! Just go straight down this street a couple of blocks and turn to your right."

The man thanked the boy kindly and said, "I'm the new pastor in town. I'd like for you to come to church on Sunday. I'll show you how to get to Heaven."

The little boy replied with a chuckle, "Awwww, come on ... You don't even know the way to the Post Office."

## The Lies Never End

# 'Birthers' Defend New GOP Senator Brown

By Max Blumenthal

Leaders of the "birther" movement that has sought to discredit President Barack Obama's status as an American citizen are defending new Republican Sen. Scott Brown's suggestion that Obama was born out of wedlock.

Andy Martin, a right-wing polemicist and perennial vanity candidate who claims on the front page of his blog that Obama's real father was the communist intellectual Frank Marshall Davis, said of Brown's remarks, "I think this shows Brown is a lot smarter than I realized and he's a lot more honest."

Martin told me that he was planning to publish a defense of Brown on his Web site.

Orly Taitz, the eccentric Orange County, CA-based dental technician who has filed numerous failed lawsuits challenging Obama's status as an American citizen, told me, "What [Scott] Brown is saying is true, which is that no one has seen a marriage certificate. I think the context in which he was saying this is that a lot of people are asking questions and want answers."

Brown made his comments immediately after the Republican National Convention in a debate on the now-defunct local CN8 news channel. The key moment, during an exchange in which Brown was defending the honor of Sarah Palin, went as follows:

Brown: Barack's mom had him when she was, what, 18 years old?

Guest: And married!

Brown: Well, I don't know about that.

Brown's suggestion that Obama was born out of wedlock echoes claims Martin made during the 2008 campaign. As Blue Mass pointed out, in July 2008, just before Brown made his notorious remarks, Martin wrote:

*Barack Obama, Senior, and Anne Dunham never married. Obama knows this fact. This is also why he keeps his white grandmother a virtual prisoner; she knows, too, and she won't lie.*

*Through the past several decades Obama has pretended he 'didn't know' the facts about his illegitimate birth. He thought he could get away with the big lie. And he almost did get away with it ...*

## Shocking Discoveries About Scott Brown

By Laura Clawson

The campaign against the new U.S. Republican senator from Massachusetts, Scott Brown, was effectively 10 days long. Ten days is not a long time, but in that time we learned a lot about Brown.

1. Brown suggested on television that President Obama was born out of wedlock, then tried to claim that Martha Coakley was making things up when her campaign called attention to it.

2. Brown voted against aid to 9/11 recovery workers because it was too expensive, while at the same time he was trying to fund a golf course in his district and give tax subsidies to corporations.

3. Brown tried to deny emergency contraception to rape victims. When he was

called on it, he tried to deny the truth, then hid behind his daughters.

4. Brown claimed he didn't know anything about any Tea Parties, even though he'd appeared at their rallies and publicized fundraisers they threw for him.

5. Brown opposes a fee to get back bailout money from the biggest banks.

6. Brown supports a constitutional ban on gay marriage and thinks two women raising a child is "just not normal."

That's a lot to take in in 10 days. Imagine if there had been a longer campaign in which these stories emerged more gradually so voters had time to absorb them fully. Now imagine what else we'll know about Scott Brown in 10 more days.

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## Is Fast Food Safer Than School Lunches?

By Tara Lohan

A study by USA Today found that the U.S. government's school lunch program, via the USDA, handed schools millions of pounds of beef and chicken that wouldn't even clear the standards of fast food restaurants like Jack in the Box and KFC.

The quality of meat in fast food restaurants has always frightened me, but not as much as reading this:

McDonald's, Burger King and Costco, for instance, are far more rigorous in checking for bacteria and dangerous pathogens. They test the ground beef they buy five to 10 times more often than the USDA tests beef made for schools during a typical production day.

And the limits Jack in the Box and other big retailers set for certain bacteria in their burgers are up to 10 times more stringent than what the USDA sets for school beef.

For chicken, the USDA has supplied schools with thousands of tons of meat from old birds that might otherwise go to compost or pet food. Called "spent hens" because they're past their egg-laying prime, the chickens don't pass muster with Colonel Sanders - KFC won't buy them - and they don't pass the soup test, either.

