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VOL. 42, NO. 8

An Independent Journal of Commentary

APRIL 25, 2010

State's Rifle Ready Militia? Tea Party Trouble

By Frosty Troy

It was an incredible evening – ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, MSNBC and assorted bloggers were giving Oklahoma the worst black eye since the Okies headed for California.

The Associated Press broke the story: legislation could soon be introduced in the Oklahoma Legislature to create an armed anti-federal government militia.

The face of Republican State Sen. Randy Brogdon, a candidate for governor, was plastered all over television and the blogs, plus his speech to a Republican meeting in Tulsa.

Joining Brogdon was state GOP Rep. Charles Key, one of the leading wingnuts in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

To his credit, Republican State Sen. Steve Russell told reporters he doubted such a militia would be created by the Legislature.

The Associated Press reported that Oklahoma Tea Party leaders, “frustrated by recent political setbacks,” were working with rightwing Republicans in the Legislature to create a new “volunteer militia to help defend against what they believe are improper federal infringements on state sovereignty.”

Brogdon and Key said they have met with tea party leaders, such as J.W. Berry of the Tulsa-based OKforTea group, but subsequently denied they were planning to author the legislation.

Even so, Brogdon said: “The founding fathers were not referring to a turkey shoot or a quail hunt. They really weren’t even talking about us having the ability to protect ourselves against



– Steve Hill

each other.

“The Second Amendment deals directly with the right of an individual to keep and bear arms to protect themselves from an overreaching federal government.”

Brogdon has since said his comments were misrepresented. He even denied using the term “militia” in the AP interview, but the AP reported it has him on tape using it five times. Key demanded a retraction. The AP says it is standing by its stories.

Critics say the Tea Party militia idea could “throw fuel in the fire of radi-

cals.”

“If the intent is to create a militia for disaster relief, we have the National Guard,” said Sen. Russell, a retired Army lieutenant colonel. “Anything beyond that purpose should be viewed with great concern and caution.”

News of the state-sponsored militia movement arrived just before the 15th anniversary of the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

Berry, the Tea Party leader who first solicited support for the militia, has posted on-line rants against President Obama – the “Muslim President” and a “reincarnation of Pol Pot” who is trying to imprison Americans for resisting health reform.

One ominous posting from Berry says that his militia should “launch a thousand guerrilla attacks on the plans that these people have to ruin us and our country.”

Both Berry and Brogdon are on far right media outlets, spewing propaganda to fuel their conspiracy theories.

Berry cites conservative news out-

lets and notes that he draws inspiration from the white supremacist thriller *The Turner Diaries*, domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh’s inspiration for the Murrah Federal Building attack that killed 168 people – including 19 children – and injured hundreds more.

Despite his extremism, Berry has met with U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, and other members of the Oklahoma Republican delegation, and counts them as “rock solid.”

Brogdon, whose states’ rights resolution was reportedly drafted by corporate lobbyists opposed to health reform, has been endorsed by the lobbyist-run Tea Party Express and has appeared on Fox News, Alex Jones’ radio show, and at a Glenn Beck rally.

On MSNBC Brogdon kept referring to the Second Amendment rather than answer the direct question on whether he favored creating an armed militia.

Tea Party members frequently invoke Murrah bombing, carried out by a decorated ex-soldier who believed the federal government was an enemy force responsible for killing Americans in Waco and Ruby Ridge.

McVeigh also believed that deadly force – including the bombing of a federal building – was necessary to resist the federal government’s “unwarranted” intrusions.

What better way to commemorate McVeigh’s victims than to organize a group McVeigh would stand in line to join?

Some on the Far Right think it would be a good idea to create a volunteer militia – a group of armed citizens to enforce the rules as they think they should be enforced.

Brogdon’s rhetoric can’t help but fuel such thinking: He said Congress and Obama [he never uses the title “president”] have been passing “unconstitutional laws” such as “Obamacare” and must be stopped.

He also sponsored the rightwing anti-health reform “state sovereignty” resolution in the Legislature.

If elected governor, he said he would

See MILITIA Page 19

Observations

A Good Bill

It didn't make page one, but Sen. Debbe Leftwich's SB 2153 greatly expanding Oklahoma's mental health courts is wending its way through the Legislature.

Given the state's deplorable fiscal condition, it won't be implemented until funds are available.

The potential is not only to save lives but millions of dollars every year in state spending on corrections, healthcare and public assistance.

