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Oklahoma Is No Exception America Divided

By Frosty Troy

"Nothing will ruin the country if the people themselves will undertake its safety; and nothing can save it if they leave that safety in any hands but their own." – Daniel Webster

Flip on most TV talk shows, roam around both AM and FM radio dials and the message is usually pure hatred of President Obama.

I don't remember such venom since John Birchers wished publicly for Jack Kennedy's death. They saw their wish fulfilled in Dallas, then a hotbed of bigotry thanks to the far rightwing Dallas Morning News.

Where are the news media? Our dollar is down the drain, Iran may go nuclear, the debt is historically high, unemployment is beyond 10%, states such as California are bankrupt, our troops are dying in winless wars, and we get Sarah Palin – over and over and over.

A Pulitzer Prize or Emmy awarded today is more likely to go for the kind of investigative reporting that once was routine.

How hard would it have been to check the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs' fake poll of Oklahoma students allegedly unable to name the first President?

It wasn't a reporter, it was it was a former teacher, Rep. Ed Cannady, who put the lie to a black eye the state received across America – even on CNN International.

The organizers of "tea party" protests don't stick to the issues – many are out for blood – such as Bill O'Reilly whose fantasy is Nancy Pelosi's body bobbing in Boston harbor.

Rush Limbaugh feasts on fear and loathing of Obama, claiming that the



President is a racist who hates white people. If he were Pinocchio no broadcast studio could contain his nose.

Now more than ever a group of radical tea partiers and birthers are convinced that being a Muslim leads to violence towards America.

They forget that the KKK used Christ's own cross as their superiority symbol over black Americans.

In Oklahoma the hate is egged on by the Oklahoman newspaper with over-the-top vicious cartoons, mind-

less editorials and a drawing of Nancy Pelosi as a witch. We all know what they do with witches, right?

Of course there should be vigorous differences of opinion but the facts are never a matter of opinion.

A poison is spilling across a divided America and Oklahoma more than contributes its share thanks to our two Republican U.S. senators, Jim Inhofe and Tom Coburn.

The state is the butt of countless jokes and ridicule in publications and on radio and TV broadcasts.

Coburn keeps lying or exaggerating about the Democratic drive to come up with some kind of health plan for more than 37 million who are without coverage.

People are entitled to their opinion on global warming but Inhofe not only appeared in Copenhagen for a mere four hours to state his opposition, he cinched his buffoonery when he said he would not read an EPA measure because whatever it said, he was

against.

Between them and Rep Sally Kern, R-OKC, Oklahoma appears to outsiders as a state of fools – especially after Kern garnered international headlines by asserting that gay people are worse than terrorists.

Coburn, an OB/GYN, is targeted by the media for the large sums he has taken from the insurance industry. His colleagues in the American Medical Association are for the Senate version of health care.

Inhofe and Coburn are members of a religious cult, The Family, and travel extensively abroad to win the world for their bigoted version of Christ.

The forces of hatred and discord are attacking President Obama with unprecedented ferocity, no longer bothering to couch the attacks as issues. It has become deadly personal.

Thousands of Oklahomans line up with tea partiers and birthers, joining those spewing venom from coast to coast. Many signs hoisted at their rallies prove the point – burn Nancy Pelosi at the stake, execute Barack Obama.

Many have wedged their way into religious denominations, producing the Manhattan Declaration unveiled late last year by Catholic bishops and Protestant leaders.

The declaration calls on Americans who disagree with laws to disobey them – from legal abortion to gay rights. Americans United said the declaration is so open-ended it would impose various religious doctrines on all Americans.

Candidate Obama promised to revamp George W. Bush's faith-based initiative program – a program so blatantly un-American that the man Bush chose to lead it quit in disgust.

Bush funneled tens of millions of taxpayer dollars into churches and parochial school vouchers.

The Obama Administration has downplayed the candidate's promises and has continued with an Office of Faith-Based Initiatives.

Since his election, a Pew Poll reveals that more Democrats than Republicans now favor faith-based fund-

See DIVIDED Page 19

Observations

Award

This issue's Crackpot Caucus Award goes to first-term state Rep. Leslie Osborn, R-Tuttle, for her argument in support of yet another gun nut bill.

Osborn told the House Public Safety Committee that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton already has signed precursors to international peace treaties that would ban firearms, adding, "I want to make sure Hillary Clinton does not go to Copenhagen and sign an accord allowing this."

First, there is no such international meeting.

Second, Osborn ought to check herself into the closest mental health facility.

Some of Osborn's claims were included in a wacky chain e-mail making the rounds last year. According to FactCheck.org, a project of the non-partisan Annenberg Public Policy Center, much of what the e-mail asserted was "simply false."

"The [Obama] administration's agreement to talk about writing a United Nations treaty to regulate arms exports and imports is a far cry from banning possession of firearms, which Obama says he doesn't want to do and the Supreme Court has said can't be done anyway," FactCheck.org reported.

Visit <http://m.factcheck.org/2009/12/international-gun-ban-treaty/> to read the complete analysis.

Boo!

If U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin is continually looking over her shoulder in her race for the Republican nomination for governor, she's watching state Sen. Randy Brogdon, R-Owasso, also a contender.

Not only has Brogdon accumulated more than 1,800 fired-up volunteers, the list is growing every day.

If Fallin had any doubt about Brogdon's impact, it certainly disappeared when Tulsa County Republicans took a straw poll - Brogdon 68.4% of the votes, Fallin 23.6%. A recent Oklahoma Poll also gave Democratic

Attorney General Drew Edmondson an edge over Fallin in Tulsa County.

Fallin already has blown \$650,000 but to little avail.

Pity Party

We never thought we would sympathize with the Republican Party, but it has been overwhelmingly captured by its fundamentalist minority.

Why was anyone surprised by John McCain picking Sarah Palin? He was advised that he needed to play to the party's base - 30 million fundamentalists ranging from nutty James Dobson to asinine Rush Limbaugh.

One need look no further than the new majority Oklahoma Republican Legislature - few if any bear any resemblance to Henry Bellmon or Dewey Bartlett.

At the recent Tea Party convention, a speaker won sustained applause when he said he was glad John McCain lost because he was a RINO - Republican In Name Only.

This generation may never see a moderate such as McCain nominated for President.

The same is true in Oklahoma, a hotbed of fundamentalists. Almost each time a Democrat is termed-out or leaves office, it's filled by a fundamentalist.

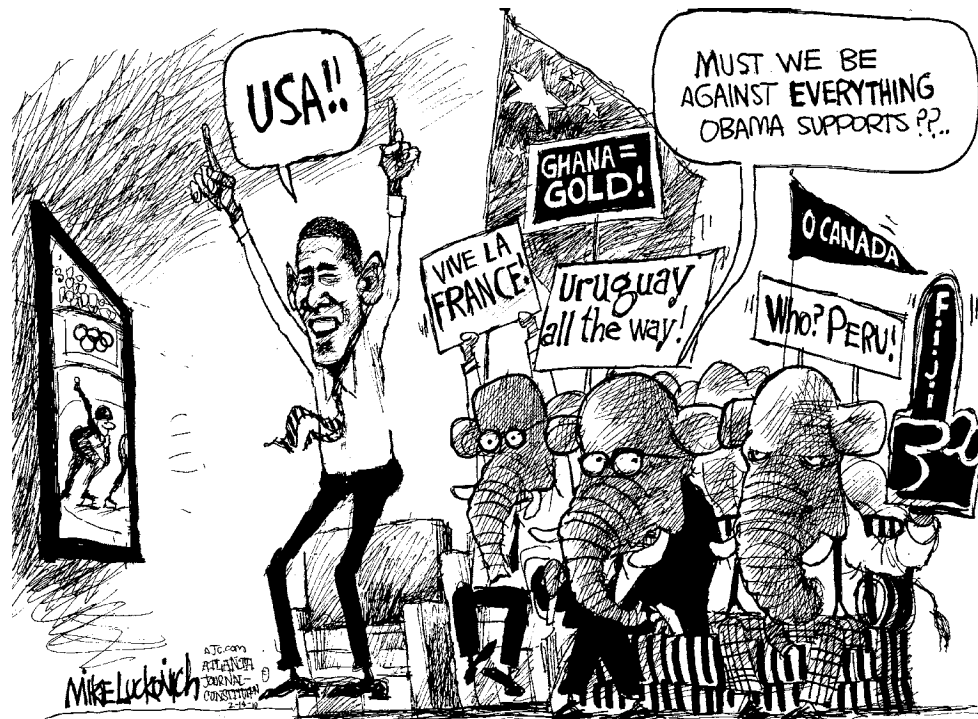
At stake here is nothing less than the future of our country, a living, breathing democracy now being assaulted by those who would create a theocracy.

Death Penalty

Talk about gutsy! Sen. Constance N. Johnson late last year announced a four-year plan aimed at repealing Oklahoma's death penalty.

Johnson said her strategy involves initially highlighting the economic and ethical concerns that make capital punishment an ineffective deterrent and a drain on state resources.

Even conservatives ought to take a



second look. The costs in death penalty cases run as high as \$1.5 million - three times the cost of life without parole.

Johnson filed SB 2208 to establish the Oklahoma Commission on Wrongful Conviction. Good luck in passing such a bill in a Republican Legislature.

The Commission would be charged with reviewing wrongful convictions, identifying potential weaknesses in the justice system and proposing remedies to strengthen the quality of justice in Oklahoma.

Johnson noted that among the nine Americans exonerated from death row in 2009, two were Oklahomans - Yancy Douglas and Paris Powell. With these latest exonerations, Oklahoma has now had 10 exonerations in the last 10 years.

She also pointed out that the death penalty is disproportionately applied to the poor, and that a number of systemic causes of wrongful convictions persist in our justice system.

The Observer has opposed capital punishment since its founding more than 40 years ago. Our belief is based on humanitarian grounds. America is the last great nation to adhere to capital punishment.

What would Jesus do?

Takeover?

Republican attempts to control Oklahoma's judiciary took another step forward when state Rep. Mike Ritze filed legislation that would allow lawmakers to impeach associate and district judges.

Ritze said the House Joint Resolution 1072 would allow the Legislature to step in when a judge has shown gross negligence, as in the David Earls case in Pittsburg County or the Tulsa County case in which a judge reduced a child murderer's life sentence to 12 years.

He obviously never heard the famous maxim: Hard cases make bad law. He cites a couple of terrible decisions in order to control a separate branch of government.

Earls, who was convicted of raping a 4-year-old child, received a one-year sentence through an agreement with the district attorney.

Ritze noted that decades ago, the Oklahoma Legislature could impeach all judges but that the law was changed to limit their impeachment power so that they could only im-

peach the Oklahoma Supreme Court justices.

What he doesn't say is that the modified Missouri plan was adopted by Oklahoma voters after years of judicial corruption.

Republican Ritze is a physician and surgeon and former deputy medical examiner for the state. He is a certified child abuse examiner and has a master's degree in forensic science.

In fact his service thus far in the Legislature proves he is an over-educated idiot.

Mirror, Mirror

We agree with Sen. John Ford that the state needs to concentrate on the critical dropout rate - 25%.

The dropout numbers are even worse for minorities. In some poverty-driven schools only 44 out of 100 students actually go to college, and only 17% earn a degree.

Ford is in a position to do something about it as the Republican chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

"Our prisons and welfare roles are filled with individuals who never completed their educations," he said.

Corrections and welfare costs ultimately hit taxpayers hard. He notes that nearly a third of Oklahoma adults on food stamps failed to graduate high school or earn a GED. In 2009, 51% of incoming DOC inmates reported they were drop outs.

Guess who shares most of the blame? You guessed it - the Legislature.

They keep enhancing sentences and they have yet to fund DHS social workers at a level where they can make a difference.

He should read his own mail. The average yearly salary for a dropout is just over \$19,000. The federal poverty level for a family of four is just over \$22,000. A high school graduate earns more than \$28,600 a year. An associate's degree earnings are \$36,000. A bachelor's degree, the average salary jumps to more than \$51,500 a year. Over a lifetime, the difference in earning potential between a high school diploma and college degree is \$1.4 million.

Where was he when the Republican Legislature turned away more than 3,000 high school students seeking a CareerTech income? More than 700 dropouts were turned away due to the parsimonious Republican Legislature.

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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

MIKE LUCKWICH
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Dart: To Rep. Ken Miller, chairman of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee, for declaring that budget negotiations are better kept behind closed doors. Whose money is it?

Women don't stand a chance in Oklahoma, national leader in domestic abuse. Out of 48 senators, only five are women. In the 101-member House only 12 women serve.

Laurel: To Sen. Debbe Leftwich, for her bill to strip party buses of their licenses and levy fines for allowing underage drinking.

One excellent reason for getting rid of capital punishment is the extreme cost – well over \$1 million by the time all appeals proceedings are concluded.

Dart: To House Speaker Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, who has no plans to furlough House employees although state workers and Senate staffers will be furloughed.

Worst idea of the legislative session was combining the Medical Examiner's office with the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, a conflict of interest. It was killed in committee.

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for his farewell joint session address, proposing 16 agency consolidations that would not only save millions but are long overdue. We will keep you posted.

Oklahoma flushes an estimated \$3 million down the toilet as one of the few states that prevent the sale of alcohol on Sunday. It would take a constitutional amendment to legalize it.

Dart: To Reps. Mark McCullough, R-Sapulpa, and Sally Kern, R-OKC. He's author of a bill making it harder to get married and she's author of a bill to eliminate no-fault divorce.

Oops! Sen. Bryce Marlett, R-Woodward, is author of SB 2112 requiring drug testing before a person could run for the Legislature or governor. He includes welfare moms or dads.

Laurel: To the U.S. Senate for ignoring a willful minority opposing the President's reappointment of Ben Bernanke as Fed chairman. Of course Republicans Tom Coburn and Jim Inhofe were among the loons.

Oklahoma public school enrollment continues to climb – now 654,511 compared to 644,754 last year. Growth the past five years tops 20,000.

Dart: To what passes for our tax-cutting leadership in Oklahoma. There are 5,300 developmentally disabled on the Department of Human Services waiting list for services.

Kissing up to the State Chamber, the Republican legislative leaders are about to wreck a workers compensation system that is working just fine.

Laurel: To Tulsa police officer Joel Ward, new commander of the 45th Division Brigade. He's a colonel in the National Guard.

State Insurance Commissioner Kim Holland will seek re-election. She has cleaned up an awful mess. She is so well respected that the National Association of Insurance Commissioners has named her secretary-treasurer.

Dart: To a Legislature busy cutting taxes for the affluent while neglecting more than \$630 million in deferred maintenance on the State Capitol building, including 50-year-old boilers.

Indian casinos may be a howling success but they have given us more than 35,000 gambling addicts – many of whom go untreated for lack of sufficient mental health funding.

Laurel: To Harvard University for a study documenting the ugly truth that more than 45,000 Americans die each year for lack of insurance. [New York Times]

While the media is busy covering nutcase Teabaggers, America is spending 16 cents out of every dollar for health care running totally out of control.



Dart: To a craven state Senate majority for postponing election of a new leader until after the November elections. It's designed to keep Harry Coates, R-Seminole, from succeeding Glenn Coffee. Coates is a superb legislator.

No wonder the U.S. Supreme Court is a coveted appointment. It may have less to do with the law and more to it being a pud job. Of the 8,241 cases filed last year, they allowed argument in only 78 cases and decided 74.

Laurel: To President Obama, slamming the U.S. Supreme Court face to face in his State of the Union speech for their incredibly corrupt opinion permitting corporations to spend unlimited funds in political campaigns.

There will be nine state questions on the ballot this year – some inane, some profoundly important – including the Republican attack on Oklahoma's judiciary. They want to gut what they can't control.

Dart: To those who ridicule the Tea Party crowd. Every time they do, it creates more of them. The issues are what should be addressed – the debt, health care and the facts.

OU President David Boren hit the bulls-eye in addressing a group of young people at the Capitol. Too many voters are ignorant of the facts – the nation's greatest need is for informed voters.

Laurel: To the Oklahoman reporter Randy Ellis for exposing a rip-off involving massive hikes in abstract fees, thanks to the Legislature creating a new regulatory board in 2007. The 2010 session should abolish it.

Rural legislators didn't waste any time blistering any consideration of small schools. Oklahoma has 532 school districts, with superintendents alone now costing \$51.3 million a year. The state has 37 districts with fewer than 100 students.

Dart: To Senate Leader Glenn Coffee for wasting your tax dollars on "policy adviser" Jim Williamson, Tulsa Republican who served in both the House and Senate and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2006. He'll be paid \$65,000 for four months work.