The Campbell Soup Company says it stopped using them a decade ago based on "quality considerations."

So, our kids are eating food that's about the equivalent of pet food. And a whole lot of kids. The article notes that 31 million students a day eat this meat and "President Obama noted earlier this year that, for many children, school lunches are 'their most nutritious meal - sometimes their only meal - of the day,'" which is also frightening.

And it gets worse.

"Each year the USDA purchases more than \$1 billion in cheap commodities as part of the federal contribution to the school lunch program," wrote David Murphy for Civil Eats. "Regretfully, the USDA is driven by two factors: get the food for the lowest price and prop up prices for commodities that are in oversupply or are unattractive to business purchases. Not quality.

"In 2009 alone, the USDA purchased more than \$151 million of commodity pork to prop up failing industrial pork producers."

Our children shouldn't be a dumping bin for food waste and a prop for failing agribusiness.

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## Service, Defined

I became confused when I heard the word "service" used with these agencies:

- Internal Revenue "Service"
- U.S. Postal "Service"
- Telephone "Service"
- Cable TV "Service"
- Civil "Service"
- State, City, County and Public "Service"

This is not what I thought "service" meant.

But today, I overheard two farmers talking, and one of them said he had hired a bull to "service" a few cows.

BAM! It all came into focus.

Now I understand what all those agencies are doing to us.



*His mother was promiscuous and had a child out of wedlock, in 1961, when that was still scandalous behavior. Is this Obama's idea of 'family values?' Obviously, he has been deceiving the American people and hoping his advertising lies could overcome the truth. He has failed.*

Martin has an extensive history of extreme statements and bizarre behavior, including a series of anti-Semitic rants that he described to me as "35-year-old rubbish."

When Martin declared his candidacy in the Illinois Republican Senate primary and then attacked frontrunner Mark Kirk as "a defacto pedophile," Illinois GOP chairman Pat Brady dismissed him as "a sick man."

Nevertheless, Martin is a prolific and popular figure within far-right Tea Party circles, prompting him to entertain the notion that his writings might have influenced Brown. "I'm not trying to say that [Brown] got the idea from me," he said, "but the fact is my work has had a lot of impact."

For Martin, Taitz and the movement they represent, Brown's victory was a watershed event. Though he has portrayed himself as a moderate, Martin sees Brown as a stealth candidate whose success could help move even the most hysterical birther claims about Obama's background further into the mainstream.

"I said to Obama himself that either you come clean about the truth or there will come a time when people will unelect you and delegitimize you," Martin said. "The mainstream media elected Barack Obama by refusing to tell the truth but I think that we might be witnessing a dam burst here."

# Unions Speak Out On Greenhouse Gas Curb

By Brendan Smith

Over the past couple of years, the American labor movement has become an enthusiastic supporter of expanding “green jobs” that fight global warming. But the actual practice of implementing emissions-reducing policies that scientists say are safe has been a harder pill to swallow.

Now, in a significant breakthrough, three large unions have come out in favor of the science-based emissions targets called for by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC].

As 250 international union delegates arrived recently in Copenhagen for the global climate summit, a statement by the Transport Workers Union [TWU] and a joint statement by the Service Employees International Union [SEIU] and the Laborers International Union of North America [LIUNA] called for a 25% to 40% reduction on 1990 emissions levels for developed countries by 2020.

## FULLY ENGAGED

Sean Sweeney, director of the Cornell University Global Labor Institute, who worked with the U.S. labor delegation to be fully engaged in the UN process at the Copenhagen conference, said, “The statements are a clear sign that U.S. unions want to bring scientific necessity into alignment with job creation and green economic development. Many other unions are also moving in this direction. Engaging with unions overseas has also helped U.S. unions to see support for climate protection is also an act of international solidarity.”

## UNIONS AND TARGETS

Both union statements gave support to the more limited climate protection measures proposed by President Barack Obama on the eve of the Copenhagen summit. They also endorsed the climate legislation introduced by Sens. John Kerry and Barbara Boxer. But they argued that reductions to address the climate emergency must go substantially further.

They noted that President Obama’s commitment of 17% reduction on 2005 levels is only 4% below 1990 levels, which have been widely used as a benchmark in international scientific discussions.