Currently, only 14 Oklahoma counties have access to mental health courts, but Leftwich said the results have been significant.

The Oklahoma City Democrat said in those counties, there has been a 79% drop in unemployment for those completing the program. Within a year of graduating, arrests fell by 92% and days spent in jail were reduced by 90%.

"When you look at the bigger picture, you can see how expanding mental health courts would dramatically reduce spending and increase personal productivity," Leftwich said.

More than 12,600 offenders held by the Department of Corrections have a mental health problem, including 79% of all women offenders and 46% of male offenders.

For years Oklahoma has operated a revolving door. In fact, even today the state's largest mental hospital is the Oklahoma County jail with more than 270 mentally ill inmates.

It is a sad commentary when business and political leaders hold a much ballyhooed news conference at the Capitol to plead for highway money but none has uttered a peep about the mentally ill.

Oklahoma currently leads the nation in the percentage of seriously mentally ill residents. That's another list we'd like to shed.

Petrostate

We were outraged after reading in Forbes Magazine how fat corporations

escape without paying taxes. It's why The Observer is accused of being anti-big oil, a label we proudly wear.

Most egregious is General Electric, which generated \$10.3 billion in pre-tax income, but ended up owing nothing to Uncle Sam. In fact, it recorded a tax benefit of \$1.1 billion.

Big Oil giant ExxonMobil, which last year reported a record \$45.2 billion profit, paid the most taxes of any corporation, but none of it went to the IRS.

ExxonMobil tries to limit the tax pain with the help of 20 wholly owned subsidiaries domiciled in the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands that [legally] shelter the cash flow from operations in the likes of Angola, Azerbaijan and Abu Dhabi.

No wonder that of \$15 billion in income taxes last year, ExxonMobil paid none of it to Uncle Sam, and has tens of billions in earnings permanently reinvested overseas.

Big corporations' tax shelter practices similar to ExxonMobil's shift a \$100 billion annual tax burden onto U.S. taxpayers. In fact, in 2008, the Government Accountability Office found that two out of every three United States corporations paid no federal income taxes from 1998 through 2005.

By the way, you will never read this in the Daily Disappointment - one more reason why The Observer exists.

Nuke Rebuke

President Obama is joined by a handful of Oklahoma Republican legislators promoting nuclear energy. Now, if they could only find someplace to store the residue.

In the waning days of the Bush Administration, the U.S. Department of Energy signed contracts with more than a dozen utilities promising to permanently store nuclear waste from 21 not-yet-built reactors.

That "below the radar" DOE com-



mitment was an unreasonable and unnecessary risk to taxpayers given the \$1 billion dollars in contractual penalties the agency faced at the time - and the agency's 35-year failure to develop a permanent radioactive waste storage site.

At the time DOE officials signed the contracts in late 2008, the government faced - and still faces - scores of lawsuits by nuclear utilities seeking compensation because the government has not stored their spent fuel as promised.

Instead, the utilities must store it on their own sites. When DOE officials signed the deals, the government had already paid \$565 million in damages and faced \$790 million in judgments on appeal.

The Department of Energy is more than a decade behind schedule in fulfilling its contractual obligations to remove and permanently dispose of highly radioactive spent fuel from the nation's 104 nuclear power reactors.

By 2020, taxpayers will have paid about \$12 billion in court judgments against DOE for its failure to find a permanent storage site for highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel, the Congressional Budget Office estimated last year.

And those folks call themselves "conservative."

Not Again!

A controversial abstinence-only approach to sex education that recently saw its federal support severed is getting a new, \$250 million lease on life under the final healthcare package signed by President Obama.

At the same time, the health-care law provides \$375 million over five years to promote more-comprehensive approaches to sex education that touch on both abstinence and the use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The emphasis in the comprehensive program is on funding efforts that are "evidence-based," "medically accurate," and "age-appropriate," the law says.

We are dismayed at its restoration. It is a very rigid, abstinence-until-marriage program. The key question is how the administration fleshes out the core ideas driving grant decisions

for the two separate initiatives in the fiscal 2010 budget.

What does Obama mean by evidence-based? What is medically accurate and age appropriate? And when is it appropriate to shift messages from delay of sex to contraceptives?

Given that America leads the western world in teen pregnancy, Obama's genuflection to the Right will have predictable consequences.