The Tenth Circuit called a halt to the asinine case against author John Grisham for his book *The Innocent Man*. Wrongful death cases are not unusual in America, last remaining civilized country with the death penalty.

Laurel: To Georgia District Judge Clay Land, slapping a \$20,000 fine on Orly Taiz, the one-woman freak show falsely accusing the President of not being an American. She was convicted of abusing her privileges of being a lawyer.

Where is the pride in Oklahoma when one in five children goes to bed hungry every single night? More than 420,000 Oklahoma children are in families without any health insurance.

Dart: To the State Chamber for naming Fred Morgan – errand boy for the GOP Senate leadership – as president, replacing Dick Rush who is retiring in March. Morgan is the discredited former GOP House leader.

No surprise in the Tulsa World's Oklahoma Poll showing a huge majority of Oklahomans favoring two-term limits for statewide elected offices – among them the attorney general, insurance commissioner, lieutenant governor, auditor, corporation commission. Oklahoma voters would term limit St. Peter.

Laurel: To Laura Pittman, deputy director of female offender operations at the Department of Corrections, for her efforts to knock down Oklahoma's No. 1 slot in incarcerating females.

We're not professional oddsmakers, but we'd put our money on OKC Rep. Mike Reynolds over Edmond Rep. Ken Miller if they ever did take their verbal jousting to the parking lot.

Dart: To the U.S. Supreme Court majority making a mockery out of the Constitution by ruling that corporations can spend all they want electing their favorite candidates – or defeating their less-favored.

Think hospitals aren't anxious for health care reform? Unpaid care cost \$36 billion in 2008. Worse, the number of uninsured is projected to climb to 58 million by 2014. [New York Times]

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

For a number of years we have been slipping away from a functional democracy and into a plutocracy. I fear that the final nail in the coffin of democracy in the United States was hammered home by the Supreme Court with their decision that money is speech and corporations both domestic and foreign can let money flow without limit so as to purchase their own Congressman or Congresswoman.

It does no good to vote if the choice is among candidates who are all solely owned by various corporations. Voting is not so much the issue when candidates have no chance unless they take large sums of money from the wealthy whether the latter are corporations or individuals.

Until we change the way we finance election campaigns, the vast majority will continue to support the rapid and destructive movement of wealth from the many to the privileged wealthy few. Congress will continue to favor corporations not the public at large and what has been a great country will continue its downward slide.

It will not be "for the people, by the people" but for the corporations, by the corporations.

Rex Ackerson
Tonkawa

Editor, The Observer:

Thank you for printing Ruth Steinberg's expose [1.25.10] on Rep. Don Armes. This article should be presented to all legislators but I have discovered that they don't always do the right thing. They do what they think will get them re-elected.

HB 3202 that came out of Mr. Armes' committee is another half-truth vendetta against Veterinary Medicine.

I hope you continue to crusade for the truth.

Dr. Calvin R White
Ada

Editor, The Observer:

Kudos and bravo on a fabulous article that thoroughly, completely and accurately summarizes HB 3202 and Rep. Armes' position against veterinary medicine.

I was at the Capitol on Rose Day. I am pro-life, and as a veterinarian and mom, I am extremely concerned about drug diversion and misuse, especially reproductive drugs like Lutalyse. Young women will use this drug for abortions, and it is not safe!

We were not even allowed to handle it while in veterinary school for fear of damaging our reproductive systems. Again, many thanks!

Mollyann Holland
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Global warming is certainly real and a big problem, but there has to be a mistake in the [1.10.10] story on page 18. In the penultimate graph it says "expected to contribute to a global sea level rise of about a meter by the end of 2009 ..."

That would be catastrophic to the world's shorelines, and certainly has not happened yet sea level is creeping up gradually. Was that supposed to be, maybe, centimeter or some year long after 2009?

Glenn Hauser
Enid

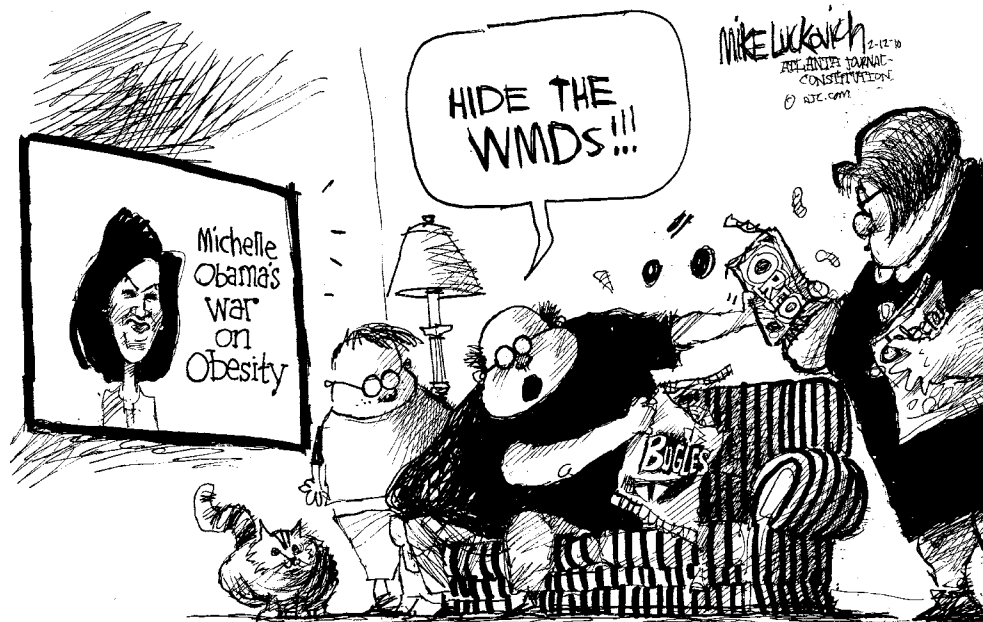
Editor's Note: Thanks to Mr. Hauser for his keen eye. The original version of the story correctly reported that an approximately one meter rise is projected by the end of the century. The Observer editor misread the sentence and mistakenly inserted the wrong date.

Editor, The Observer:

Frosty's article [1.25.10] on his religion contained a peevish section on atheists. He said he was tired of being hit over the head by his former atheist friend and presumably the "leaders of new atheism ..." Does he not think that these people might be tired of being hit over the head with crosses and Ten Commandments and "in God we trust" being stuck all over public places, even inserted onto our coins and in our pledge of allegiance?

The Oklahoma Gazette [1.27.10] also had an article where various religious leaders dumped on the "new atheists." New? Thomas Payne, who had written *Rights of Man*, a major contributor to initiating our revolution for independence, later wrote *Age of Reason* which listed biblical errors and reasons that indicated the disciples did not write what is attributed to them in the Bible. He was ostracized for that and led a lonely life afterwards. There are people even now that say they would vote for a Muslim rather than an atheist; thereby they show their double bigotry.

Apparently the religious think they have the right to shove their religion down my throat but do not want to hear anything from me. They want



to teach their lack of understanding of scientific facts to my children as science in public schools. Rep. Tad Jones even said that since a majority of people thought evolution was wrong that some form of religious explanation should be taught.

Since most people here still thought the sun goes around the earth, then should that be taught as well?

Scientists are pointing out that we are in danger from over-heating earth, that we are killing off other living species that might be necessary for us to live, and that we have over-populated earth beyond a sustainable level, while the religious are selectively denying these facts. We Okies keep electing buffoons for our Congress people for their just hammering away on god, gays and guns. If we scientists do not speak up against this religious ignorance, America might slip back into a dark age. You get the impression that that there are more than a few here that would welcome the return.

Chadwick Cox
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

Re: The arrest of former U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook's son [2.10.10 Observations]:

I have no sympathy for that guy. He and his ilk have ragged David Walters over his kid, and had no sympathy for them.

Why should I have a moment [of sympathy] when Istook has done so much terrible stuff and continues to at the Heritage Nuthouse?

He can say God is getting even with him, and much deserved too! No tears here!

Larry Stem
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

A recent poll respondent stated in the Tulsa World, "I have come to realize that liberty, truth and justice is represented by the Republican Party while the honesty factor continues to erode the Democrat Party." Well, I'm convinced both parties and their cohorts should be "taken to the woodshed" because honesty in America has become a rare commodity, especially in commerce.

For 16 years the citizens have been brainwashed to accept a Public Funded/ Private Business Partnership that would make Oklahoma rich, accord-

ing to former Republican Gov. Frank Keating. And our legislators fell for it.

It's not working. "Economic development" for whom? The private business end of this "partnership?"

The profiteers are the companies and corporations that are riding on the "gravy train" of public subsidized incentives and rating 5% "kickbacks" off their total payroll.

Let's be honest now - that is not capitalism. That legalized, deceptive partnership causes shortfalls in all our cities, counties, states and federal treasuries.

This problem can be stopped by honest citizens - regardless of "political affiliation" - who want to end the plunder of America!

The Chamber of Commerce "Business Union" has always hated the worker's Labor Union, lied about the Right to Work [for less], lobbied legislators that reduced workers compensation five times during Keating's watch.

Now Republican Mary Fallin's goal, if elected governor, will be to obtain whatever business wants, not that which is equitable.

Slavery no longer exists in America, but the serfdom of monetary bondage flourishes. American workers rated the most productive in the world are not businesses' enemy; we do the production, generating business profits.

The audacity of business to think all we deserve is a bone and they the steak!

Laboring citizens are wondering if truth, liberty, justice and honesty are applicable anymore as they continue to be the downsized victims in a world of deceit and greed.

United we stand, divided we fall.

Carol Seim
Owasso

Editor, The Observer:

I thought you might enjoy the reaction of my retired partner, Walter Mondale, to your recent piece about his role in cloture reform.

David Busby
Washington, DC

Dear David:

Thanks for sending me a copy of the magnificent Oklahoma Observer which appears to be the only newspaper in the country that remembers my role in cloture reform.

Walter F. Mondale
Minneapolis

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.

Scouting



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

I was number six in my family and all five of my older brothers were Boy Scouts. From as early as I can remember, I dreamed of turning 12 so I could join the Boy Scouts.

When that day came I rejoiced. My brothers took me to the meeting of Troop 1 which met in a basement room of St. John's School in McAlester.

The first thing I learned from Scout Master Tony Fabry is that before I could take the Boy Scout Pledge I had to run through a beltline.

I didn't know what a beltline was until I saw the Scouts taking off their Boy Scout belts. He said I could run as fast as I could but I couldn't run outside the beltline or I would have to come back next Tuesday and try again.

Wow! I agreed and he said he would tell me when to go. The second he said it I was off. I can't remember how many Scouts there were but they faced off and they whacked me hard.

I fought back the tears. They all shook my hand after I took the pledge. From then on I lived for scouting. [A beltline was not in the Boy Scout Handbook.]

My Boy Scout Handbook told me the rules of scouting and the various merit badges to earn before advancing to the next rank.

I began as a Tenderfoot but I worked hard at scouting. The summer camp lasted a week and was held at Camp Tom Hale at Robbers Cave State Park north of Wilburton.

It was really neat, and while I couldn't sleep with my brothers in one of the cabins reserved for senior Scouts, I made good friends with Scouts from across Eastern Oklahoma. One became a college president.

The most astonishing Scout was a guy they called "snake." I asked how he earned that nickname and they said to ask him, which I did. [I am always asking questions.]

He showed me his snakeskin collection [including rattlesnake skins with the rattlers intact] and asked if I wanted to go with him to the rocks above the cave to look for snakes.

I was mortally afraid of spiders and snakes, but I went. He soon found one and snagged it. They said it was a non-poisonous one.

The following summer I applied for a staff position. It was a four-week non-paying job and I landed it. I kept racking up Merit Badges. My life-saving badge required me to swim across the creek tugging a guy who weighed twice as much as I did. I made it but barely.

The second summer I applied for the Order of the Arrow. It was elite scouting. One thing I had to do was be blindfolded and led into the woods. I had to find my way back following the stars.

Only problem is that the woods were so thick you couldn't see the stars. I was terrified by the night sounds - insects gone wild. I laid my ear to the ground hop-

Climate Change Deniers

Oklahoma probably has the highest percentage of climate change deniers in America. It's partially a result of Al Gore's misnomer "global warming."

Oklahomans fall in step with Republican U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, who calls climate change a gigantic hoax.

In fact, climate change is occurring. The hottest spots on the globe are getting hotter. The coldest are getting colder - that's climate change.

Thanks to honest science we know carbon dioxide [CO₂] is pumped into the air through human activities and heat becomes trapped in the atmosphere.

It's the "greenhouse effect." If the earth's global temperatures rise a mere three degrees, there will be catastrophic results all over the world.

In fact the ocean's ability to store CO₂ is not very long. Only 50% of CO₂ is absorbed by areas of the ocean that are not very deep.

In these areas, CO₂ is released back into the atmosphere. Recent studies have shown that only 30% of CO₂ is stored in the deep ocean. The rest, some 20%, stays in the atmosphere for thousands of years.

Deniers say evidence that CO₂ emissions are linked to any rise in global temperatures is casual at best. Global CO₂ emissions do not match Arctic temperatures, which are often used as the best gauge for how to measure the earth's climate.

Wrong again! The Arctic may serve as a great resource for measuring climate change, but looking at one small area of the planet is not the best way to assess the situation.

During the 1930s, for example, warming occurred in the Arctic, but the cause is not exactly known and did not take place all over the planet.

Deniers say scientists fix the data all the time. One ice sampling in the Arctic at Siple has shown us that CO₂ levels were around 328 parts per million all the way back in 1890. Global warming believers insist that this level wasn't met until the early 1970s.

Past warming cycles are not the result of greenhouse gas emissions. These warming trends were the result of the earth's rotation around the sun. When the earth heated up in the past, more CO₂ was released from our carbon sinks, which



Yes, that's our founding editor [back row, left] serving as Den Chief for the Cub Scouts

ing I could hear a vehicle.

I finally made it to the road and started in a trot.

I finally realized I was going the wrong way - thanks to the Benedictines who whacked me when I picked up a pencil with my left hand. To this good day I'm easily confused by directions.

I won Scouting's God and Country Award and I was two Merit Badges short of making Eagle - my greatest ambition.

Meanwhile, I became a Scout Den Chief heading a Den of Cub Scouts, teaching them and telling them how important scouting would be to their life if they stuck to it.

I was visiting an older brother in Dallas when North Korea invaded the South. I scooted home and joined the National Guard - my Dad signing the papers reluctantly. I had turned 18 that summer.

I brought my brother Kevin's body home from Heartbreak Ridge [he won the Silver Star]. I settled in as a reporter for the McAlester News-Capital because I wouldn't be able to start OU until the fall semester.

I dropped by Edwards Bookstore to tell the owner Bill Edwards, the local Scout executive, I wanted to finish my last two Merit Badges.

He looked crestfallen.

"Frosty, you can't. They've changed the rules. No more adults."

I almost broke into tears.

"Tell them where I was and what I was doing!"

He called national headquarters while I waited. Sorry, no exceptions.

Here I was, a Life Scout only two badges shy of one of my life dreams and they had changed the rules.

To this good day I'm bitter about it. It's the 100th anniversary of Boy Scouts of America. Many troops flow through the State Capitol and I always greet them as a fellow Scout.

The words haunt me. They changed the rules.

created a greenhouse effect.

So when humans release CO₂ today we are not allowing the earth to go through its natural cycle. Our oceans haven't even started heating up yet. If they do, and we do not cut CO₂ in the atmosphere over the next 20 years, catastrophic effects will ensue.

- My thanks to RealClimate.org for background resources

Rep. Reynolds, Defined

STATE REP. MIKE REYNOLDS, R-OKC

Noun: meaning an annoying or irksome person who, despite an acute awareness of his actual ineffectiveness and tragic lack of influence, remains so convinced of his moral and rational rectitude, that he turns the simplest tasks into deliberations of constitutional proportions by launching line after line of perplexing yet pointless inquiries and self-mesmerizing diatribes.

Adj: Having or exuding a quality of active and fervent pointlessness. See also: obstinate, self-righteous, stubborn, self-important, time consuming or generally a waste of time.

Verb: The act of wasting valuable time and tax dollars in an effort to save valuable time and tax dollars. The act of constant questioning when one knows the answers. The act of tripling the time it takes to accomplish a task.

When used in a sentence, it is often shortened to "Reynolds."

Examples:

"Man, that guy is a total Reynolds."