The SEIU-LIUNA statement points out this means that extreme, perhaps impossible reductions will be necessary later on to meet the targets that science says are necessary.

“To reach an 80% reduction by 2050, the scientific consensus, with an only 4% reduction by 2020 means that there must be a 76% reduction over the last three decades or roughly 25% per decade,” the statement says.

## BACKLOADING UNJUSTIFIED

“We find it difficult to justify backloading this obligation in a way that shifts the burden of reducing carbon emissions from ourselves to our children and grandchildren. Accordingly, we would support more aggressive carbon emission reduction policies.”

The statement notes that “an aggressive and science-based approach to emissions reductions” is “absolutely necessary” for “achieving a sustainable environment.”

Until now, few – if any – U.S. unions, and neither of the major labor federations, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, have supported specific emission-reduction targets or even gone on record to support the principle of making the reductions called for by scientific consensus.

This is largely because only a few unions with a direct stake in the issue, notably in the energy and manufacturing sectors, have opposed such measures.

## THREE UNIONS ARE IN LINE

Their stand brings these three unions in line with the position of the International Trade Union Confederation [ITUC], an organization that represents na-



tional union federations, with a membership of 175 million workers in 155 countries. It organized the international trade union delegation to the Copenhagen conference and strongly supported the IPCC targets.

An article published by the Bureau of National Affairs reported that the AFL-CIO had issued its own position paper at the Poznan climate talks, supporting ITUC concerns for “decent work, green jobs, industrial regeneration, border adjustment mechanisms and worker adjustment mechanisms,” but failing to indicate support for the targets and timetables at the core of the ITUC position.

The BNA reported that, “U.S. labor unions balked at backing ITUC’s position, given fears that deep cuts would ‘devastate’ heavy manufacturing in the United States as well as the coal and steel industries.”

Labor’s traditional approach to climate policy was largely shaped by industries in the manufacturing and energy sectors. That is likely to change, however, as a result of organized labor’s changing center of gravity.

According to a recent study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, barely one union member in 10 works in manufacturing. An even smaller proportion works in fossil-fuel production.

Today the overwhelming majority of union members are in services and the public sector. But they have barely begun to weigh in significantly on climate policy. If the new statements by the transport, service and laborers unions are any indication, they are likely to favor stronger climate protection with more stringent emissions reductions.

A Transport Workers Union statement said that a science-based approach to emissions reductions would be good for our economy and for working families.

## UNION POSITIONS MATTER

AFL-CIO support is essential to passing any climate change bill, according to Jason Grumet, director of the National Commission on Energy Policy, who told Congressional Quarterly, “If you don’t have organized labor, you can’t get something through.” Strong union support for science-based targets could play a significant role in strengthening current legislation.

The U.S. will also face an enormous number of climate-related policy decisions in the near and more distant future, ranging from what provisions should be included in international treaties to national policy on fuel-efficiency standards to sidewalks and bicycle lanes for local streets.

Organized labor can be a significant player in all of them. It can also play a big role in how those policies are actually implemented in industries and workplaces. And it can help educate its 16.5 million members about what climate change means for them and their children – and what has to be done about it.

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# 20k Killed In Homes By Radon Gas Last Year

By Brian Merchant

In January, the World Health Organization released its mortality statistics – never a fun document to read. But one stat stood out, and was pounced on by the EPA: 20,000 Americans were killed from simply living in their homes last year.

The culprit? The under-publicized – and underestimated – radioactive gas radon that emanates from rocks and soil. Radon kills more people every year than drunk driving, fires, and carbon monoxide.

In response to the statistics, the EPA has proposed making January the National Radon Awareness month. So here’s some awareness: according to the Environmental Health Committee, radon is one of the most pervasive problems in the U.S. – it’s thought to be a risk in every single county in the nation.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, after smoking. It’s thought to be responsible for anywhere between 3% and 14% of lung cancer deaths.

And you could be breathing in radon right in your own home, as we speak: 80% of homes in the U.S. have not been tested for radon. That isn’t meant to be a scare tactic – it’s just meant to be a bit of a wake up call.

Radon is relatively easy and cheap to test for – it just takes a bit of effort. And a combination of lack of awareness and lack of effort is in essence leaving some 20,000 Americans dead every year.