Busybodies

The busybody bipartisan bunch at the Capitol keeps legislating in Oklahoma bedrooms - three more bills are now law, thanks to the insipid pen of Gov. Brad Henry.

SB 1890, by Rep. Dan Sullivan and Sen. Todd Lamb, forbids an abortion based solely on the sex of the child. Not a single case could be cited.

"In many countries, it is culturally acceptable to abort a baby based solely on the fact that she is a female," said Sullivan, R-Tulsa. "This legislation will make sure that practice is banned in our state."

SB 1891, by Rep. Pam Peterson and Sen. Anthony Sykes, creates the Freedom of Conscience Act, which would protect the rights of health care professionals to refuse to take part in the destruction of innocent human life. They already have that right.

"This legislation simply protects doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health care workers from being forced to take life against their will," said Peterson, R-Tulsa. "I am pleased the governor signed this important pro-life legislation."

SB 1902, by Rep. Skye McNiell and Sen. Clark Jolley, makes it illegal for a person other than a physician to provide or administer the morning after pill, RU-486.

Just what we need - more unwanted, unloved children.

What's up @ the Capitol?

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THE OKLAHOMA
Observer

www.okobserver.net

FOUNDING PUBLISHER • Helen B. Troy [1970-2006]

[ISSN 0030-1795]

The Oklahoma Observer [USPS 865-720] is published the 10th and 25th of each month, except July 25th and Dec. 25th, by AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plymouth Xing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK 73125.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1-Year [22 issues] \$40. Send check to The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Online: Visit www.okobserver.net to use a credit card.

UPDATE ADDRESSES: Please notify us at least two weeks before your move to ensure uninterrupted service. E-Mail to subscriptions@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

LETTERS TO EDITOR: E-mail to letters@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

SPEAKERS BUREAU: To book Founding Editor Frosty Troy for your Chamber banquet, convention or other gathering, and for rates and availability, call 405.525.5582. You also may submit your request via e-mail to ftroy@fullnet.net or by U.S. mail to P.O. Box 53371, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3371.

To invite Editor Arnold Hamilton to address your civic club, students or political gathering, contact him directly at 405.478.8700 or at ahamilton@okobserver.net.

PUBLISHER

Beverly Hamilton
bhamilton@okobserver.net
405.478.8700

EDITOR

Arnold Hamilton
ahamilton@okobserver.net
405.478.8700

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy
ftroy@fullnet.net
405.525.5582

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

A nutty rightwing group, The Guardians of a Free Republic, is asking 41 state governors to resign from office, including Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry. Gee, we thought he'd already retired.

Dart: To Sen. Bill Brown, R-Broken Arrow, for winning approval of HB 2297 that would provide up to a life sentence for any death resulting from an adult providing booze to an underage person.

The latest Sooner Poll shows 65.4% are opposed to the health reform package and 58.2% favor a constitutional amendment to opt out. [Stupid pollster: There's already an opt-out provision in the law.]

Laurel: To Mike Fogarty of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority for pointing out that under President Obama's health reform package 250,000 uninsured Oklahomans will be covered for \$63 million a year – a real bargain!

Blessed are the peacemakers – unless you happen to be State Rep. Rex Duncan, R-Sand Springs, who blasted President Obama for pledging with Russia not to use a nuke on a non-nuclear power.

Dart: To Senate leader Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, for protesting the public awarding of the rank of lieutenant colonel to Sen. Tom Ivester, D-Elk City, during the joint session honoring the 45th Division. How petty.

Oklahoma has more than 1,500 births to school teen girls each year. Thanks to Republican opposition, a legislative plan to let OU Medical School provide on-site medical care to keep them in school was killed.

Laurel: To Fairview school teacher Linda Gonzales, winner of the Ag Teacher of the Year Award. She and her husband own a nearby farm and she has integrated hands-on farming in the classroom. Bravo!

Legislation is pending [HB 3220] that would turn the Gilcrease bypass in Tulsa into yet another toll road if the Turnpike Authority OKs it.

Dart: To a Legislature that can find money for highways and bridges but on July 1 will cut nursing home rates 10%. The new rate will be \$117 per day per patient, but it costs \$146 per day just to operate.

A featured speaker at the Tea Party rally in Washington was none other than Ernest Istook, discredited former Oklahoma congressman. It figures.

Laurel: To David Davis III of Clinton High School, winner of the \$10,000 AXA Achievement Scholarship as a result of a national competition on college access.