"Sorry hunny, I'm going to be late getting home tonight, it's been a Reynolds day."

"I got totally Reynoldsed today by some idiot in history class."

- Anonymous

The Unhinged World Of Oklahoma's Tentherers



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

The American electorate is so splintered these days, you almost need a program to keep up with the latest coalition of the aggrieved.

Tentherers and Birthers and Truthers – oh, my – all-too-often dominate cable news, evidence of Tin Foil Hatters gone wild.

Nowhere, sadly, are the sounds of Black Helicopters louder than in Oklahoma.

At a time when state government teeters on the brink of financial calamity, far too many legislators are focused on shadow-boxing *them* – you know, the universe's omnipotent, invisible master puppeteers out to destroy our personal liberties.

Watch out, we are warned: *They* won't just be planting microchips in our driver's licenses in the near future – *they* will be inserting them against our will, maybe even without our knowledge, into our derrieres or other body parts, the better to track and control us.

These elected officials may represent districts in Oklahoma, but they live in the Great State of Paranoia, a murky world dominated by the feds, wealthy industrialists, the New World Order, the Trilateral Commission and other evildoers.

You think I'm kidding? This must be fantasy or satire? *Au contraire.*

These self-styled super patriots are very real, proud members of a loosely knit coalition that fancies itself as the Liberty Caucus – as many as two dozen joining forces on various issues.

Also known as Tentherers for their devotion to the U.S. Constitution's Tenth Amendment, these lawmakers are busy churning out resolutions and bills designed to send a defiant message to the federal government:

You've overstepped your bounds and you no longer have authority over Oklahoma and its people.

In Tenterland, anything not contained in the Constitution's specific list of federal powers – regulating interstate commerce, for example – is beyond Congress' authority. Specifically, they cite the Tenth Amendment provision that "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

I'm hardly naïve about what's at stake. We Americans must be ever vigilant in defense of our liberties and stand firm against abuses of government power. I'm a card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union for that very reason.

But there's a difference between fighting real battles and imaginary ones.

OKC Republican Rep. Charles Key's HJR 1063 is Exhibit A. He wants a state-wide vote on his self-styled Oklahoma Sovereignty Protection Act that would give the Legislature the authority to determine whether "certain acts of the federal government violate the United States Constitution."

Earth to Key: Neither state voters nor state lawmakers have the power to make those decisions. That power belongs to a nine-member, black-robed crew in Washington known as the United States Supreme Court. Perhaps you've heard of them?

This isn't Key's only revolutionary screed this session. Nor is he the only state lawmaker engaging in a sophomoric game that might aptly be called *Stickin' It To Uncle Sam.*

Key, who didn't believe the official explanation of the Oklahoma City bombing and carried out his own investigation, also has introduced HJR 1064 calling for a repeal of the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that took the power to appoint U.S. senators from state legislatures and gave it to the voters.

"... The Congress of the United States has, since the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment, steadily encroached upon the sovereignty of this and the other states ..." his resolution declares.

I haven't seen any polls lately on the Oklahoma Legislature's overall popularity, but I suspect it's similar to Congress' 70-plus-percent disapproval rating. And I bet few Oklahomans would be willing to cede their power to directly elect who represents them in the U.S. Senate – much less turn the decision over to the state Legislature.

Another Tenter doozy is state Rep. Leslie Osborn's HB 3157 that asserts Oklahomans cannot be forced to participate in any international, state or federal firearms registration programs – nor can their lawfully owned firearms be confiscated.

Osborn evidently believes Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other liberty-haters are working in concert with some grand international conspiracy to seize Americans' guns. The fact that Osborn's claims [see "Award," page 2, for details] are bogus doesn't appear to give Tentherers much pause.

They are convinced America's problems can be traced to the Great Depression when New Deal reformers "illegally" expanded the federal government's powers. They contend Congress is forbidden constitutionally from enacting such programs as Medicare and Social Security or even today's proposed health care reforms.

Unfortunately, it's an all-too-common refrain during times of upheaval historically.

As Ian Millhiser noted last year in *The American Prospect* on-line, the "right-

wing South justified both secession and the Civil War on the theory that the Constitution is nothing more than a pact between sovereigns that each state is free to leave at will."

Millhiser, a legal research analyst at the Center for American Progress, also recalled that in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 19 senators and 77 representatives endorsed a "Southern Manifesto" that used Tenter-like language to assert the Supreme Court decision banning separate-but-equal schools had encroached "on the rights reserved to the States" because the Constitution did not mention education.

[By the way, "Birthers" are those who reject the legitimacy of President Obama's citizenship and his eligibility to be president and "Truthers" reject the mainstream account of the 9/11 attacks.]

The Tentherers' efforts in the state Legislature would be laughable if the times were not so serious.

Is it too much to ask that state lawmakers focus on the truly weighty matters of state – like a \$1.2 billion budget hole next year that threatens to cripple essential state services such as education and child welfare, highways and bridges, corrections and law enforcement?


Further, what's seeping out of the Oklahoma Legislature these days gives our state a black eye – not only nationally, but also internationally. Can't you just imagine business leaders and top-flight researchers steering clear of a state where the patients are too often in charge of the asylum?

The sliver of good news is that these grand anti-government declarations are routinely laughed out of court, the equivalent of scofflaws declaring they can't be made to pay income taxes.

But it's no laughing matter the way these zealots can play on the fear, anger and emotion of politically ignorant and naïve people, turning them against their government and often erasing any notion of a peaceful redress of their grievances.



That's how we end up with the Timothy McVeighs of the world – those already so wounded emotionally and psychologically that they come to believe they have no choice but to refresh the tree of liberty with the blood of tyrants.

The Tentherers are playing a dangerous game that long ago ceased being slapstick.



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Tsunami Of Corporate Cash Swamps OKC

By Wanda Jo Stapleton

The latest U.S. Supreme Court ruling [Citizens United v. FEC] will empower corporations and unions to spend unlimited amounts of money during political campaigns, beginning immediately. Within 10 years, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, ExxonMobil, and others will buy and install their toadies in enough positions of power to control much of what we watch, hear, and read.

We in Oklahoma City recently experienced the power of corporate money when the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce raised and spent \$2 million during the MAPS 3 campaign – money which will enable the Chamber to raise

**For more on the Supreme Court's unconscionable decision:
ACLU Backs Assault On Free Speech and
Court Displays Bad Case Of Cliched Thinking**

– Page 14

\$777 million by continuing a 1% sales tax for almost eight more years.

So grandma's grocery money will help pay for the city's third convention center and a 70-acre park downtown – a "front yard" for Devon Energy's new skyscraper. The sales tax extension will cost the average Oklahoma City resident an additional \$930 or more, despite repeated statements that "your taxes won't go up."

Largest corporate contributors to this \$2 million campaign were the Oklahoma State Fair Inc. \$100,000; Chesapeake Energy \$109,332; Devon Energy \$113,040; Cox Communications \$160,450 [mainly "trade out"], the Oklahoma Publishing Company [the Oklahoman, NewsOK.com, etc.] \$176,741 ["trade out"]; and the Chamber's Forward Oklahoma City III program \$809,850.

MILLIONS MORE

In addition, on July 7, 2009, the City Council gave the Greater OKC Chamber \$4.9 million – \$100,000 from the general fund and the rest from the hotel-motel sales tax. That was the Council's annual contribution to the Chamber, purportedly for conventions and tourism.

DOUBLE TAX FOR STATE FAIR

Over half [six elevenths] of the hotel-motel tax goes each year for "improvements to the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds, not including operational expenses." The State Fair Park will get another \$60 million from the MAPS 3 sales tax for

Ask Your Rep: Where's Your Corporate Logo?

By John R. Wood

The recent U.S. Supreme Court case, Citizens United v. FEC, is undermining the legitimacy of democracy. The ruling will allow a flood of money from corporations and unions to influence elections under the guise of "First Amendment" protections.

On Jan. 22, the Oklahoma Ethics Commission meeting focused on the testimony regarding the passage of a new rule allowing for this new Supreme Court case, but also covering state-level candidates. The hope was to limit the state's exposure to lawsuits.

This new ethics amendment was placed on the agenda the day before in reaction to 183 pages of legalese that everyone admitted they had not read yet. I testified that we should wait on this state ethics ruling; we do not know enough about it. I believe the ruling is actually limited to federal candidates. Therefore, a new ethics commission rule should focus only on those candidates running for U.S. Senate and the U.S. House representing Oklahoma. It does not apply to the governorship, or other statewide offices.

The Supreme Court case reverses most of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act [BCRA] 2002, otherwise known as McCain-Feingold. The BCRA only applied to "federal election activities," so only Oklahoma's federal delegation is affected.

After further research, I stand by this interpretation. However, I conferred with two lawyers who explained that because Citizens United is a "Freedom of Speech" case, Oklahoma does indeed expose itself to lawsuits from candidates or corporate bodies that support them.

This opens up a can of worms. Are corporations "persons?"

ARTIFICIAL BEINGS, NOT PERSONS

Since America's founding, corporations were put in their place. In 1819, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, concluded: "A corporation is an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law. Being the mere creature of law, it possesses only those properties which the charter of its creation confers upon it."

However, the Supreme Court later recognized corporations as "persons" through the 14th Amendment in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* in 1886. Thom Hartmann, however, argues that it was done serendipitously and by misinterpretation into the court record. According to Hartmann, "personhood" was never written in the case itself, only the summary added later. It was cited thereafter by justices who only read the summary, never the case itself.

Soon, though, the "antitrust" movement was in full force with the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, culminating in the Tillman Act of 1907 banning corporations from donating money directly to candidates in federal elections. Even Oklahoma's



building upgrades. Clay Bennett [married to Louise Gaylord of the Oklahoman] chairs the Fair Board.

Clay is in the process of collecting the benefits of a \$192 million bounty for moving his basketball team, now called the Thunder, from Seattle to Oklahoma City: \$121 million from OKC sales tax, \$11 million from OKC use tax, and \$60 million from the state Legislature.

CHAMBER BOARD MEMBERS NOT REPRESENTATIVE

Of the 80 members on the board of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, 78% are Republicans, 12% Democrats, and 6% Independents. One member is not registered to vote.

Only 14% are women.

Even worse, fewer than half [47.5%] of the board members actually live in Oklahoma City; 24% live in Nichols Hills, 16% in Edmond, and 12.5% in other towns.

CORPORATE CONTROL

The Oklahoma City Chamber has a system in place to continue collecting avalanches of money from the Oklahoma City Council and from corporations. In addition, the latest U.S. Supreme Court ruling empowers those corporations to contribute unlimited amounts during political campaigns in order to retain their puppets at the city, state, and federal levels – thus forcing their will on the rest of us and their hands farther into our pockets.

– The author, a former Democratic state representative, lives in south Oklahoma City

founding fathers reflected this sentiment in our state Constitution the same year.

The Supreme Court seldom wavered; as recently as 1990, *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, criticized corporations in politics.

DANGER: CORRUPTING THE ELECTORATE

John McCain, in his push for McCain-Feingold legislation, limited "soft money" and specifically prohibited pre-election issue advocacy ads paid for by a corporation or by an unincorporated entity using corporate or union funds. It passed Congress and was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2003.

In defense of his legislation, McCain cited Theodore Roosevelt, "There is no enemy of free government more dangerous, and none so insidious, as the corruption of the electorate, if legislators are extorted by any kind of pressure or promise, express or implied, direct or indirect in the way of favor or immunity, then the giving or receiving becomes not only improper, but criminal. All contributions by corporations to any political committee or for any political purpose should be forbidden by law."

However, on Jan. 21, the Supreme Court overturned McCain-Feingold and 100 years of corporate limitations on elections despite the Amicus Briefs by the ACLU, Common Cause and others citing the potential of corruption with money flooding elections, problems of aggregated wealth warping fair elections, and even the problem with overturning precedents that span this entire century.

PROBLEMS WITH CORPORATE 'PERSONHOOD'

Double Representation?

Critics say corporations are organizations made up of people and should not be deprived of their rights because they act collectively. But, isn't this double representation? People can now contribute unlimited money from their corporate treasuries, and then pull out a wad of cash from their wallets. Isn't the interest of the corporation already expressed on the individual level?

Foreign-Controlled Corporations?

Not all corporations based in America are American-owned. The Abu Dhabi Investment Council controls 75% of the Chrysler Building. CITGO is owned by Petr6leos de Venezuela. Caribou Coffee and Church's Chicken are both owned by Arcapita, which is backed by the Bahrain-based First Islamic Investment Bank. Could you imagine foreign nationals trying to influence a campaign for their benefit? They can with the Citizens United ruling. A corporate lobbyist can now tell any elected official "vote against my company or labor union or interest group, and we will spend unlimited dollars advertising against your re-election bid."

See CORPORATE Page 9

PUBLIC FORUM

Of Faux Questionnaires And Special Interests

By Sharon Martin

An Open Letter to State Rep. Skye McNeil, R-Tulsa:

When my legislative representative asks for my opinion on the issues, I feel it is my responsibility as a citizen to respond. Before I can respond to the questionnaire you sent, however, I need clarification on a couple of your questions.

When you asked, "Should we continue the restrictions placed on Oklahoma small businesses...?" you didn't say what those restrictions were. Are you talking about restrictions that keep employers from hiring illegal immigrants? Restrictions on child labor? On adequate compensation? Are small businesses in Oklahoma restricted by unnecessary safety regulations to protect the health and save the lives of their employees?

You asked, "Should we depend on overseas oil for all our energy needs...?" How did you expect us to answer that?

You asked if Oklahoma's legal system was adequate, then continued with a second question about frivolous lawsuits. Could you give me an example of a frivolous lawsuit? If it continues through the court system, a judge somewhere has deemed that it wasn't frivolous or it wouldn't have gone forward.

Is the Legislature trying to take over the judicial system? Personally, I like the system of checks and balances between the three branches of government set up by our founding fathers. I wouldn't like that to be eroded by frivolous laws.

You asked if we should continue the restrictive taxes on Oklahoma energy developers. Could you elaborate? Are you suggesting that they not pay taxes? That's fine, but if you cut taxes for them, you need to raise them somewhere else. Or are you suggesting we cut taxes at a time of severe budget shortfalls without somehow making up the difference? I suppose we could close schools in Oklahoma. Or we could cut out meals for homebound elderly, perhaps.

You suggested that money to promote tourism might be cut. I know if I had to choose between education spending and tourism spending, I'd be tempted to cut the tourism dollars. However, both tourists and educated citizens bring



money into the state's coffers. If we cut money for tourism, we bring in fewer out-of-state dollars, and we have to cut budgets again.

Education, health, tourism, and economic development are investments. They bring money back to the state. Unfortunately, they don't always bring the money back in a single legislative term, which makes investment unsexy to those who depend on contributions to be re-elected.

Oklahoma has one of the lowest tax bases in the nation, and we are one of the poorest. Perhaps we don't invest enough in our citizens. If we don't invest, we don't get anything back.

I urge you to consider our health, our education, our job needs. I urge you to stand with the citizens who pay your salary and not with the special interests who fill your campaign war chest. We are your constituents. We need you, not the party line.

One more thing: I'd have a lot more respect for the questionnaires I receive from my representatives if my representatives didn't ask leading questions and didn't demand that I pay for these thinly disguised campaign ads with my tax dollars.

Now, you know where I stand. Do you represent me?

- The author lives in Oilton

How To Tear Down An Honest Candidate

By Fannie Bates

Over the many years that I lived in Oklahoma City, I attended dozens of meetings of the City Council. I personally observed Mick Cornett time and time again, taking the side of special interests over the taxpayers.

Once about two years ago, there was a man in a wheelchair who came to the meeting to complain that the buses were passing him by, and he was having to wait from one hour to two hours for a bus. Mick Cornett was very rude to this man.

As you have probably heard, there is a 39-year-old man named Steve Hunt running against Cornett for mayor. I know Steve personally. He is a hard-working citizen. He is certainly bright enough to be mayor. He has common sense, and he is not bought and paid for like Mick Cornett is.

When Steve Hunt is mayor, he will stand up for the firefighters and police. All the talking heads in city government will experience a new level of accountability. The taxpayers will have the mayor's ear.

There is already a smear campaign against Steve. People are saying he works at Taco Bell. That is a lie.

Also, a picture is circulating that they claim shows Steve smoking a drug. That is simply not true. The picture shows Steve smoking a hookah pipe. This pipe originated in India and is very popular in the Middle East. The tobacco is often flavored [like strawberry, for example], and is less harsh than regular tobacco.