According to the Environmental Health Committee, Radon is naturally occurring, odorless, and colorless gas produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil,

rock, and water. Because radon is a gas, it can enter buildings through openings or cracks in the foundation.

The radon gas itself decays into radioactive solids, called radon daughters. The radon daughters attach to dust particles in the air, and can be inhaled. The inhalation of radon daughters has been linked to lung cancer.

So how do you know if radon is a problem in your home? Simple – test it. Use a test kit or hire a professional to test for it.

Radon measurements are relatively simple to perform and are essential to assess radon concentration in homes. Indoor radon concentration varies with the construction of buildings and ventilation habits.

These concentrations not only vary substantially with the season but also from day to day and even from hour to hour. Because of these fluctuations, estimating the annual average concentration of radon in indoor air requires reliable measurements of mean radon concentrations for at least three months and preferably longer.

Short-term measurements provide only a crude indication of the actual radon concentration.

In short, assessing radon is difficult to do accurately – even by the experts. So test your home over a long period of time [3 months] to get the best idea.

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# Jesus Hated War – Christians Love It?

By Gary G. Kohls

When Gulf War I ended [during George Bush the Elder's presidency], Gen. Norman Schwartzkopf, the field commander, triumphantly proclaimed, "God must have been on our side!"

In his memoir, *It Doesn't Take A Hero*, Schwartzkopf claimed that he kept a Bible at his bedside throughout the war.

I cringed knowing that, according to the biblical Jesus, God is never on the side of the victors. The God of love that Jesus revealed was on the side of the victims, the oppressed, the starving, the sick, the naked, the meek who were victimized by unjust power.

Jesus's God would not be on the side of the war-makers, but on the side of the peacemakers, the compassionate and long-suffering ones who work to prevent killing and to relieve the suffering of the victims of war.

I cringed when I heard Schwartzkopf claim God's blessings on the carnage that he helped orchestrate because similar claims have been used to rationalize killing throughout history, from ancient times to some of the darkest days of the modern era.

## GOD WAS ON THEIR SIDE?

As the German Nazis went about their systematic purging of any and all left-ist or anti-fascist groups – Jews, socialists, homosexuals, liberals, communists, trade unionists and conscientious objectors to war – they insisted that God was on their side, too.

Adolf Hitler claimed that he was doing God's will. German soldiers, both in WWI and WWII, went into battle with the words "Gott Mit Uns" [God With Us] inscribed on their belt buckles.

The slogan also convinced most of the educated Protestant and Catholic clergymen to comfortably proclaim from their pulpits that Hitler's wars were endorsed by the Christian God, and therefore every military action could be justified and carried out without guilt.

Bishops, priests and pastors, most of whom had taken an oath of allegiance to Hitler, told their parishioners that it was their Christian duty to join the military and fight and kill for the Fuhrer.

## TWO GULF WARS

In the last two decades, the two Bush administrations mounted wars in the Persian Gulf region that had the consent [or acquiescence] of the majority of



U.S. church leaders, with prayers from Billy Graham in the White House the night before the invasions began.

Virtually all Christian evangelical, conservative and many mainstream church leaders and their congregations were active supporters of the Bush wars.

Only four American Catholic bishops voted in opposition to Bush the Elder's Gulf War I [at an annual conference of U.S. Catholic bishops]. In Gulf War II, Pope John Paul II declared that the war was contrary to the teachings of Jesus, but most American Catholic leaders and parishioners ignored the Pontiff's warnings and supported the war. Most American Protestants did the same.

Yet, General Schwartzkopf and both Presidents Bush are in "good" company when it comes to believing that God is on their side in war. All U.S. presidents and presidential candidates in recent memory, even President Obama, end their speeches with "May God Bless the United States of America," the equivalent of the German military's "Gott Mit Uns."

Today, the killing is not just done by soldiers on the ground who can see the "whites of their eyes." War is now often done from a safe distance by the high-tech "soldiering" of high-altitude bombing, supersonic jet fighters, long-range missiles [many of them computer-guided from unmanned drones], and radioactive DU armor-piercing ordnance that will continue killing for many centuries into the future.