Good news! Termed out Rep. Tad Jones, R-Claremore, has quit the Republican race for Labor Commissioner, and is returning all donations.

Dart: To one of the GOP's premier show-offs, Kevin Calvey, a candidate for Congress who filed a lawsuit against "Obamacare." He should sue his brain for non-support.

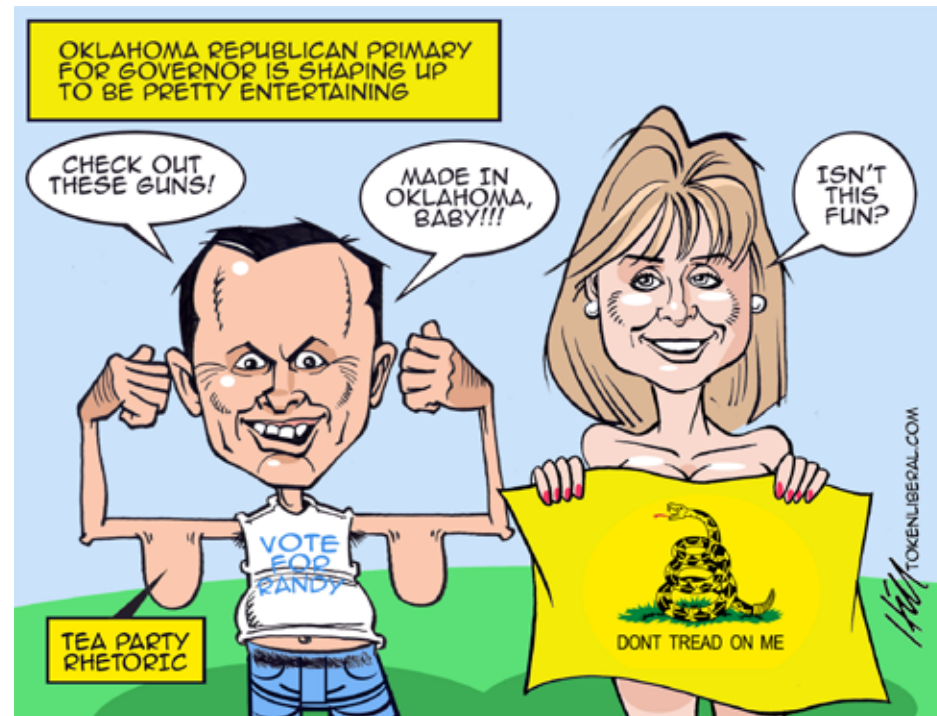
More military personnel killed themselves in 2009 than had been killed in either Iraq or Afghanistan – 120 veterans a week. [CBS investigation quoted in Newsweek 4.5.10]

Laurel: To 40,000 public school teachers polled by the Gates Foundation for telling the truth. Far too many students are unprepared for success, thanks to sorry parenting.

Oops! Public safety officials lined up at a Capitol news conference, opposing making public birthdates of state employees public because it would jeopardize law enforcement. They couldn't name a single case.

Dart: To Republican House leaders for proposing HB 3029 that would allow districts to eliminate school librarians. That would compound Oklahoma's education disaster.

Big shots from insurance companies to the State Chamber lined up to oppose State Question 744 on the Nov. 2 ballot. It would bring per pupil expenditures to the regional average.



– Steve Hill

Laurel: To Gov. Brad Henry for a budget proposal that would avoid huge cuts in vital state services such as mental and public health. So far the GOP legislative leaders are thumbing their noses.

U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, publicly criticized Fox News for distorting the health reform law and defended Speaker Nancy Pelosi as a "nice person." Who says there are no miracles today!

Dart: To U.S. Rep. John Sullivan, R-Tulsa, signing onto the subcommittee monitoring "Obamacare," which he says is unconstitutional.

Oklahoma state classified employees are already 15.47% below what the jobs in the private sector pay – and things are going to get a lot worse.

Laurel: To Sen. Richard Lerblance, D-McAlester, asking a Republican senator if it wasn't true that the GOP [1] promised teachers the regional average salary and [2] would pass the education bill first. Both pledges were broken.

State Sen. Steve Russell, R-OKC, was named by MSNBC's Keith Olbermann "the worst person in the world" for his bill to let Oklahoma opt out of the new federal hate crimes law. The bill was killed by sweet maneuvering by Rep. Mike Shelton, D-OKC.