There are at least two lounges in OKC where people can smoke this kind of a pipe. Although I personally do not like to see anyone smoke, I think smoking a hookah pipe is safer than smoking cigarettes.

Steve is just a smart, hard-working young man who wants to make OKC a better place to live.

If you want to learn more about Steve, please see his Facebook page, called "Steve Hunt for Mayor of Oklahoma City." Or call him at 405.250.9683.

Mick Cornett has a closed mind when it comes to saving OKC's railyard and future rail possibilities. I believe Steve Hunt is willing to work with us.

Thank you for keeping an open mind about this young man.

- The author lives in Emmonak, AK

Diary Of A Not-So-Mad Substitute Teacher

By Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner

At 70 years old, I have found a new career. Like Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie, I have become a kindergarten cop.

The sub-finder computer calls at 5:30 a.m. and gives me my assignment. I will be Miss Jones, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Whatshername, Mr. Whatshizname in the Tulsa Public Schools.

The schools are now 36% white and the remainder black and Latino. Many white kids have followed their parents to the suburbs - Broken Arrow, Jenks, Union and Owasso.

So, the inner-city kids need a fiery Irish lass like me to tell them how to straighten up and fly right like my Mama, Louise Cooper Dennis, did in her one-room schoolhouse.

My Dad, Chester Dennis, the garment cutter, left me a wonderful legacy - three dozen dew-rags for my bald head.

It got that way after breast cancer surgery and chemo. I've finished my chemo and radiation and my mammogram is all clear. Wahoo! My hair is coming back, too.

So, I tie on my dew-rag, grab my teaching bag, including Robert Louis Stevenson's poems, my clown nose, and strike out for a different school each week-day.

Uncle Marvin, the school superintendent, should see me now.

In the trunk is a bulletin board and framed photo of my proudest moment as a parent - my son's service with the Peace Corps in Madagascar.

They show his students using toothbrushes I sent them and other scenes from his adopted country. The black and brown students love to see them. At school, I check in with the "Aunt Bonnies" [the ringmaster]. I tell my students

stories like Frank McCourt did in the New York City Public Schools [*Teacher Man*]. With my back to the class I put on my clown nose, turn around and say, "If there is any clowning around it will be done by me." The class roars.

Just before the Christmas holidays, I wore my long red dress and was teaching kindergarten. The kids decided I just might be Mrs. Claus. I said, "Yes, I am." They wanted to know what it was like at the North Pole.

I said we have polar bears in our front yard, lots of snow and Santa feeds the bears peppermint sticks.

"How did you get here?" they asked. I said Polar Express. Oh, they cried, "How will you get back?" I said Polar Express.

"We want to go, too," they said. "We want to see the elves." One little boy had done his own thing all day. He was under the tables and on the floor. He came up to me at the end of the day and said, "Will you be back tomorrow?" I said no. He put his arms around me and gave me a big hug. It made my day worth it.

I had a class with five autistic boys. All wanted to tell me what they would be someday. I decided to share Robert Louis Stevenson's poetry with them. One was a non-communicator with his head hanging down. However, when I told my stories and read the poetry he looked up with a gleam in his eyes and smiled. One of the great days of my life.

Joel was in the fourth grade. He was bigger than the other kids and bright. He was constantly pushing, shoving and fighting someone.

I said, Joel, we don't push, shove or hit other people and boys never push, shove or hit a girl.

By the end of the school day I decided to share Robert Louis Stevenson and
See DIARY Page 9

State Ed Boasts High National Rankings

In their sixth consecutive annual report, the National Institute for Early Education Research [NIEER] confirms Oklahoma as the national model for Pre-Kindergarten programs and one of only two states offering voluntary access statewide.

Oklahoma is No. 1 in the percentage of four-year-olds attending public school programs and one of only 12 states meeting at least nine of 10 early childhood education quality standards.

Nationally certified: Oklahoma ranks 8th nationwide in the number of new National Board Certified Teachers [324] and ranks 10th in the total number of teachers who have national certification [2,307], according to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

For 2008, Oklahoma ranked 5th nationally in terms of National Board Certified teachers as a percentage of all teachers in the state at 5.7%, while just 2% of all teachers in the U.S. have this prestigious credential.

NATIONALLY CERTIFIED

Since 1998, legislative appropriations have provided performance-based funding of a \$5,000 bonus and application support. Nearly 60% of Oklahoma teachers with national certification teach in high-poverty schools compared to 42% nationally.

Oklahoma is one of 14 states in the U.S. to improve mathematics scores at Grades 4 and 8 in 2007 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], compared to the previous test [2005] of a sample of students in each state. NAEP scores improved for Grade 4 reading but were statistically unchanged in Grade 8 reading, which remained at the national average.

Quality counts: After evaluating policies and performance in 150 categories of education reform, Education Week ranks Oklahoma 25th overall on its 13th annual "Quality Counts" report.

Notable in Oklahoma's report is that the state earned perfect scores for "School Accountability" subcategory.

High tech: Oklahoma ranks 12th on a composite score in "Technology Counts 2009," a national report by Education Week. Oklahoma received a grade of B, compared to the national average grade of C+. Oklahoma scored above the national average in both categories comparing state school systems on technology indicators: the use of instructional technology, and the capacity to effectively use instructional technology.

GRADUATION RATE

High school graduates: Data from the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education's most recent "Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate of Public High School Students, by State: School Year 2005-06," ranks Oklahoma 20th nationally.

The report said 77.8% of Oklahoma students graduated from high school in 2006, compared to 73.2% percent nationally.

High standards: In 2006, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation issued its comprehensive report since 2000 on the quality of state academic standards. Oklahoma's Priority Academic Student Skills [PASS] state curriculum ranks 10th nationally on that analysis, which included the curriculum standards adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

State investment: Oklahoma ranks 46th nationally for per-pupil expenditures [\$7,615] compared to national average of \$9,963 and 42nd for its average teacher salary of \$43,551 compared to national average of \$52,308 in 2007-08 according to States 2008 and Estimates of School Statistics 2009.

The regional average for per-student spending stood at \$8,870, and the regional average for teacher pay was \$45,172. [Rankings include the District of Columbia.]

Editor's Note: National rankings are regularly updated and available online at www.sde.state.ok.us or contact the State Department of Education at 405.521.3331 for more information.

CORPORATE

From Page 7

All Rights, No Responsibilities

We have given First Amendment rights to a non-living creature of the law. Imagine if a corporation now can vote or even run for office? Actually, Murray Hill Inc. is taking this next step by running for Congress this year. While the campaign seems tongue-in-cheek, it shows us that these corporations now have all our rights, but not our responsibilities and inconveniences of life.

"Freedom of Speech" for nonliving corporations means money is a megaphone. If you don't have money, your voice is merely a whisper. Corporate money flooding the airwaves in fall 2010 will change the way we look at elections, and it will drown out our voice.

Shareholder Rights?

What if a Republican has shares in Caribou Coffee Co.? This company gave 99.5% of its \$42,200 in campaign money to Democrats in 2009. Alternatively, a

Democrat could have shares in Wal-Mart, which gave 78% of its campaign money to Republicans, approximately \$1.6 million. Maybe candidates should start wearing their corporate logos on their shirts, so we can see who backs them like race car drivers!

Republicans think they will find an advantage with a huge corporate presence in elections, however, according to the Blue Pages, Democrats gain as many contributions with a combination of unions and corporations, which hedge their bets on election outcomes.

The real winners are corporations and unions, and the losers – us!

Next time you see your Congress member, ask, "Where is your corporate logo patch?" And, try not to whisper.

– The author is a political science professor at Rose State College and an active member of Common Cause

DIARY

From Page 8

his poems with the kids.

I related the poem about the lamplighter where Stevenson mentions drinking tea. I said what happened in Boston that we still talk about today? Joel answered, "The Boston Tea Party." I said, yes, Joel, and you get an "A." He was so excited, he giggled and pulled his jacket over his nose. Some days it is worth the struggle.

I told one class about Stevenson's "My Shadow" poem in which he mentions seeing dew on every buttercup. We call them daffodils. Outside with the children, waiting for the parents, I feel a tug on my dress. A little Latino girl, said, "Teacher, teacher. Look over there." I looked and saw daffodils.

Some days are worth pure gold.

– The author lives in Wagoner

Why My Wife Won't Take Me Shopping

After I retired, my wife insisted that I accompany her on her trips to Target, Wal-Mart, and Sam's.

Unfortunately, like most men, I found shopping boring and preferred to get in and get out. Equally unfortunate, my wife is like most women – she loves to browse and touch ... everything. Yesterday, my dear wife received the following letter from the local Target.

Dear Mrs. Rheume,

Over the past six months, your husband has caused quite a commotion in our store. We cannot tolerate this behavior and have been forced to ban both of you from the store. Our complaints against your husband, Mr. Samuel, are listed below and are documented by our video surveillance cameras.

1. June 15: Took 24 boxes of condoms and randomly put them in other people's carts when they weren't looking.

2. July 2: Set all the alarm clocks in Housewares to go off at 5-minute intervals.

3. July 7: He made a trail of tomato juice on the floor leading to the women's restroom.

4. July 19: Walked up to an employee and told her in an official voice, "Code 3 in Housewares. Get on it right away." This caused the employee to leave her assigned station and receive a reprimand from her Supervisor that in turn resulted in a union grievance, causing management to lose time and costing the company money.

5. August 4: Went to the Service Desk and tried to put a bag of M&Ms on lay-

away.

6. August 14: Moved a "CAUTION – WET FLOOR" sign to a carpeted area.

7. August 15: Set up a tent in the camping department and told the children shoppers he'd invite them in if they would bring pillows and blankets from the bedding department to which 20 children obliged.

8. August 23: When a clerk asked if they could help him he began crying and screamed, "Why can't you people just leave me alone?" EMTs were called.

9. September 4: Looked right into the security camera and used it as a mirror while he picked his nose.

10. September 10: While handling guns in the hunting department, he asked the clerk where the antidepressants were.

11. October 3: Darted around the store suspiciously while loudly humming the "Mission Impossible" theme.

12. October 6: In the auto department, he practiced his "Madonna look" by using different sizes of funnels.

13. October 18: Hid in a clothing rack and when people browsed through, yelled "PICK ME! PICK ME!"

14. October 21: When an announcement came over the loud speaker, he assumed a fetal position and screamed "OH NO! IT'S THOSE VOICES AGAIN!"

And last, but not least:

15. October 23: Went into a fitting room, shut the door, waited awhile, then yelled very loudly, "Hey! There's no toilet paper in here." One of the clerks passed out.

BOOKS

The Final Nail In Sanford's Political Coffin

By Tim Rutten

STAYING TRUE

By Jenny Sanford
Random House Publishing
240 pages, \$35

I believe it was my mother who first admonished me never to presume that "you know what really goes on in another person's marriage."

Well, Mom, meet the Sanfords of South Carolina, whose odd and tumultuous union is now an open book, thanks to Jenny Sanford's memoir of a marriage that only can be described as the Contract With America meets Southern gothic.

Sanford's husband, Mark – the governor of South Carolina – was once a rising star in the national Republican firmament. Then, last June, he disappeared from office for nearly a week, ostensibly to go "hiking on the Appalachian Trail." As it turned out, he was in South America for a tryst with his Argentine mistress.

After that, things went from bad to worse, personally and politically. Gov. Sanford's long, incoherently confessional television interviews didn't do much to help matters, and this book, for all its more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger tone, clearly seems intended as the last nail in the coffin.

REVENGE 'A BARELY CONCEALED SUBTEXT'

The former first lady, a one-time investment banker with Lazard Frères, is smart, focused and very angry. For all the pious references to forgiveness stitched throughout the narrative, revenge is a barely concealed subtext.

And revenge she gets, but there's a good bit of collateral damage in what's just as obviously unintended self-revelation. In fact, by the time we get to the affair late in the book, it's a bit of a relief, since this is about the first normative impulse either of the Sanfords seems to have had during their marriage.

Take, for example, the future governor's haggling over their wedding vows, because he was reluctant to promise to be faithful. Now, why do we think somebody might have that sort of reservation?

Sanford spends a great deal of time describing her heroic efforts to accommodate what she repeatedly calls her husband's "frugality." Frugality! If this guy is frugal, the unreformed Ebenezer Scrooge was thrifty.

A MODERN DAY SCROOGE

Consider this anecdote: Never good about presents – early in their marriage he gave her "half" a used bicycle – and momentarily remorseful for all the time he was spending away from his family while serving in Washington as a congressman, he had an aide buy a diamond necklace and hide it in the family home.

On the morning of his wife's birthday, he faxed clues so she could have "a treasure hunt." She was overjoyed when she found the necklace and wore it to dinner when he returned home. "That is what I spent all that money on?" he said. "I hope you kept the box."

According to Jenny Sanford's account, "He returned the necklace the next day, thinking it was not worth the money he had spent. He could see I was disappointed. ... In truth, once I knew he thought he had overspent, I also knew it would pain him to see me wear the necklace had I insisted on keeping it. I wouldn't have felt comfortable wearing it in his presence, so what was the point?"

POWER OF MARTYRDOM

The unintentional point, of course, has to do with the power of martyrdom. As Sanford informs us elsewhere in the book, "Women were made for sacrifice."

And boy does she sacrifice ... over and over and over. What's never clear from her extended exercise in score-settling is why? The man she describes is driven, self-absorbed, pathologically cheap and 360-degrees weird. She runs his political campaigns, puts up with his habitual absences and bears him four sons.

She even believes him, she tells us here, when late in their marriage he explains an unexpected trip alone to New York by saying he needs respite from the extra stress he is feeling because the hair on the top of his head is thinning.

Gimme a break.

If you believe that, you'll also believe Sanford really was looking for family property records when she ransacked her husband's desk while he was away on one of many hunting trips and found the file with his love letters.

SANFORD'S SELF-ABSORPTION

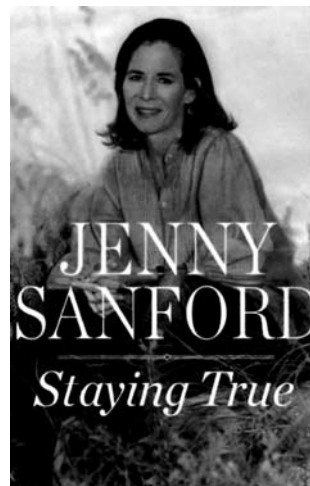
On the other hand, this guy's self-absorption appears so complete that he demanded his wife's permission to continue seeing his mistress because it was the first thing he'd ever done for himself. [This is the same man who voted for Bill Clinton's impeachment and called the former president "reprehensible."] It was then that Sanford realized "reconciliation" was impossible.

After she's decided that neither she nor God can forgive her husband because he was "seeking his own comfort, no longer guided by a power above," we're asked to believe that all Jenny Sanford requires is a quiet life by the sea with her sons, long walks on the beach and her prayers.

"Even as I wrestled with what I might have seen or what I should have understood earlier," she writes, "I refused to beat myself up. ... I was proud to conclude that giving and doing more for our marriage than I had received in return had been the right thing to do for our family."

TRADEMARKED HER NAME

Eight days after her husband's affair came to light, Sanford took legal steps to turn her own name into a trademark. According to U.S. Patent and Trademark records first obtained and reported by NBC's Columbia, SC, affiliate, she applied to legally designate her name as a "good or service" [that is, a product] and



to claim exclusive rights to "product merchandising to be sold at on-line retail stores featuring clothing, mugs and other household items; stickers, decals, notepads."

On ABC's "20/20," Sanford told Barbara Walters that she was troubled but dutifully accommodating when her husband-to-be balked at promising fidelity: "It bothered me to some extent, but ... we were very young. We were in love. I questioned it, but I got past it ... along with other doubts that I had."

A merchandise trademark, a book with inspirational potential tailor-made for the lucrative evangelical

speaking circuit, a network interview with Barbara Walters.

Not a bad launch for the woman-scorned brand.

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Top 10 Reasons Ken Starr Bad For Baylor

By Don Wilkey

Editor's Note: In mid-February, Baylor University trustees hired former Clinton prosecutor Ken Starr as the Baptist school's 14th president. Starr's investigation of the Whitewater land deal and Monica Lewinsky led to the House of Representatives voting to impeach the president, but he was acquitted by the Senate. Starr has been dean of the law school at Pepperdine University, a Church of Christ-affiliated school, since 2004.

1. In John 7 there is a familiar story of lawyers who drug a Jewish girl caught in adultery into the public square. The lawyers did not care about the law, justice or faith – it was merely a political ploy to destroy somebody. James Harris used to say the act committed by the Pharisees was worse than the act committed by the woman in the heat of passion. Which character[s] in this story represents the projected head of a Baptist school?