See WAR Page 18

# Stunning Stats On Private Contractor Waste

By Jeremy Scahill

A hearing in Sen. Claire McCaskill's Contract Oversight subcommittee on contracting in Afghanistan has highlighted some important statistics that provide a window into the extent to which the Obama Administration has picked up the Bush-era war privatization baton and sprinted with it.

Overall, contractors now comprise a whopping 69% of the Department of Defense's total workforce, "the highest ratio of contractors to military personnel in U.S. history." That's not in one war zone – that's the Pentagon in its entirety.

In Afghanistan, the Obama Administration blows the Bush Administration out of the privatized water.

According to a memo released by McCaskill's staff, "From June 2009 to September 2009, there was a 40% increase in Defense Department contractors in Afghanistan.

## PRIVATE COPS PROLIFERATE

'During the same period, the number of armed private security contractors working for the Defense Department in Afghanistan doubled, increasing from approximately 5,000 to more than 10,000.'

At present, there are 104,000 Department of Defense contractors in Afghanistan. According to a report from the Congressional Research Service, as a result of the coming surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, there may be up to 56,000 additional contractors deployed.

But here is another group of contractors that often goes unmentioned: 3,600 State Department contractors and 14,000 USAID contractors. That means that the current total U.S. force in Afghanistan is approximately 189,000 personnel [68,000 U.S. troops and 121,000 contractors].

Remember, that's right now. And that, according to McCaskill, is a conservative estimate. A year from now, we will likely see more than 220,000 U.S.-funded personnel on the ground in Afghanistan.

## CONTRACTORS DOUBLE

The U.S. has spent more than \$23 billion on contracts in Afghanistan since 2002. By next year, the number of contractors will have doubled since 2008 when taxpayers funded over \$8 billion in Afghanistan-related contracts.

Despite the massive number of contracts and contractors in Afghanistan, oversight is utterly lacking.

"The increase in Afghanistan contracts has not seen a corresponding increase in contract management and oversight," according to McCaskill's briefing paper.

"In May 2009, DCMA [Defense Contract Management Agency] Director Charlie Williams told the Commission on Wartime Contracting that as many as 362 positions for Contracting Officer's Representatives [CORs] in Afghanistan were currently vacant."

Remember, there are officially 14,000 USAID contractors and the official monitoring and tracking system found none of these people and less than half of the State Department contractors.

As for waste and abuse, the subcommittee says that the Defense Contract Audit Agency identified more than \$950 million in questioned and unsupported costs submitted by Defense Department contracts for work in Afghanistan. That's 16% of the total contract dollars reviewed.

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# Ready! Aim! Pray! Contractor Proselytizes

Coded references to New Testament Bible passages about Jesus Christ are inscribed on high-powered rifle sights provided to the United States military by a Michigan company, an ABC News investigation has found.

The sights are used by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and in the training of Iraqi and Afghan soldiers. The maker of the sights, Trijicon, has a \$660 million multi-year contract to provide up to 800,000 sights to the Marine Corps, and additional contracts to provide sights to the U.S. Army.

U.S. military rules specifically prohibit the proselytizing of any religion in Iraq or Afghanistan and were drawn up in order to prevent criticism that the U.S. was embarked on a religious "Crusade" in its war against Al Qaeda and Iraqi insur-

gents.

One of the citations on the gun sights, 2COR4:6, is an apparent reference to Second Corinthians 4:6 of the New Testament, which reads: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Other references include citations from the books of Revelation, Matthew and John dealing with Jesus as "the light of the world." John 8:12, referred to on the gun sights as JN8:12, reads, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The Pentagon is looking into the ABC News report.

# Gestapo Glenn Beck's Anti-Obama Tactics

By Eric Burns

When Glenn Beck recently aired an hour-long documentary titled "Revolutionary Holocaust: Live Free or Die," it marked a major turning point in the annals of television.

The film, narrated by Beck himself, purported to reveal "really disturbing and shocking stuff," specifically the "dirty little secret" that progressive political beliefs led inexorably to "some of the most horrifying outcomes in history."

With help from interview subjects like Jonah Goldberg, author of the book *Liberal Fascism*, Beck linked the progressive political movement to such nightmares as China's Cultural Revolution and Hitler's gas chambers. Beck alternated images of the emaciated, tortured bodies of the victims he blamed on progressivism with archival footage of Goebbels, Stalin and Mao.