Dart: To a state leadership that passed huge tax cuts for the rich while new Health Department figures show that more than 5,300 poor Oklahomans die each year due to untreated health problems.

Republican House speaker Chris Bengtson, R-Tulsa, says the minimum budget cut for the ensuing fiscal year will be \$1.2 billion – with no known revenue source to reduce it.

Laurel: To State Sen. Gary Stanislawski, R-Tulsa, for Senate passage of HB 2641, eliminating most state tax exemptions next fiscal year. That electric car exemption cost the state \$40 million.

If it was your honor to know former state legislator Robert V. Milacek of Enid, we share your sadness at his passing at 68. They don't make Republicans like him anymore.

Dart: To Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, for failing to follow the state's ethics law, giving the Daily Disappointment a reason to once again go after the Legislature with a tar brush.

Another superb Democratic candidate, Jon Robinson, has withdrawn from the race for State Auditor, unable to raise the hefty dollars needed for a statewide campaign.

Laurel: To Attorney General Drew Edmondson for not wasting huge sums of tax money and staff time filing suit against the health care reform law. Innumerable cases have already been filed.

Has Republican U.S. Rep Mary Fallin, running for governor, forgotten that she eagerly supported the G.W. Bush destruction of America's economy? She says it's all President Obama's fault.

Dart: To both Republican and Democratic legislators supporting open-carry HB 3354 by Rep. Rex Duncan, R-Sand Springs. Damn public safety, stick with the NRA.

Did you catch OETA's The People's Business when State Sen. Jim Wilson, D-Tahlequah, matched wits with ranting Rep. Charles Key, R-OKC? It was no contest.

Laurel: To the New York Times' Anthony Shadid, Oklahoma City native, winner of his second Pulitzer Prize for international reporting.

The state's leadership finally roused from their long nap and moved to stop the oil and gas boom and bust cycle. Henceforth it will be a three-year average in the budget.

Dart: To a State Senate majority for passing a "scholarship" for special needs children – a flimsy indirect religious schools voucher scheme. Oklahoma has one of the best special ed programs in America.

Robin Finegan has been named FEMA Regional Administrator. She is the daughter of proud Oklahoma parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gene McCoy.

Laurel: to OU's R.J. Gigilo and Nick Watts, winners of the national Cross Examination Debate Association award.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters

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WEAPONS OF MASS
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Editor, The Observer:

Look no further – the world's best ever non sequitur has been spoken:

Tulsa Tea Party leader J.W. Berry on the Tea Party's idiotic idea to start a state militia: "It's not a far right crazy plan or anything like that. This would be done with the full cooperation of the state Legislature."

Enough said!

Nancy Kenderdine
 Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

This past October my husband and I visited Richmond, VA and had a wonderful time visiting Civil War and Revolutionary War sites and eating delicious food. We had planned to go again this May to visit more. We will not be going.

We have been appalled at the reactionary, backwards steps the new governor and attorney general have taken, culminating with the declaration of Confederate History Month. Everything they have done screams of hate and divisiveness.

This is not the Virginia I knew many years ago. The gun lovers encampment April 19 was the final topper of disgusting events. We live in Oklahoma City. April 19 is not a day for celebration of guns; it is a day of mourning.

Perhaps lack of tourist dollars will speak loudly. I hope so. I will be encouraging my acquaintances not to visit Virginia until this dark night has passed.

Carolyn Waterman
 Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

This society has a big problem with judging and categorizing people according to labels and ideologies and the like, as opposed to their fruits. I just had to say that. It's worth pondering.

Stephanie Hershberger
 Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

The Vatican and the Roman Catholic hierarchy are morally bereft. When the Dean of the College of Cardinals can dismiss the cries for justice of hundreds if not thousands of sexually abused victims as "petty gossip" and be hugged by the Pontiff as a gesture of gratitude, then one has to suspect that the clergy care more for their reputations than they do for the Body of Christ.

Sometime in the past, on their

rise to positions of authority in the Church, they have lost sight of the fundamental mission of Jesus, that is, to bring the Kingdom of God to all. Jesus's passion for the marginalized got him tried and killed. Yet in our time the Catholic clergy would cast aside God's directive for their self-interest.