2. Ken Starr spent over \$52 million to prosecute a president and it proved to be a failure as experts told the nation this impeachment would never happen. Not exactly good stewardship.

3. Some Biblical commentators believe the Pharisees in John's story were involved in the same thing the woman was and that was what Jesus wrote in the sand. During Starr's legal maneuvering, the leading opposing political party had a long list of people doing the exact same thing as the president. While the House leader was leading the charge for impeachment, he was having an affair with a staff member.

4. Starr ain't a Baptist.

5. Baylor often uses euphemistic language to pass something along to its supporters. A few years ago I received a letter stating the university had decided to discontinue its "unclothed anatomical figurine drawing class." Most of us in East Texas didn't know what they were talking about. If they had told us they were closing the nude modeling co-ed class we would have understood. The spin is that Starr is a Democrat!

6. Since the Baylor basketball player, who was poor and drove a new SUV, capped a few rounds into a fellow team member, Baylor has held the spotlight quite often for embarrassing reasons. Not to mention a huge debt, harming the church/state tradition, and firing administrators.

7. Starr went against President Bush's wishes and pushed for a pro-choice Supreme Court nominee. Texas Baptists are not pro-choice.

8. I assume leaders of institutions ought to draw folks together not splinter them further apart.

9. You cannot trust the board at Baylor with the rocky recent history.

10. In just about every truck stop in Texas there is a sarcastic bumper sticker. It reads, "Remember the golden rule, those who have the gold make the rules." This choice appears to be like the famous movie line, "Show me the money."

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

Water Crisis Looms Sooner Than You Think

By Norm Rourke

A recent report on CBS News rekindled my concern about our rapidly dwindling water supply. A few statistics: Americans use 150 gallons of water each day. The UK uses 40 gallons. China uses 22 gallons. Kenya uses 13 gallons.

One water scientist said water is overtaking oil as the scarcest natural resource in the world.

Here's an even more sobering statistic: Thirty-six states will face a water shortage in three years! *Oklahoma is one of those states.*

I can hear many saying: "Yeah, yeah, here we go again." No, this has nothing to do with the debate about the validity of global warming.

Having lived in New Mexico where water is precious and from visiting Tucson, AZ and Lubbock, TX where they don't squander water keeping greenery alive in center medians, I get angry when I see rivers of water gushing down gutters as sprinklers blast away like geysers.

SCANDALOUS WASTE OF WATER

Northeast Oklahoma is called "Green Country." And for good reason: Trees, bushes, plants and water soaking landscape are everywhere. Yes it's nice to see things all a-bloom. But when the city of Tulsa wastes so much water keeping landscaped center medians blooming just to be part of "Green Country" it makes one wonder.

But the city isn't the only culprit in the water wasting business. Take a drive around 71st Street and Yale Avenue during the summer. You could wash your car with the water spewing from sprinklers and running down the gutters. The water wasted to keep the center median greenery alive between Harvard and Yale on 71st Street is all but criminal. Most of it blows all over the street thanks to our ever-present Oklahoma winds. So what's being watered?

These water wasters should be heavily fined for squandering a diminishing natural resource. It's clear they just don't care. Municipalities should be ashamed for contributing to the problem and not setting an example.

Add to this the commercial and institutional water wasters in this area and you soon have a growing problem. And this is only one area where water is wasted.

ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Here's a solution to the water wasting that many other cities like those men-

tioned earlier have done: Use xeriscape plants that require little or no water and can survive on the water received during rains. Instead of beds of water absorbing bushes and such, landscape with decorative rock. Not only would this cut down the need for water, it would also reduce the maintenance costs.

Every center median with Bradford pear trees [a popular tree used by the city of Tulsa and others] requires constant maintenance and water and will be replaced in less than five years. All the bushes, plantings and other water absorbing plants will die out during our hot summers, be frozen in the winter and have to be replaced.

Landscaping with xeriscape plants and rock is as attractive as all the Bradford pear [or other] trees. Lubbock has some of the most beautiful center medians found anywhere using xeriscape and rock landscaping. People in Tucson have reduced their maintenance and water usage using this approach. Las Vegas is rewarding its residents to remove grass lawns and use xeriscape plants and non-water absorbing landscaping. As a result, that city is realizing millions of gallons of water saved.

"But we don't want to look like a desert!" some will say. "We like our trees, our plants and all the rest."

PERMANENT WATER RATIONING

OK, keep it up and there won't be a choice when water rationing becomes a requirement.

Crying wolf? Don't think so. The water tables have been dropping like the proverbial rock and still we continue to waste water just so the term "Green Country" can be used in advertising hype.

This doesn't mean we can't take showers, wash our clothes or use water as we always have. But a little thought about how we can conserve or reduce our water usage will help.

If lush green lawns or center medians along our roads means creating rivers of water gushing down gutters [even sometimes when it's raining!] it's not worth it when there are other options available that are just as beautiful and maintenance free.

– The author lives in Beggs

Corporate Greedhead Trophy Is Up For Grabs

By Jim Hightower

By gollies, the top executives of health insurance corporations are not giving up without a fight! To paraphrase every high school football coach who ever lived, "When the going gets ugly, the ugly get going."

During the past several months, the Barons of Wall Street had established themselves as the vilest and most reviled corporate team in the land. They've been lavishing bonuses on themselves even as their firms continue to benefit from government bailout measures and even as ordinary Americans continue to struggle with the economic collapse caused by the bankers' arrogance and avarice.

Wall Streeters were widely considered a shoo-in to take the coveted Corporate Greedhead Trophy this year – but, holy cow, what a comeback bid we're now seeing from the Giants of Insurance!

\$12.2 BILLION IN PROFITS

Let's recap their amazing charge: Recently, the news broke that America's five largest health insurance companies [United Health, Wellpoint, Aetna, Humana and Cigna] had scored record profits in 2009, totaling \$12.2 billion. This was a stunning 56% hike over the previous year, a drive made all the more im-

pressive by the fact that these gains came during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

As American families struggled financially last year, Team Insurance was able to boot 2.7 million more people out of their private health plans, leaving those folks in the corporate dust. In an even slicker, hidden-ball play, three of the five giants cut the proportion of premiums they spent on their customers' medical care, shifting those premium dollars into corporate salaries, profits and administrative overhead.

Even Wall Street's Barons had to shake their heads in disbelief and marvel at the audacity of that play.

\$16.8 MILLION FIGHTING REFORM

By the way, buried in that increase for the insurers' administrative overhead was a little statistic that often gets overlooked: lobbying expenses. The Big Five spent \$16.8 million last year to lobby against comprehensive reform of our health care system.

You youngsters should take note of that, for such attention to detail is what

See GREED Page 18

A Perfect Tea Party For Sister Sarah

By Edwin E. Vineyard

In the vernacular of New Orleans Saints' fans, we might be prone to raise the question: "Who 'dem Tea Party goers?" And, as compared to the famous car commercial of the olden days, "It's not your father's Oldsmobile," we could say, "These are not the same tea-baggers you last saw in a town near you."

Television provides us with repetitive images from which we sort to choose those which represent groups of people or even ideas. Television has provided us with images of tea-baggers. There was that one lady who reminded us of Cousin Minnie Pearl of Grand 'Ole Opry fame. She had tea-bags hanging from the brim of her hat, reminiscent of Cousin Minnie's price tags hanging from her hat and clothes. Then there was that slouchy militia, red-neck type carrying an anti-Obama sign in one hand and a rifle in the other.

But, no, the Tea Party at the fancy Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Resort was not that so-called populist movement of tea-baggers we saw rallying here and there around the country, wherever a crowd was already gathered. However, the rhetoric sounded pretty much the same.

THIS IS NO MOTEL 6 CROWD

To begin with, that Gaylord hotel is a rather fancy place, and it costs money to stay there. It also costs money to get there. The registration fee for the Tea Party was \$549, plus an extra \$350 to attend the dinner to hear Sarah Palin speak to earn her \$100,000 fee. This Tea Party carried a price tag of somewhere near \$2,000 a person for a really big party experience. One might say that eliminated that riff-raff, populist bunch.

While the sponsorship of the Nashville Tea Party convention was a "for-profit" organization, that is not really all that different either. The whole tea party and tea-bagger "grass-roots" movement has had its wealthy and corporate sponsors providing the money and paying for the organizing of their "spontaneous" events, bus tours, and celebrations.

But this group of Tea Party-goers was indeed different than most of those we saw carrying the signs and yelling anti-government slogans around the country the last six months. This one was made up of people who could afford to leave home and jobs and spend \$3,000 to \$4,000 a couple for a trip to Nashville to visit with one another and hear their favorite right wing politicians.

ELITE INVITATION LIST

Not every tea-bagger was invited to come, not all wanted to go, and not many of the well-known people in the party [or even the tea movement] were invited to speak. This was a select group. These folk have been having something of a falling out. Some are mad about this, and some about that. Outsiders don't know too much about specifics.

Some of the old bunch didn't like the crowd that sponsored the party to make money. Some were mad because their favorites were not invited, or were uninvited, to speak. Mainstream Republicans were slighted.

We couldn't tell for sure from a distance, but it looked like affairs at this Tea Party of right wing, ultra-conservative, Republican folk went off to suit them just fine. We heard about only two of their speakers, the keynoter and the finale. Those choices were interesting and different, as was their manner and material. Both were "ex-es," one a failed congressman and one a failed vice-president candidate and governor who bailed out halfway in her first term.

The race-obsessed, anti-immigrant, former Congressman Tom Tancredo blamed illiterate Latinos and blacks for the election of President Obama. He spoke fondly of reviving "literacy tests" [which were used for decades to keep black people in the South from voting]. He noted that these would have kept Mr. Obama out



of office.

LILY WHITE GATHERING

No less an authority than Meghan McCain has called this speech "innately racist." Of course, the cheering tea party crowd was an all-white gathering, polling as anti-government and anti-Obama.

Mr. Tancredo spoke of the president by his three names, each enunciated slowly and clearly – Barack Hussein Obama – as only a speaker appealing to prejudice does. Of course, that was meant to convey that our president was really a foreigner and not "one of us." He also called the president "a socialist ideologue."

Tancredo, as is his custom, managed to appeal to several of the lowest common denominator traits in his audience. Sadly, each time he did so, he received spontaneous, loud cheers.

In such manner was the level of character, culture, and intelligence of these Tea Party goers established. Only such a group would pay someone such as Sarah Palin to come in and give a \$100,000 speech, or pay \$350 to hear her give the speech and cheer her along.

TALK TO THE HAND

Sarah did not disappoint her crowd. She heaped coals of fire on the president's head. She railed against government and taxes. That's what Tea Party people do. Then she managed to get in several real cutesy digs at the Democrats and their leaders – of the sort like "lipstick on a hockey-mom," or whatever that old one was. But one backfired.

Her dig at the president's use of a teleprompter while reading from her prepared text did not go over with the outsider audience of TV clips, and the "cheat sheet" printed on her hand at which she looked and checked during a press interview and later remarks was worse. That became a big joke.

It would have not been so bad, had it not exposed her own pointed remarks as hypocritical.

Sarah has become something of a celebrity. That would be OK, of course, if she did not pretend to be anything of gravitas or serious nature. People would be tolerant of her, just as they are of Paris Hilton. The fact that observations and polls indicate that both she and some 35% of our people think that she is qualified to be president is the potential tragedy.

But this Tea Party society is Sarah Palin's venue. She fits well there. Not much intellectual substance is expected. Not much is given. They have money, and they gave it to her. This is her kind of crowd.

– The author lives in Enid. More of his essays are available on-line at www.okobserver.net

Sarah Palin: The Gift That Keeps Giving

By Karen Webb

I have not watched or read Sarah Palin's entire speech at the Tea Bag convention, nor have I watched all of the entire interviews, but from what I have seen, Tina Fey already has all she needs and more for the next three years.

All of this after just one year with President Obama in office.

Thank you, Sarah, and keep it going, please, please, please.

She said that Obama is still trying to make this all about George W. Bush. Maybe she has forgotten that Bush and the Republicans to this day are still blaming Bill Clinton and it has been nine years now.

A QUESTION FOR PALIN

"This was all part of that hope and change and transparency. Now a year later, I gotta ask the supporters of all that, 'how's that hopey, changey stuff working out for you?'"

Not as well as I had hoped, but I don't know Sarah, "how is that quitty, tax evading, losey stuff working out for you?"

Obama only has to stick it out another year and he will have lasted longer than you did in office. How is it that inciting gun owners to wear guns to presidential speeches was OK, but wearing a W with a slash through it or having it on your car bumper could get you arrested or kicked out of a Bush speech?

THREE STOOGES OF FOREIGN POLICY

"Treating this like a mere law enforcement matter places our country at grave risk. Because that is not how radical Islamic extremists are looking at this. They know we are at war and to win that war we need a commander in chief,

and not a professor at law standing at the lectern."

Maybe we could use another C student, draft-evading, egotistic, dry-drunk, rich, frat boy, egging on suicide bombers by daring them to "bring it on" and then declaring victory nine years, and still counting, too soon.

Maybe we need a guy with his fifth draft deferment still spouting off on TV.

Maybe we need a small town mayor, who had to go to several schools in order to find one willing to give her a degree, who couldn't stomach a full term as governor, who thinks war is some sort of political, darers-go-first party game standing at the lectern reading her own palm in front of all those bagged tea leaves out there.

AIN'T ANARCHY GRAND?

"I caution against allowing this movement to be defined by any one leader. This is about the people and it is bigger than any king or queen of a tea party and is a lot bigger than any charismatic guy with a teleprompter."

Who needs a leader when anarchy is such fun? Yelling over anyone who disagrees with you and calling it "your constitutional right to free speech." How can a woman who had to write her three primary talking points on her hand for an interview make fun of a guy who just sat down with over 100 people, who are against everything he stands for, with NO teleprompter and NO pre-approved questions?

She had "energy, budget crossed out with cuts next to it, tax beneath that

See GIFT Page 13

Republicans Distorting Texas Social Studies

Think Oklahoma is national headquarters for rightwing nuts? Look to our neighbors to the south for Republicans who ought to be kept in cages.

For months, the Texas State Board of Education has been hearing from so-called "experts" about the direction of the state's social studies curriculum and textbook standards. The advice to the 15-member board – which is composed of 10 Republicans – has included more references to Christianity, fewer mentions of civil rights leaders, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

The State Board of Education on a 7-6 vote, decided to add "causes and key organizations and individuals of the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s, including Phyllis Schlafly, the Contract with America, the Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority, and the National Rifle Association" to the curriculum.

TED KENNEDY IS BANISHED

The Republican majority voted against requiring Texas textbooks and teachers to cover the Democratic late senator Edward Kennedy, the first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and leading Hispanic civil rights groups such as LULAC and MALDEF. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Thurgood Marshall, the country's first African-American Supreme Court justice, will be taught.

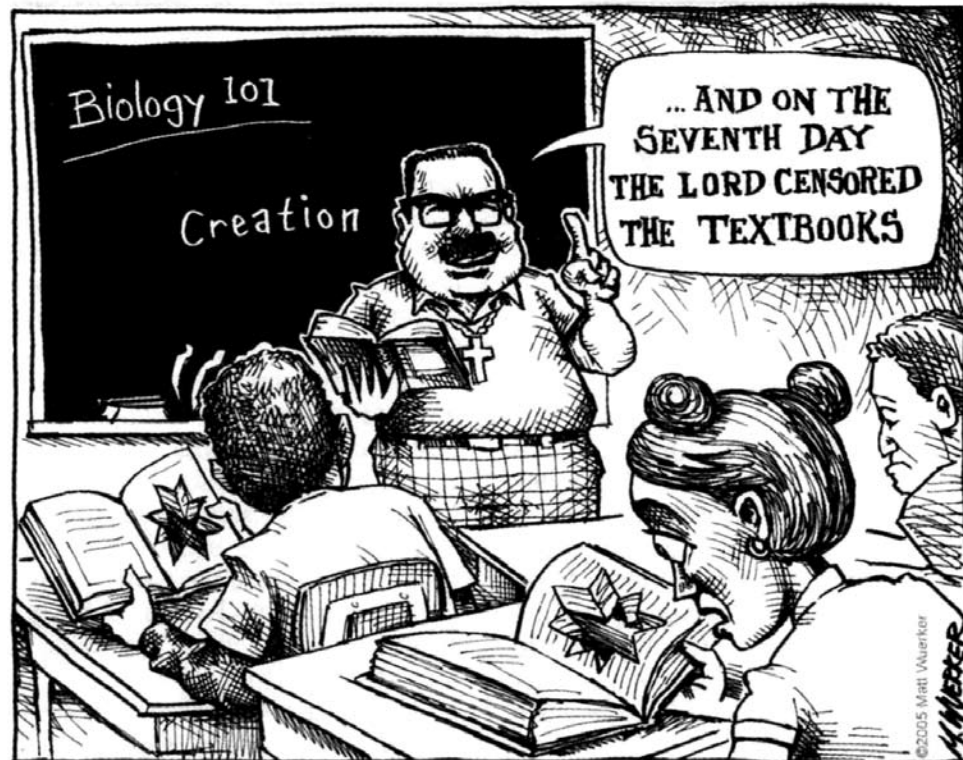
Republican Don McLeroy lost a battle to remove hip-hop and insert country music in its place from a proposed set of examples of cultural movements. Republican Patricia Hardy said that while she disliked hip hop music, pretending it wasn't around was "crazy."