## THE RIGHTWING FUTURE

Behold, America, the future of conservative media.

There was a time when such stunningly irresponsible and historically dubious assertions were the province of isolated individuals holding homemade signs at rallies – but no longer.

"The Revolutionary Holocaust" was watched by nearly four million Americans. And it was broadcast by one of the world's largest media conglomerates, News Corporation, which made no effort to disassociate itself from the program's content.

Partisan media – even rabidly partisan media – has existed in America for as long as our nation has. Vicious attacks against perceived political opponents aren't anything new, either, and in that way, Glenn Beck is merely the latest polemicist willing to assault his enemies – as well as basic logic – in order to make a buck. [And he makes plenty.]

But never before has such commentary been hitched to the star of a multinational media conglomerate, one capable of beaming the resulting invective into hundreds of millions of homes in real time.

## RUPERT IGNORES AD LOSSES

Never before has a company as influential as News Corp. been willing to back a host like Beck in the face of mounting pressure from advertisers.

Even after 80 different sponsors announced they would no longer advertise on Beck's show, News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch was still willing to personally defend the host, offering his own nonsensical defense of Beck's infamous accusation that our nation's first African American president harbored "a deep seated hatred for white people."

"Even if you think I'm wildly irresponsible," Beck said a few weeks ago, "you have to know that News Corp. is not stupid. It's a company worth billions of dollars. Do you really think this corporation would risk everything on an irresponsible crazy guy?"

The answer, apparently, is yes.

And no wonder: Beck is the rising star of Fox News, a conservative entrepre-

neur of immense capabilities who is developing and capitalizing on new right-wing markets with unmatched skill.

## SECOND MOST WATCHED

Despite the fact that he only joined Fox at the beginning of 2009 and was given the network's undesirable 5 p.m. time slot, Beck is routinely the second-most-watched prime-time host on TV.

He's also a self-styled political activist, having created the "9/12 Project" and then guided it through its first major protest last September, an event alternately known as the Tea Party march on Washington, DC. And Beck has promised to double down in 2010 – again, with Fox's blessing and support.

He'll soon publish a book called *The Plan*, and he aims to organize educational seminars around the country at which he'll preach his own brand of revisionist history.

Beck's inability to accurately evaluate the past doesn't mean that he lacks vision. His documentary was merely the latest salvo in his war against all facets of progressive political thought, the kind of war on ideas that Ronald Reagan waged so effectively, helping to reframe the electorate's understanding of crucial issues.

## ALWAYS A STEP AHEAD

In picking this fight, Beck is ahead of the curve, finding new ways to encapsulate the principles and values held by conservatives.

In much the same way, Beck is drawing the battle lines for what has become a media-driven conservative movement unapologetically dedicated to the destruction of the Obama Administration.

Selectively working off of a new generation of Matt Drudge-inspired "journalists" like Andrew Breitbart, Beck is picking and choosing which lines of attack the right will take.

For example, he was among the first to popularize the trumped-up ACORN "scandals," the fictitious claims of a propaganda operation involving the National Educational Association, and the alleged radicalism of Obama appointees Van Jones, Mark Lloyd, John Holdren and Anita Dunn, among others.

At a time of immense challenges, the White House was forced to respond to each of these pseudo-stories in turn.

As Fox News continues down the road toward becoming the country's first-ever 24/7 political campaign run by an independent media operation, progressives must understand the degree to which Beck has increasingly taken the wheel.

They must understand his uncanny ability to reach out to new groups of disaffected voters, and must counter and isolate the lies and misinformation he spreads on a daily basis.

And they must ensure the "Beck-o chamber" he seeks to create fails to gain any more influence than it already has.

– The author is president of *Media Matters for America*

# HARVEY

From Page 13

his approval and accepted Hoover's suggested changes.

Apparently it was important to Paul Harvey to project the appropriate view to support his conservative agenda.

Among the 1,400 pages of documents obtained by The Washington Post for their story was another revelation about Paul Harvey that reveals his lack of character.