McLeroy was successful with another of his noteworthy amendments: to include documents that supported Cold War-era Sen. Joseph McCarthy and his contention that the U.S. government was infiltrated with Communists in the 1950s.

TARGETED DARROW, GARVEY

Republican board member Cynthia Dunbar unsuccessfully tried to strike the names of Scopes monkey trial attorney Clarence Darrow and Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey from the standards.

Asked by another member about her opposition to Garvey, Dunbar explained, according to the Texas Tribune: "My concern is that he was born in Jamaica and was deported."



The board "included a requirement for students in U.S. history classes to differentiate between legal and illegal immigration."

McLeroy, who has been the driving force of some of the most conservative amendments, said that he plans on proposing more controversial standards, such as an evaluation of the U.S. civil rights movement and the "increased participation of minorities in the political process and unrealistic expectations for equal outcomes," in addition to the "adversarial approach taken by many civil rights groups."

This debate is important not only because it will dictate how the state's 4.7 million schoolchildren are taught but also because Texas "is one of the nation's biggest buyers of textbooks." Publishers are often "reluctant to produce different versions of the same material," and therefore create books in line with Texas' standards.

"Publishers will do whatever it takes to get on the Texas list," one industry executive told the Washington Monthly.

GIFT

From Page 12

and, Lift American spirits" written on her hand. A cheat sheet with corrections! What's up with that?

She had to remind herself to lift our spirits? Well she couldn't lift mine with a crane, but those tea bags that have to be in hot water to release anything need a lot of lifting and dunking.

SARAH'S LOOPY LOGIC

Then with Fox News' Chris Wallace instructing her in a way similar to a teacher speaking to an unruly student on how to take off her political hat and put on her analyst hat to analyze Obama's chances in 2012 she really cranked up. After being influenced by one of Pat Buchanan's columns she said, "SAY, he played the war card. SAY, he decided to declare war on Iran or really came out and SAY do whatever he could to support Israel, which I would like him to do. That changes the dynamics. What we can assume is going to happen between now and three years. Because if the election were today I do not think Obama would be re-elected. But three years from now things could change on the national security issue."

SAY, Sarah thinks the more dead Americans we have in the next three years the better, if Obama wants to win in 2012. SAY, declare war on Iran, that would do it, and SAY, make sure to support Israel. SAY, those panty-waists who allow gays in combat need all the support they can get. SAY, that would change the dynamics. Please, Obama, Sarah wants you to play that death and destruction for votes card, but it didn't work for Sarah in 2008 so be careful. Did she really mean it when she said, "Say, if he really came out" and then suggested he support Israel? Came out?

Chris asked, "You are not suggesting that he would cynically play the war card."

"I am not suggesting that," she said, "but if he did, things would dramatically change if he decided to toughen up and do all that he can to secure our nation and our allies."

COULDN'T PASS A CIVICS TEST

Our allies? SAY, does she mean those 25 who allow gays in combat? Obama, we need dramatic effects and from the speaker just before Sarah, Jim Crow Tancredo, we need a whole lot more *Birth of a Nation* kind of stuff. He wants a civics test to vote and is suggesting a lot of Obama supporters are still illiterate.

From all I have heard or seen from Tea Bag Queen Sarah, and all her drones, they couldn't pass a civics test if they had the Constitution, Bill of Rights and the Ten Commandments written on their hands and were allowed to use a civics book.

And then, Sarah said that when Rush Limbaugh used the term "retarded" he was using it correctly, as satire. She is against name calling, except in the satirical sense. Does she think all of that crap coming out of her mouth during the election was satire? She thinks we need to stick to the issues, or at least what she can write on her palm. Name calling is unnecessary and wastes time, she

says. She can say "law professor" or "community organizer" and make it sound like she is saying something dirty and degrading.

Then Chris almost sounded like a real journalist when he said, "You know what some people are going to say and have said. They say, look, when it is her political adversary, Rahm Emanuel, she is gonna call him out, he is indecent and demand he apologize, but when it is a political ally friend, like Rush Limbaugh, oh, it is just satire."

PALIN'S DOUBLE STANDARD

"I didn't hear Rush Limbaugh calling a group of people whom he did not agree with "f---ing retards" and we did know that Rahm Emanuel did as has been reported say that. There is a big difference there," she said.

I'm sorry, and the difference is? Is she saying Rush didn't call people he disagrees with "f---ing retards" when he said it is OK to call people "retards" if they actually are "retards." Is she insinuating that Rush agrees with the Senate Democrats or that they actually are "retarded?" I think she and Rush are saying exactly the same thing, which by her definition depends and hangs solely on whether or not Rahm Emanuel really believes the Senate Democrats are "f---ing retards" or was just being sarcastic.

I have to agree that it is insulting to compare the mentally challenged to some of the Senate Democrats, who are politically challenged and closer to criminal selfishness, from what I have seen and heard.

- The author lives in Moore. More of her essays are available on-line at www.okobserver.net

How The Cookie Crumbles

A very old man lay dying in his bed. In death's doorway, he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favorite chocolate chip cookie wafting up the stairs.

He gathered his remaining strength and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with even greater effort forced himself down the stairs, gripping the railing with both hands.

With labored breath, he leaned against the door frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven.

There, spread out on newspapers on the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favorite chocolate chip cookies. Was it heaven? Or was it one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself toward the table. The aged and withered hand, shaking, made its way to a cookie at the edge of the table, when he was suddenly smacked with a spatula by his wife.

"Stay out of those," she said. "They're for the funeral."

- Thanks to Frank Silovsky for this gem

ACLU Backs Assault On Free Speech

By Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman

The Supreme Court's atrocious Citizens United green light for unlimited corporate campaign spending had a willing accomplice – the American Civil Liberties Union.

Why?

As long-time supporters, we are horrified by the ACLU's betrayal of political reality and plain common sense.

Standing proudly with the victorious corporate hacks on the steps of the Supreme Court was none other than the legendary First Amendment crusader Floyd Abrams.

Keith Olberman has called him a "Quisling" for aiding and abetting this catastrophic confirmation of corporate "personhood."

The ACLU has long been the go-to stalwart of First Amendment rights. Its list of accomplishments is long, impressive and essential.

The ACLU has bravely faced divisive, expensive controversy. Long ago it defended the right of American neo-nazis to march through Skokie, a heavily Jewish suburb of Chicago.

ACLU DEFENDED KKK

The ACLU has also defended the right of such loathsome haters as the Ku Klux Klan to gather and speak.

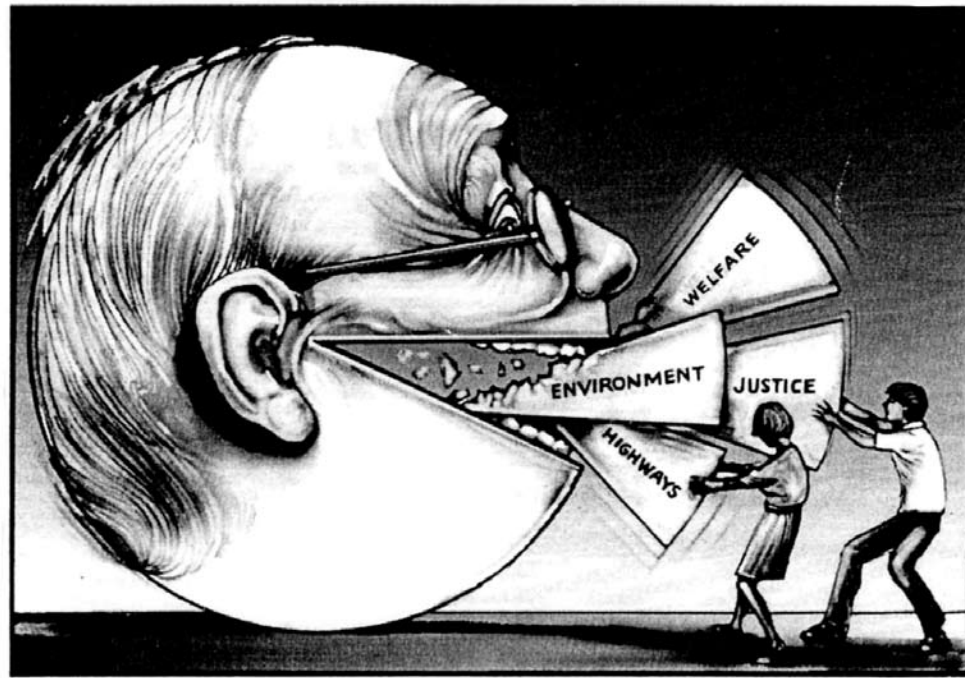
In these and other such cases, the ACLU has been right, and has courageously paid a price.

But perhaps the organization has confused those valid First Amendment cases with a Citizens United decision perpetrated by the most virulent judicial opponents of individual speech in the history of the Court. In reference to this case the ACLU says it "has consistently taken the position that section 203 is facially unconstitutional under the First Amendment because it permits the suppression of core political speech, and our amicus brief takes that position again."

We respectfully – but vehemently – disagree. Simply put: money is not speech, corporations are not people.

Given the immense sums of cash these corporations have to spend, the Citizens United decision is the equivalent not of guaranteeing individual Nazis the freedom to march, but instead of granting the Party itself the right to drive tanks down the street, guns ablazing.

It's not the same as giving individual Klan members the right to hold a rally,



but rather for the organization to do public lynchings as part of a terror campaign aimed at taking tangible power.

FOUNDERS AND CORPORATIONS

Nowhere in the Constitution do the Founders mention the word corporation. There were six of them at the time of ratification, all strictly limited by state charter to where and what kind of business they could do.

They bear scant resemblance to the multi-national behemoths we confront today. Those who wrote and ratified the First Amendment would be horrified by their very existence.

The moneyed power of these corporations and their access to the First Amendment through the myth of "personhood" has been the ultimate pox on American politics since the 1880s.

It has been reported that the ACLU Board is now considering endorsing limits on campaign spending. Abrams has been reported as arguing that "the worst thing you could do – the absolutely worst thing you could do – is transform a civil liberties organization into a liberal political organization."

This decision has transformed the ACLU into a conservative political organization, working to arm the ultimate enemies of democracy with unlimited monetary and political power.

We are confident the activist community can survive this latest assault on democracy. It will not be easy, but it can be done.

A good first step would be for the ACLU to face reality and now oppose the false claims anti-human money machines have made on our sacred Bill of Rights.

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Court Displays Bad Case Of Cliched Thinking

By Danny M. Adkison

"You lie!" Remember that? Do you remember the name of the man who uttered those words? Maybe it would help if you had a hint: he was a member of the U.S. Supreme Court. Does that help?

OK, it was Joe Wilson, a Republican House member, who yelled the exact phrase "You lie" to President Obama when he gave his major speech to a joint session of Congress on health care last year.

Apparently, though, calling the President a liar is becoming business as usual when he appears before a joint session of Congress.

When the president recently gave his first State of the Union address [the message is required by the Constitution], he saw fit to criticize the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision that struck down portions of federal law regulating corporate political spending.

ALITO BRISTLES AT REBUKE

The President's speech was delivered before a joint session of Congress, but his Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, and Supreme Court justices are also invited. Although the President spent only two sentences of the entire speech on the Court's opinion [Citizens United v. FEC], it was too much for Justice Samuel Alito [sitting among several other Supreme Court justices]. The camera caught him wincing and mouthing the words "not true" – twice. The other justices [as they did all night] sat stone faced.

While Alito's reaction got some media attention, much of the reaction focused on President Obama publicly criticizing a Supreme Court ruling. One "legal expert" quoted by the Washington Post noted that he could not recall a president doing such a thing.

Ouch.

IT WAS HARDLY UNPRECEDENTED

Actually, even a quick historical search would show that not only has it happened, but also that it is not that rare. Several modern era presidents [beginning with FDR and including others such as Eisenhower and Reagan] went public with their criticisms of court decisions.

If you care to wade through the recent case you'll have to read about 100 pages written by Justice Anthony Kennedy [the swing vote] and supported by four of the most conservative justices and another 100 pages written by Justice John Paul Stevens leading the liberal bloc.

Stevens admits [there is no denying it] that the court has for a long time granted constitutional protection to corporations [they ruled in 1886 that when the Fourteenth Amendment referred to a "person," this covered corporations]. What the conservatives did with that old case was to combine it with a cliché, and use

ing logical analysis they concluded that it was unconstitutional to prevent corporations from using their profits for political advertisements.

SUPREME COURT'S 'LOGIC'

Here is how they reasoned: money talks; talk is speech; speech is protected by the First Amendment; and, therefore, the portion of federal law restricting such corporate spending is unconstitutional.

While this reasoning raises many questions, let's focus on two.

First, it was the Fuller Court which ruled that corporations were "persons" [in the constitutional sense]. During that time there were about 12 major monopolies in the United States. By 1905 that number had increased to around 300.

Furthermore, the Fuller Court didn't stop with just providing constitutional protection for corporations, it all but halted Congress from regulating them. In 1895 it ruled that the Sherman Anti-Trust Act [outlawing monopolies] did not apply to the E.C. Knight Company [which refined sugar], in spite of the fact that the company controlled 98% of sugar production! When the state of New York passed a law [unanimously] regulating unsanitary and unsafe working conditions in bakeries, the Supreme Court struck that down on dubious constitutional grounds.

In other words the Fuller Court was not acting out of fairness, it was demonstrating a clear corporate bias, which is why many of its decisions were subsequently overruled.

A CASE OF CLICHED THINKING

Secondly, the logic of treating campaign contributions as speech is based on a cliché, which some would argue is by definition false. Americans [conservatives, liberals, whatever] should demand more from their highest court than clichéd thinking. But, even accepting the assumption that spending is speech, the court does not allow all speech.

If individuals can be limited in what they say, corporations should also be subject to limitations. Accepting this, the only question is not if corporations can be regulated, but how? That, however, was not the approach taken by the five justices in the recent decision.

Finally, the court had, at least three times prior to its latest case, upheld restrictions on such corporate spending. It had ruled that while it is speech, it has been trumped by corruption in financing campaigns [or the appearance of corruption]. Of the 16 different Supreme Court justices who ruled on campaign finance reform laws, 11 of those support the restrictions that the five voted recently to strike down.

See CLICHE Page 15

Bush Holdovers In Control

'Crude, But Effective Military Coup'

By Sheila Samples

*I know you need your sleep now,
I know your life's been hard.
But many men are falling,
where you promised to stand guard.*
- Leonard Cohen

My friend Bernie says he's suffering from Afghanistan information exhaustion. "During all those months that Obama was dragging his feet about escalating the war in Afghanistan, did you ever get the impression," he asked, "that foxes were in the hen house, chickens were squawking and running around crazily, wolves were tearing the foxes to pieces, and farmers were shooting wildly into the coop with no regard for the innocent?"

I stared at him, mouth agape, my mind trying to shore up all that activity. "Well ... I ---"

"And that's just the generals - David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal - and their boss, or cohort, defense secretary Robert Gates. They were everywhere - everywhere!" Bernie said, rolling his eyes. "And still are. Turn on the TV, pick up a newspaper, open a magazine, check out Congress, look under a rock - peek behind a tree - and there they are. They're a three-man brigade - we're going in, we're coming out - we're winning, we're losing. Or maybe not. We won't know for 15 years ... 20 years ... or until it's over ---"

PARTISAN POLITICAL SEAS

Bernie shook his head in disgust, and headed for the door. "You keep telling me to walk a mile in Obama's shoes; that he's got a lot on his plate. Well," Bernie said grimly, "every time I try to do that, I nearly drown. And, if you're paying attention, you know he's having trouble keeping his own balance out there on those turbulent partisan political seas."

President ... who?

Bernie says he'd like to give President Obama credit, or blame him, for the decision to expand the war in Afghanistan, but is convinced that Obama's input was neither wanted nor accepted by the three top war dogs. I agree. What those of us familiar with military protocol - with a properly functioning chain of command - witnessed was a crude, but effective, military coup.

Aided by an eager and complicit media, for months these insubordinates fueled the fire of Obama's inability to come to a quick decision to meet their demands. They brushed him aside as idealistic and inexperienced.

TOO MUCH COMPROMISE

Commander-in-Chief? C'mon, get real. During the recent health-care fiasco, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, put into words what all Republicans, not a few Democrats, and far too many military brass think of Obama.

"... I believe he didn't serve in government long enough to understand really how things work ... Remember, he was in the Senate four years, but effectively only two years because he spent two years where he was hardly ever here at all - he was campaigning for president. He really does not have an understanding of how Congress operates."

The hateful audacity of Chuck "Obama wants to kill your grandma" Grassley is the typical Republican mindset concerning this president. Each time Republicans push him or challenge him, rather than push back or kick ass, Obama backs down, preferring to compromise to reach a bipartisan agreement.

Unfortunately, Republicans don't work that way. They want it all, and the only way they know to get it is to - as Weekly Standard's Bill Kristol said - "go for the kill."

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The military also goes for the kill. But that is its mission - what it is trained to do. And Obama needs to understand the military does not function on compromises or bipartisanship. It has a chain of command, and when the Commander-in-Chief, after considering input from field commanders, makes his decision - gives an order - all those throughout that chain of command, whether they agree or not, salute and continue to march.

That is not happening here. After 10 "war council" meetings and months of considering input, an angry Obama rejected McChrystal's plan that had been leaked to Bob Woodward at the Washington Post, and informed McChrystal that his goal of doubling the force would not be met.

Two days later, on Dec 1, Obama announced his decision from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He didn't mention smoking terrorists out, getting them on the run and bringing them to justice, but he dredged up 9/11 and why we should remain convulsed in fear. He spoke of "huge challenges," "bold action," "seizing the initiative," and "long-term consequences."

GHOST OF GEORGE W. BUSH

While we were trying to figure out if former president George Bush had left a copy of his speech on the Academy podium, Obama announced he was sending an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan but insisted since America has no interest in fighting an endless war, 2011 was a definite time frame. He said unequivocally that there would be no counterinsurgency and, beginning in July of 2011, the troops would begin to come home.

Or not. Nobody saluted. Gates, Petraeus and McChrystal, along with Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. Michael G. Mullen continued to march in lock-



step. They raced to the media both here and abroad, where they shrugged aside Obama's promise of a July 2011 transition, saying it was an "open issue." They insisted that counterinsurgency and special ops remained "embedded" in their war strategy. Ten days after being rejected by Obama, McChrystal's request to double the size of the Army and police to 400,000 remained unchanged.

FOXES, CHICKENS, WOLVES

Obama should take a long, hard look at the Dick Cheney "stay behinds" who are wreaking havoc, especially in defense; insubordinates who openly challenge his decisions and defy his orders while whipping up confusion with daily conflicting announcements and interviews. Perhaps he should start with Cheney who not only stayed behind but remains in his Virginia bunker, just a stone's throw from CIA headquarters, where he "goes for the kill" by giving hate speeches and issuing press releases accusing Obama of being a coward that are published verbatim by the media.

Just hours after Obama's speech, the placid, eerily serene Gates, along with Mullen and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, testified before Congress that troop withdrawal depended on conditions on the ground rather than a deadline. The consensus seemed to be that their commander-in-chief was simply indulging in "wishful thinking."

Days later, according to Think Progress, Gates, Petraeus, Clinton, and another Cheney "stay behind," National Security Adviser James Jones, were all over the Sunday talk shows. Gates told NBC's Meet the Press, "We will have a significant - we will have 100,000 forces - troops there. And they are not leaving - in July of 2011."

Jones agreed with Gates on CNN's State of the Union, repeating what he had told BBC two days earlier - "It's very important that people in Afghanistan hear this very clearly: this is not a withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan in 2011, it is a decision to turn over to the Afghans some of the responsibility where they are ready to accept that responsibility. But in no manner, shape or form is the United States leaving Afghanistan in 2011."

WOLVES CIRCLING PREY

These stay behinds, their shoulders blazing with stars, now so eager to expand their military industrial killing spree throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan - even Iran - are like wolves circling their prey. They are presenting a powerful, united front against Obama.

And none has refused to follow orders more relentlessly than McChrystal, former commander of the clandestine Joint Special Operations Command, whose secret assassination teams answered only to him, and he answered to no one. McChrystal is a frightening lone wolf.

It's difficult to imagine President Obama, after promising change - promising to stand guard and end our wars of aggression - deliberately putting himself in a position where he appears impotent when he is ignored and over-ruled by subordinates. He has been warned by those who have been there, done that. He is being warned by the people who are gathering for massive national anti-war marches in Washington, Los Angeles and San Francisco on March 20 - the seventh anniversary of Bush and Cheney's illegal war of aggression against Iraq.

It's time for Obama to put aside empty, soaring speeches and come to grips with who his enemies really are. It's time for him to step onto dry land and walk a mile in his own shoes - while he still has a pair.

- The author is an Oklahoma writer and former civilian U.S. Army Public Information Office. She is a regular contributor for a variety of Internet sites. More of her essays can be found at <http://sheilastuff.blogspot.com/>

CLICHE

From Page 14

Most justices have correctly taken the position that if we have a problem with corporations and political spending, it is the inordinate influence corporations have on elections, not too many unjust restrictions on corporate behavior.

- The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University. More of his essays are available on-line at www.okobserver.net

Hope Is Alive, Well And On The Way

By Glenn Staab

Let's turn back the clock to January 2009. Let's pretend that John McCain won the election. Come on. It will be fun. You betcha. As he takes over the Oval Office, the Dow is headed under 8,000. Banks are coming up craps. Auto and home sales are plummeting.

With no help from the Democrats, President McCain initiates programs to rescue the economy. The Democrats conclude America as we know it may come to an end. An economic Armageddon is predicted.

But wait. A year later, the Dow almost reached 11,000 and is well over 10,000. Banks have recovered, paid off their bailout money, are starting to reward themselves with millions and millions of dollars of bonuses [in my humble opinion, border-line criminal, but I digress.] Auto sales are through the roof; home sales are recovering.

The Republicans would be talking about a coronation; perhaps canonization.

SCREAMING BLOODY MURDER

But John McCain was not elected President. Barack Obama was elected President.

The Republicans screamed bloody murder that President Obama's programs would take us deeper into financial abyss. And despite great successes, they are still screaming.

There is still much to be done, but there was a lot to do. Hope is alive and well.

Which takes us to healthcare. Not one Republican vote could be found for any healthcare proposal. Nary a one vote from the right side of the Senate aisle could be found.

But the strangest part of this healthcare thing is the support garnered for the current system. At one time, some polls showed 60% to 70% Americans thought we needed major reform.

Yet, the Teabaggers' cries called for the status quo. They wanted their premiums to remain highest on the globe. They wanted their providers to be the most expensive anywhere on earth. They wanted their claims to continue to be denied. They wanted their prescription drug cost to continue to skyrocket.

'MORE POWER TO THE ARISTOCRACY'

On a story I read on BBC News, author Thomas Frank describes it like this, "It's like the French Revolution in reverse in which the workers come pouring down the street screaming more power to the aristocracy."

What happened?

You see, a whole bunch of folks get all their information from Fox News [an oxymoron extraordinaire]. Climate change? Nope, the "scientists" at Fox say there is no global warming, so there isn't. And that's how a tax credit for small businesses to provide healthcare for employees becomes a tax hike. The Congressional Budget Office reported the healthcare bills would actually lower the deficit by \$900 billion, but the Fox "economists" claimed it would add trillions. We just have a lot of people getting expert advice from Rush, Bill and Glenn [Beck, not me].

UNPRECEDENTED NASTINESS AND PARTISANSHIP

Washington, DC has always been partisan. But long-term politicians have said they can't remember it ever being this nasty.

President Obama has tried to reach across the aisle from the very beginning,

Catholic Hospitals Are Backing Health Care

By Kathleen Reeves

A group representing America's Catholic hospitals announced that it would support the Senate's version of the health care bill, breaking rank with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops which opposes the Senate bill, and, perhaps, "providing political cover" for pro-life Democrats to support the bill.

David Kirkpatrick offered this analysis of the divide within the Catholic Church:

Catholic scholars say their statement reflects a different application of church teachings against "cooperation with evil," a calculus that the legislation offers a way to extend health insurance to millions of Americans.

For the Catholic hospitals, that it is both a moral and financial imperative, since like other hospitals they stand to gain from reducing the number of uninsured patients.

A MORAL IMPEPRATIVE

Indeed, for all hospitals and health care providers, health care reform is a moral and financial imperative, which is why the rabid opposition to said reform has been puzzling when it comes from the public, and infuriating when it comes from religious leaders.

The Catholic Church has advocated for universal health care for decades, but in the past few months, the A-word has been their only policy issue of interest. [This thanks to culture warriors on the far right intent on using the Catholic church as a pawn in their game.]

As usual, abortion opponents argue that liberals are overstating the hospital association's influence.

"They don't carry the same sway," said U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, the Michigan Democrat who led the effort that resulted in the House bill's including a full ban



but every time he reaches across all he gets in return is a bloody hand. The latest being when he accepted an invitation to speak to Republican lawmakers. In an hour-plus Q & A session, he refuted every argument; every false accusation. There were no-teleprompters in sight.

He did so well the Republicans immediately called a news conference blasting the President and his policies. So much for reaching across the aisle.

So what would the Republicans have to lose by working on healthcare reform with the President and those folks on the left?

HEALTH SYSTEM IS BROKEN

And, it is broken. This week, I had someone call asking me to refer him somewhere to get a quote. He and his wife and teen-age daughter were paying \$1,700 a month for their health insurance!

If the President's economic policies continue to be successful, the Republicans may not have much to run on this fall. A successful healthcare reform package would make it even more difficult for them.

And one final thought: I think every Republican, Democrat or Independent lawmaker who nixed the public option of the reform bill should do the right thing and give up their healthcare insurance that we provide for them and purchase it from the private sector.

Fair is fair.

- The author lives in Hays, KS where he dabbles in insurance and real estate, serves as county Democratic chairman and writes a weekly column for the Hays Daily News, where this essay first appeared.

on abortion coverage in any subsidized health insurance plan.

Why is it that Catholic bishops have more authority than Catholic hospitals in the crafting of health care legislation? Why do Catholic bishops have any authority in legislation, at all?

Why is Bart Stupak enlightening us on the relative sway of various Catholic lobbies? What is this bill about?

Here's a helpful reminder from the Catholic Health Association:

- Health reform will provide the assurance that individuals and families can get the health care they need when they need it.
- Health reform will help us move from a disjointed, expensive system to one that is coordinated, affordable, sustainable and fair.
- Health reform will create greater access to and stronger emphasis on prevention and wellness to keep us from getting sick in the first place. Being healthy enables people to be productive in school, at work and in their communities. Healthier people also mean lower costs to the system and every one of us.

HE IGNORES HEALTHCARE?

Bart Stupak loves talking about abortion; when was the last time he talked about people's health?

I hope that the Catholic Health Association's endorsement of the bill means that light is finally dawning on these past, dark months, when Americans all over the country, pious and secular, fought tenaciously against their own health.

I don't know if hindsight will allow us to understand the behavior of the politicians who led this charge, particularly the hapless Stupak. Bizarre, inexplicable, and unfortunately, in this case, deadly.

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GOP's Double-Standard On Terror Trials

By Joe Conason

Preparing for what they hope will be their return to power in Washington, Republican congressional leaders have revived the fear-mongering and flag-flapping used by Karl Rove to win the 2002 midterm elections. Like the former White House deputy, forever known to his boss as "turd blossom," the right-wing strategists on Capitol Hill feel no shame in arousing the basest of emotions among their base.

Now when the Republicans insist that they are the only true patriots, the most fervent defenders of the Constitution and the sharpest counter-terror strategists, however, those hysterical claims should be tested against the facts with calm and candor.

The first instance is the controversy over the upcoming trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, indicted for plotting the Sept. 11 terror attack along with four accomplices and slated for trial in a federal courthouse, and the decision to prosecute "underpants bomber" Umar Abdulmutallab as a criminal defendant.

Leaving aside the logistics and costs of any public trial – because the city of New York will remain the most tempting target for jihadists no matter where any trial occurs – Republican critics charge the Obama Administration with compromising national security.

SILENT AS MICE

That complaint would deserve more respect if only they had voiced the same concerns when the Bush Administration was pursuing precisely the same course of action. But as partisans whose only purpose is to undermine their political adversaries, regardless of the effect on American prestige and national security, these roaring elephants were as silent as little mice back then.

Even coming from Washington's habitual hypocrites, all the sudden outrage over trying terrorists in court is over the top – and a blatant insult to every right-wing rube they expect to rally behind them.

As reporter Jane Mayer explains in the current issue of *The New Yorker*, despite all the tough talk about "enemy combatants" and military commissions, the Bush Administration almost always indicted terror suspects as criminals and tried them in federal courts. Statistics compiled by New York University's Center on Law and Security show that since Sept. 11, the criminal justice system has convicted around 150 suspects on terrorism indictments, and dozens more on broader national security violations. That contrasts with only three

Guantanamo detainees, apprehended overseas, who have been convicted in military commissions at the island prison camp.

CIVILIAN COURT VICTORIES

Among the civilian defendants sent to prison for life were Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber" who tried to bring down a civilian passenger jet, much like Abdulmutallab, and Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called 20th conspirator of the Sept. 11 attacks.

"When the Bush Justice Department obtained these convictions," Mayer notes, "the process was celebrated by some of the same people" who are now assaulting the patriotism and judgment of Attorney General Eric Holder for his efforts to do the same thing.

She quotes Rudolph Giuliani, who said after the Moussaoui conviction: "I was in awe of our system. It does demonstrate that we can give people a fair trial." No doubt he will be deployed between now and November to denounce the very thing that he held in awe simply because a Democrat now occupies the Oval Office.

HOLDING TERRORISTS ACCOUNTABLE

But Giuliani was right. A fair trial is the American way. A fair trial is what the Constitution provides for every criminal suspect apprehended on our soil, at the very least – which is why the Bush White House, knowing that the courts would uphold those traditional liberties, decided to honor them despite its authoritarian leanings. A fair trial is the way to prove that we aren't afraid of al-Qaeda and that, when captured, they will be held accountable by the civilization they wish to destroy.

Our public officials take an oath to uphold the Constitution because that is the best way to protect the nation. From its first days, the Obama Administration has sought to fulfill that pledge with a combination of judicial prosecutions and military force, with indictments and drone strikes.

The prosecutions have forced several defendants to cooperate, including Abdulmutallab, and the drones – albeit at a terrible cost in civilian casualties – have badly disrupted al-Qaeda. Whatever the wisdom of Obama's policies, he is honestly trying to protect both the country and the Constitution. It is too bad the same cannot be said of his unscrupulous adversaries.

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A Health Care Plague On Both Their Houses

By Susan Estrich

My friend Ethel is mad as hell, but she has no choice but to keep taking it. She's mad at her health insurance company, and she's mad at the administration and Congress. She's equally mad at Democrats and Republicans. It's not partisan; it's personal.

Ethel had breast cancer five years ago. Knock on wood and keep the evil eye away, she is doing fine. Health-wise, that is. Financially, it's a completely different story. Financially, it's a disaster.

Ethel is not one of those people who doesn't have health insurance. Actually, she's kind of tired of all the attention Democrats have been paying to the folks who don't have health insurance, who show up at the emergency room and expect to be taken care of, and then have someone else pay the costs. She's the someone else, and she knows it.

But she's just as tired of all those Republicans who claim they're the party of small business and say the market will take care of everything. She knows better. It's not taking care of anything.

SHE WORKS, SHE WORRIES

Ethel owns a small store. You can find her there seven days a week. She works, and she worries. She pays more than \$900 a month for individual health insurance. It's a lousy policy: huge deductible, huge co-pays and a very limited network of doctors.