During the shameful era of Sen. Joseph McCarthy and his demagoguery, lives were ruined through false claims. Paul Harvey helped that happen. In a selfish attempt to further his career he wrote to McCarthy with tips about "known Reds" at a Texas Air Force Base.

A senior FBI official added a handwritten notation to ensure that Harvey's letter not be distributed outside the bureau's top brass: "No dissemination since identity of Harvey cannot be revealed."

He wasn't issued a subpoena to appear before McCarthy's congressional committee and forced to divulge names. Paul Harvey sat in the safety of his Chicago

office and willingly and voluntarily served up names and tips for his own self-promoting purpose.

Those were events in Harvey's professional foundation that helped propel him to great prominence. Secrets, dirty little secrets he probably hoped would never surface as part of "the rest of the story."

That leaves me to wonder decades from now what little secrets will surface about our current crop of conservative commentators like Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly and others.

I'd be willing to bet money they'll be even more repugnant, but I won't be around to collect on it.

– The author lives in Tulsa. More of his essays are available on-line at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net)

*Editor's Note: Paul Harvey was born in Tulsa and graduated from Tulsa Central High School. The Observer jostled with him on many subjects as he was the leading McCarthyite warrior in broadcasting.*

# WAR

From Page 17

The victims of this kind of lopsided modern warfare [for which the human targets have no defense] regard these tactics as cowardly acts.

These days, wars are started and perpetuated by a huge conglomeration of war profiteers: corporations [and their lobbyists], government bureaucracies [that obediently follow orders from above], the handlers of pro-war politicians and the financial underwriters of their campaigns, the ruling class, and the Department of War/Defense which has, as job No. 1, the planning and orchestrating of current and future military conflicts, whether originating from real, imaginary or invented threats.

A major unasked question is "what should be the role of religion [specifically Christianity] in the starting and perpetuation of politically motivated wars?"

One only has to read the gruesome history of the many "holy wars" and atrocities committed in the history of Christendom, including the Crusades, the Inquisitions, the wars of the Reformation and counter-Reformation, the various

genocides including the Nazi Holocaust.

## THEY WERE CHRISTIAN

The vast majority of Germans before World War II were baptized members of a Christian church, but since WWII ended church membership has fallen sharply and the number of Germans attending weekly worship services is now estimated to be in the single digits.

The psychological and spiritual wounding of the soldiers and their families in the two world wars stripped the German churches of their moral standing.

Those PTSD-afflicted ex-church-going combat veterans who lost their faith in the wars, along with their traumatized families, found out much too late that they had not been warned by the very institutions that theoretically should have courageously and faithfully taken on the heavy responsibility to teach private and public morality.

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# Democrats Bring Reagan Back From The Dead

By David Sirota

"After months of struggling to find their footing, it looks like the GOP has finally found an effective spokesman: Republican leaders have unveiled the reanimated corpse of Ronald Reagan (and) the undead former president has quickly emerged as the new face of the Republican Party." — The Onion

This line from a recent satire perfectly captures the moment's political zeitgeist — except for one detail: Republicans aren't responsible for the revival of Reaganism. Democrats are.

That is the moral of Massachusetts' U.S. Senate race. In a state where Democrats outnumber the GOP by a 3-to-1 margin, little-known Republican Scott Brown defeated Democratic Attorney General Martha Coakley with an ancient Reaganesque message demonizing the government and taxes.

Why did this tired old Republican tactic suddenly work? Because Reagan's vote-eating cadaver is now stalking the land, thanks to Democrats' odious new worldview.

In 2009, Democrats made clear that their idea of government is radically different from the one embedded in their legacy and campaign promises.

## TAXPAYER-FUNDED BRIBES

They unleashed what The Nation's Chris Hayes calls "corporatism" — an agenda that fuses public and private sectors, replacing Rooseveltian regulations and LBJ-esque social safety nets with taxpayer-funded bribes of rapacious business interests.

Under Democratic corporatism, "government" is not what it used to be — it is not tough financial rules or public programs like Medicare. Instead, "government" now means giving public dollars to private banking, insurance and drug firms, and then hoping [but not mandating] that such largesse compels those companies to change.

This public-private collusion, it must be noted, is not limited to one of the two parties — in today's money-dominated politics, they both champion it when in power. Additionally, corporatism is neither "left" nor "right" — Barack Obama's bailouts are no more "liberal" than George W. Bush's corporate welfare bills were "conservative."