Excuse me – she *paid* \$900 a month. If Anthem Blue Cross [That is what they are called here in California. Ethel has another name for them, but it can't be included in a family newspaper.] has its way, she'll be paying 39% more every month. Anthem has just announced a rate increase for its individual policyholders, the people who don't work for big companies and don't belong to any groups. Individual coverage is the most expensive you can buy – if you can buy it.

Ethel keeps paying every month because she knows darn well that the company would like nothing better than the chance to drop her. If she didn't already have insurance, they wouldn't sell it to her. She can't change policies or companies. So she sold her car to pay for her insurance.

INSURANCE WOULDN'T COVER SONOGRAM

For two years, after having breast cancer no less, she didn't have a sonogram – even though the doctor said the mammogram wouldn't work with dense breasts – because her insurance wouldn't cover it and she couldn't afford it. She gets teary as she tells me. So do I.

Who is helping me, she asks. She has written letters to her senators. In return, she gets form letters telling her how hard they are working to make sure every American has access to health insurance. Right.

An increase of 39% on top of the \$900-plus she is already paying is beyond the pale. But there is a reason for it. My sister has worked in the field for years. Much as I'd like to chalk it all up to greed, much as that might make for good

raw meat in a liberal crowd, she taught me long ago that it's a whole lot more complicated than that.

Ethel can't drop her insurance because she's been sick once. But what's happening in the individual market, in the midst of this continuing recession, is that the healthy people in that pool are deciding they can't afford it anymore and are going uninsured. As the younger and healthier people drop out, the pool of individuals gets older and sicker, meaning it costs more to provide the same coverage. Could it be as much as 39% more? It could.

PRESIDENT'S PLAN WILL HELP?

I tried to tell Ethel that the president's plan would help her, but she just laughed. All he cares about are the people with no insurance, she said. I don't think that's true, but what can I say? I still don't know exactly what's in – or out – of the Democratic plan, and we both know it isn't going to pass in its current form anyway. I told her she'll be worse off without the Democratic plan, whatever it is, but she doesn't believe that, either. Now that Anthem has announced the increase, I might be right, but that's hardly a victory for anyone.

Republicans may be crowing now about defeating health care, but they should beware what they wish for. Saying no when the other side has 60 votes is one thing. Just saying no doesn't work anymore. Live by the sword, die by the sword. If Republicans don't find a way to work with Democrats in creating a bigger and healthier pool for Ethel, she might decide that the plague belongs on both their houses. And she'd be right.

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Generation Gap

Just in case you weren't feeling too old today ...

- The people who start college this fall were born in 1992.
- They are too young to remember the space shuttle blowing up.
- Their lifetime has always included AIDS.
- The CD was introduced two years before they were born.
- They have always had an answering machine.
- They have always had cable television.
- Popcorn has always been microwaved.
- They never took a swim and thought about Jaws.
- They don't know who Mork was or where he was from.
- They never heard: "Where's the beef?", "I'd walk a mile for a Camel" or "de plan, Boss, de plane."
- McDonald's never came in styrofoam containers.
- They don't have a clue how to use a typewriter.

Losing At Corporate Welfare Roulette

By Jim Hightower

One thing that governors and mayors absolutely love to do is win a prize in the national game called "Corporate Welfare Roulette." It's a simple casino-style game in which politicians put down a big stack of taxpayers' money on an out-of-state corporation as an "incentive," hoping that their bet outbids other states and cities trying to lure that same corporation to move to their area and hire some people.

There's always a celebration when politicians "win" one of these cash-for-jobs gambles. The media gather, politicians prance, the Chamber of Commerce chief grins from ear to ear and the corporate CEO mouths platitudes about free enterprise [while stuffing taxpayer cash in his pockets].

Only six years ago, Winston-Salem, NC, had its lucky day, having won the spin of the roulette wheel to land a corporate gem. Dell, the computer giant, was headed to town, pledging to erect a state-of-the-art assembly plant and hire up to 1,500 folks.

POTS FULL OF FOOL'S GOLD

"We won," crowed all the local poobahs. They had put down about \$318 million in tax giveaways, cash and other freebies to land the prize, and in October 2005, they enjoyed the glorious grand opening of Dell's \$7 million plant. The future was bright.

However, one thing that governors and mayors absolutely hate to do is to face up to the fact that their prize has reneged, failing to deliver the promised number of jobs. Real bad politics.

Last October, four years and two days after Dell's gala opening in Winston-Salem, the giant suddenly upped and left! It abruptly announced that it would soon cut out for the cheap-labor havens of Asia, shut down the still-sparkling assembly plant, discard the 900 people it had hired [600 short of its promise] and kiss off North Carolina. Thanks for the memories. Adios, chumps.

RED FACED POLITICOS

Formerly gleeful politicians were now howling, demanding "every red cent of incentive money" back. But they had put down their money and taken their chances, and corporate gods are notoriously fickle. While much of North Carolina's subsidy had not yet been doled out, taxpayers still took a hit of about \$17 million for its fling with Dell.

Meanwhile, the roulette wheel continues to spin, and more and more taxpayers across the country are learning that they're getting stiffed, receiving only a fraction of the jobs they were taxed to bring to their area.

This is always embarrassing to the public officials who've so enthusiastically played the game, but leave it to a Texas politician to come up with a slick political



fix. When Gov. Rick Perry's corporate job subsidies don't succeed, he simply – *abracadabra!* – redefines success.

TEXAS GOVERNOR'S, UH, ETHICS

Texas has a long history of governors who have a genetic resistance to ethics, but this guy can't even spell the word.

A watchdog group, Texans for Public Justice, recently exposed Perry's flim-flam in a report documenting extensive job shortfalls in his corporate deals. TPJ revealed that Gov. Slick had quietly been "amending" the terms of the contractual agreements that corporations signed to get our tax dollars.

Without even informing the other state officials who supposedly oversee the corporate subsidy fund, Perry eased the job-creation requirements to make the deals look like they are succeeding. Such slackers as Lockheed Martin and Tyson Foods have had their job quotas slashed, been permitted to count part-time jobs as full-time and even been allowed to use foreign workers [and possibly illegal immigrants] rather than Texas citizens to meet their job-creation obligations.

WHEN IN DOUBT, SPIN

When he learned last month that the TPJ was about to bust his little secret "fix," Perry rushed out a statement lamely insisting that nothing was amiss, that his redefinitions were merely meant to "refresh" the state's job contracts.

Refresh? Why do I feel an urgent need to shower when I hear such a clean word ooze out of the mouth of such an oily politician?

The whole game of Corporate Welfare Roulette is oily. For more information on the scams that come from it – and on what can be done to stop these giveaways – contact Good Jobs First: www.goodjobsfirst.org.

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GREED

From Page 11

builds a corporate champion.

The recession-time surge in insurance profits, the shedding of older and sicker customers, the lateral of more premium dollars into things like executive pay – these maneuvers alone would've moved health insurance up in the top tier of ugly industries. But then the industry ratcheted up its game another

Haiti AIDS Benefit Set

A benefit concert to help raise funds for purchase of antiretroviral medications for HIV-positive Haitians is set for March 7 at Oklahoma City's Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ.

The concert kicks-off the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, an event in which Mayflower and other Oklahoma churches – including Tulsa's Community of Hope UCC – are participating.

"Haiti has the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the western world," said Rev. Loyce Newton Edwards, a member of Mayflower UCC who serves on the United Church of Christ HIV/AIDS Network Inc., UCC-Wider Church Ministry National Board of Directors.

One hundred percent of donations collected at the event – from 3 to 5 p.m. at Mayflower, 3901 NW 63rd in OKC – will help purchase medications for HIV-positive residents of the island nation rocked by a devastating earthquake in January.

Speakers at the event include state Sen. Connie Johnson, D-OKC, and Dr. Gaetane Jean-Marie. Among the groups set to perform are the Mayflower Chancel Choir, the Mixed Company & Discord from Church of the Open Arms UCC, the Langston University Gospel Chorale and A Touch of Class String Quartet.

For more information, contact Rev. Edwards at 405.642.0124 or Dr. Maria Davidson, 405.286.2433.

Meanwhile, Tulsa's Community of Hope UCC, located at 2545 S. Yale Ave., has set an area-wide planning meeting Feb. 23 for the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. For more information on the planning session or event, contact Rev. Bob Lawrence at 918.747.6300.

The National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, sponsored by The Balm in Gilead Inc., is set for March 7-13. Visit www.NationalWeekofPrayerfortheHealingofAIDS.org for more details.

notch. One of Wellpoint's subsidiaries heaved a "Hail Mary" pass that shocked everyone and catapulted insurance into a serious contender for the Greedhead Trophy.

In the same week that Wellpoint acknowledged that its 2009 profits were up by \$2.3 billion over the previous year [a 91% increase], its Anthem Blue Cross subsidiary in California caused a sensation by seeking to raise the premiums on its customers' policies by as much as 39% this year.

As befits a true Greedhead striver, Wellpoint neatly stiffed critics by asserting that this price hike was necessitated by the general increase in America's health care costs – never mind that the corporation's rise in premiums is actually 10 times more than the rise in the overall cost of health care. What a move!

REGULATORS STEPPING IN?

However, whether Wellpoint's daring California score will be allowed is in question, for there was a flag on the play. State insurance zebras are questioning the legitimacy of the increase, causing a company executive to argue heatedly that while tens of thousands of customers would indeed be socked with a 39% jump in their premiums, the average rate increase would be a mere 25%, so the play should be OK.

Come on, sports fans, ya gotta give 'em some style points just for trying to get away with that.

Still, can the upstart Insurance Giants hope to out-ugly the more-sophisticated Wall Street Barons? The great thing about Corporate America is that competition is always fierce for the national greedhead title, and insurance is now in the running. As sportscasters can tell you: Only time will tell, it's not over 'til it's over, tomorrow's another day, winners never quit/quitters never win, wait'll next year, and it's *deja vu* all over again.

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What's Up @ The State Capitol?

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Koch Billionaires Are Misinforming America

Oil-spill billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch are the wealthiest and most effective opponents of President Obama's progressive agenda. They have been looming in the background of every major domestic policy dispute over the last year.

Ranked as the 9th richest men in America, the Koch brothers sit at the helm of Koch Industries, a massive privately owned conglomerate of manufacturing, oil, gas, and timber interests.

David and Charles are responsible for a vicious attack campaign aimed directly at obstructing and killing progressive reform.

Over the years, millions of dollars in Koch money have flowed to various right-wing think tanks, front groups, and publications. At the dawn of the Obama presidency, Koch groups quickly maneuvered to try to stop his first piece of signature legislation: the stimulus.

A BLIZZARD OF REPORTS

The Koch-funded group "No Stimulus" launched television and radio ads deriding the recovery package as simply "pork" spending. The Cato Institute – founded by Charles – as well as other Koch-funded think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, produced a blizzard of reports distorting the stimulus and calling for a return to Bush-style tax cuts to combat the recession.

As their fronts were battling the stimulus, David's Americans for Prosperity [AFP] spent the opening months of the Obama presidency placing calls and helping to organize the very first "tea party" protests.

AFP, founded in 1984 by David and managed day to day by the astroturf lobbyist Tim Phillips, spent much of last year mobilizing "tea party" opposition to health reform, clean energy legislation, and financial regulations.

STOPPING CLEAN ENERGY

David Koch presents himself as a champion of science. Because of his donations, a wing of the Smithsonian will be named after him. Nevertheless, Koch has done more to undermine the public's understanding of climate change science than any other person in America.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute, funded in part by Koch foundations, has waged an underhanded campaign to falsely charge that a set of hacked e-mails somehow unravels the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring.

Koch finances the "Hot Air" tour, a nationwide roadshow using a balloon to depict climate change science as "hot air." Despite the brothers' extravagant wealth, Koch's Americans for Prosperity has run populist ads mocking environmentalists as spoiled brats more concerned about their "three homes and five cars" than about economic conditions.

MISINFORMING THE PUBLIC

In addition to its efforts to misinform the public, Koch Industries has spent

DIVIDED

From Page One

ing of social services.

Two-thirds of voters polled said those receiving the aid should not be allowed to discriminate based on race, creed color or religion.

The latest Oklahoma Poll has 58% of Oklahomans disapproving of President Obama's job. Yet when you ask a critic what's in the health care bill the answer is pure Tom Coburn – it's socialism. Rush Limbaugh calls it communism.

As for the "death panels" – that's pure hogwash. Most sensible people – including the Catholic Church – can avoid "extraordinary means" to stay alive. It's called a living will.

How well I recall the late Attorney General Jan Eric Cartwright's valiant fight for life.

Long after he was brain dead his anguished father refused to let him go. He was kept on a ventilator hour after hour. His father finally relented and let him go.

If Sarah Palin could view such an event it probably wouldn't change her mind. In her view Democrats in Congress can't do anything right and Obama is their cheerleader.

The dumbing down of Oklahoma and America can be laid at the media's doorstep. Half the people don't read a daily newspaper – where one still exists.

Those who claim to get their news off TV should have listened to Walter Cronkite – TV news is a very limited headline service. Read the paper for critical details.

The Obama haters are the same people who think torture is acceptable and American jurisprudence should be denied to those accused of terrorism.

Funny, it worked just fine for the Murrah building bombers.

The Oklahoman has some superb reporters who must be chronically embarrassed by America's worst editorial page.

Wonder why the Oklahoman owners are so passionately against a healthcare bill? They have canceled some health benefits, including those of retirees.

Time will tell whether Congress will come up with a workable plan. This much is in both House and Senate plans – 30 million now uninsured would be covered. Meanwhile the lies multiply in a divided America.

Those ready to give up on America can take heart in the words of Ted Kennedy:

"For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."
Amen.



millions so far on direct lobbying, much of it on climate change legislation. With a team of Koch-funded operatives going as far as attempting to crash the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the brothers are working to scuttle any prospect for addressing climate change.

Much of the fierce opposition to health reform can be credited to Koch organizations. As the health care debate began, AFP created a front group, known as "Patients United," dedicated itself to attacking Democratic health care reform proposals.

Patients United blanketed the country with ads distorting various provisions of the health reform legislation, particularly the public option. Patients United even centered a media campaign around Shona Robertson-Holmes, claiming she had a brain tumor the Canadian system refused to treat.

EXAGGERATING THE CASE

However, the Ottawa Citizen reported that Patients United has been exaggerating Holmes' case, and that she in fact had a benign cyst. In their quest to block health care reform, Koch-funded groups have fostered extremism.

A speaker with the roving Patients United bus tour repeatedly compared health reform to the Holocaust while an eight-by-five foot banner at an AFP health care rally with Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-MN, read, "National Socialist Health Care: Dachau, Germany" superimposed over corpses from a concentration camp.

Although many were surprised at the level of anger AFP channeled into Democratic healthcare Town Halls last August, it wasn't the first time Koch groups have helped to hijack the health reform debate.

Back in 1994, Americans for Prosperity, then known as Citizens for a Sound Economy, worked closely with then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich to bring mobs of angry men to health reform rallies with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton.

The Koch brothers clearly have a financial stake in blocking reform. Koch Industry oil refineries are major carbon dioxide polluters, and Georgia-Pacific, a Koch Industries timber subsidiary, is one of the largest contributors to the loss of carbon-sink capacity.

According to the EPA, Koch Industries is responsible for over 300 oil spills in the U.S. and has leaked three million gallons of crude oil into fisheries and drinking waters.

BUSINESS-RELATED REASONS

So there are clear business-related reasons why Koch would want to block regulatory enforcement, clean energy, labor, and other reforms. Part of their opposition stems from a long family tradition of funding conservative movements to shift the country to the far right.

Fred Koch, father of Charles and David and the company's namesake, helped to found the John Birch Society in the late 1950s. The John Birch Society harnessed Cold War fears into hate against progressives, warning that President Kennedy, Civil Rights activists, and organized labor were in league with communists.

By presenting progressive reform as a capitulation to the Soviet Union, Fred Koch and the other industrialists bankrolling the Birch Society were able to galvanize hundreds of thousands of middle class people into supporting their narrow agenda of cutting corporate taxes and avoiding consumer regulations.

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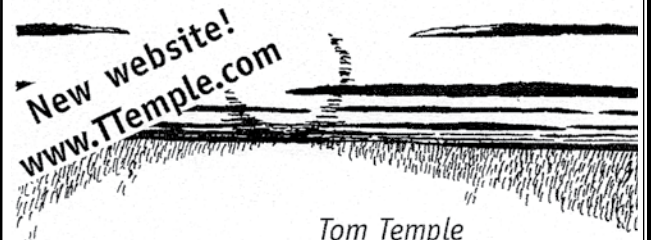
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