## AMERICANS SEE BETRAYAL

The difference is that unlike business-affiliated Republicans, Democrats in 2008 explicitly pledged to fight such state-sponsored larceny, and America sees their subsequent betrayal as an unseemly attempt to feign concern for voters while enriching the party's corporate donors.

The problem, of course, is that those are mutually exclusive constituencies. You cannot fix the financial system, punish Wall Street thieves and reform health care as the electorate wants while also preserving the same financial system, rewarding Wall Street thieves and strengthening the health care status quo, as wealthy campaign benefactors demand.

Trying to do both — i.e., refusing to answer the famous "Which side are you on?" question — birthed today's Democratic corporatism and reanimated Reagan's gangrene corpse.

## GIPPER'S PALLID AVATAR

Now, even in its rotting and pulpy form, the Gipper's pallid avatar is poised to mount a more cogent — and destructive — crusade than even his previous self.

In the 1980s, the living, breathing Reagan faced at least some obstacles in attacking a government of beloved New Deal and Great Society programs. Presently, though, Reagan's undead carcass [whether rendered as Brown or any other Republican opportunist] is finding easier success because the moans that "government is the problem" vilify a government of rightly despised corporatism.

Indeed, it's no surprise that voters — including self-described liberals — are sympathizing with anti-Democrat, anti-tax and anti-government arguments at a time when Democrats are funneling tax dollars into executive bonuses and

# CLOWNS

From Page One

Thousands of the mentally ill are abandoned, CareerTech has been gutted, the Corrections Department is in the toilet and public schools are barely holding on thanks to federal stimulus money.

It wasn't an Oklahoma leadership decision. Under the terms of the federal stimulus agreement, the state is required to maintain certain funding levels for public education and health care.

The overall agreement applies only to the FY 2010 budget. State leaders presented the FY 2010 proposal to the Legislature and hope to pass the contents as quickly as possible so lawmakers can then turn their attention to the FY 2011 budget.

Gone are the fat cat days of playing to the State Chamber's every whim.

The State Chamber has as priority

No. 1 retention of the \$5.5 billion in incentives now on the tax rolls, some \$2 billion haven't paid off with a single job.

The Senate is wrangling over new leadership since Coffee is term-limited. Republican Rep. Dave Dank speaks for a number of House members who are tired of Benge's pork-barrel Chamber business as usual.

Meanwhile, angelic Brad Henry soars above the party rifts, secure in the knowledge that he is extremely popular with the ignorant voters, half of whom don't take or read a daily paper.

If it were not for the pain and suffering, Oklahoma would make a terrific reality show. If one of the TV networks is hard up for a new reality show, let them come to Oklahoma.

Here's the real biggest loser.



equating government with hated industries.

## INEPT DEMOCRATS

Incredibly, as clumsy as the Reagan zombie still is [and as hypocritical as formerly corporatist Republicans are], Democrats' reaction to the onslaught has been positively inept.

Only when facing the Senate election loss, did the White House finally back a populist-sounding levy on the biggest banks — but that tiny proposal looked like desperate pandering.

As Massachusetts proves, Obama and his party will need to muster much more than hollow gestures to stop the election-hungry corpse they needlessly resurrected.

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## How Is Norma?

A sweet grandmother telephoned St. Joseph's Hospital. She timidly asked, "Is it possible to speak to someone who can tell me how a patient is doing?"

The operator said, "I'll be glad to help, dear. What's the name and room number of the patient?"

The grandmother, in her weak, tremulous voice, said, "Norma Findlay, Room 302."

The operator replied, "Let me put you on hold while I check with the nurse's station for that room."

After a few minutes the operator returned to the phone and said, "I have good news. Her nurse just told me that Norma is doing well. Her blood pressure is fine; her blood work just came back normal; and her physician, Dr. Cohen, has scheduled her to be discharged tomorrow."

The grandmother said, "Thank you. That's wonderful. I was so worried. God bless you for the good news."

The operator replied, "You're more than welcome. Is Norma your daughter?"

The grandmother said, "No, I'm Norma Findlay in Room 302. No one tells me s---!"

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