What dismays me as a life-long Catholic of more than 60 years is the silence of the bishops. Is there not one standing U.S. Bishop willing to come forth and challenge the politics of the Vatican and remind them that the Church's mission is more than the individual? The silence of America's Bishops is not only morally repugnant, but it also makes them enablers of pedophiles.

Joe Shveima
 Bartlesville

Editor, The Observer:

On his national television show "Countdown," Keith Olbermann [3.30.10] called Sen. Steven Russell, R-OKC, the "Worst Person in the World." Russell filed what Olbermann called a "horrific, bigoted" bill which denies gay Oklahomans equal protection under federal law, namely the Matthew Shepard Act.

Russell's version of SB 1965, which passed the state Senate, prohibited state law enforcement agencies from helping enforce the "sexual orientation and gender identity" categories in the federal law against hate crimes. In other words, Russell aimed to protect churches that wanted to preach hate against homosexuals. He called preaching hate in the name of religion a form of free speech.

Matthew Shepard, because he was gay, was tortured, tied to a fence in a rural Wyoming, and left to die. Now Sen. Russell aims to drop situations like this from the law covering hate crimes.

Olbermann pointed out that Russell "hoisted himself on his own petard" because he cited the law [Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 245] which nullifies protection from hate crimes based on race, color, religion, and national origin. In other words, he did to preachers what he had intended for gays. It was Section 249 which would have stripped protection for Oklahoma's gay citizens.

Happily, Rep. Mike Shelton, D-OKC, on April 5 stopped SB 1965. He became the House author of that bill then asked the House Judiciary Committee NOT to hear it.

If there's a category called "Best Person in the World," I'm nominating Rep. Shelton.

Wanda Jo Stapleton
 Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I received this note from one of the people on my e-mail lists. This is outrageous:

Sarah Palin has a new game. Palin is telling her Teabagger minions to stop people who have Obama bumper stickers on their cars and ask, "Are you happy the way things are with Obama?"

It has happened to my stepdaughter three times and it has become quite unnerving for her. The last time someone followed her from her car, waited for her at the door of the local Walmart store and asked the same question about President Obama.

My wife has googled the exact phrase used and found the source, Palin, and also incidents of road rage against people with Obama bumper stickers.

Barbara Santee
 Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I don't watch much television these days, and I especially don't watch local news programs. Practicing the right not to listen rather than see views that are opposite of mine put forth constantly is my prerogative.

However, with that said, I was watching OETA recently during the 6 o'clock hour. During the newscast there was a section recognizing those who have served this country so proudly and who had lost their lives that day: There were nine, men and women, from all over the United States.

Never have I been more proud of those who serve in the military than I am now. They have been asked to serve in the Iraq War when it is obvious now that we never should have been there. The fact that we should not have been there doesn't lessen their sacrifice. They are now serving not only in Iraq, but also in Afghanistan, where we probably should have been all along.

This is where I am: It's time to end the insanity ... it has been for a long time. Our best, brightest, and most dedicated are being lost every day, and even though most news sources

have chosen to disregard our losses, lives are still being lost. I can no longer, in good conscience, sit back and watch the carnage without expressing my views. One more lost American life ... or any life will be too many. I have expressed this view to Oklahoma's Congressional delegation, at least mine, but they refuse to return anything at all.

I fear that we will be judged harshly if we continue to sit and say nothing.

Bruce Treadaway
 Minco

Editor, The Observer:

On March 25, the Pardon and Parole Board by a vote of 3-2 voted in favor of commutation of the death sentence in the case of Richard Smith.

Mr. Smith has served almost 24 years in prison. He is a completely different person than he was when he committed his crime. He has sought to use his experience to help others turn away from drug abuse, including a number of his own relatives and the nephew of one of his former lawyers.

He has contributed to the development of a community endeavor called TASK [Teaching And Saving Kids] that seeks to turn young people away from drugs, gangs and crime.

Several of the jurors in his 1986 trial have said they could support commutation to life without parole as an alternative to the death penalty.

I feel that it would be in the best interests of justice to grant commutation to Richard Smith. It is up to the governor to make this decision.

Tom Gallagher
 Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Re: Gov. Brad Henry signing into law three anti-abortion measures:

Welcome to the DARK AGES. Last one out of this poor excuse for a democracy be sure to lock the door and throw the key in the deepest, darkest hole in this state [and there are plenty of those].

How many centuries must pass before the all-woman Legislature passes a bill that all males must be "neutered" after impregnating any female with whom they are not wedded or after they have two children by their wife?

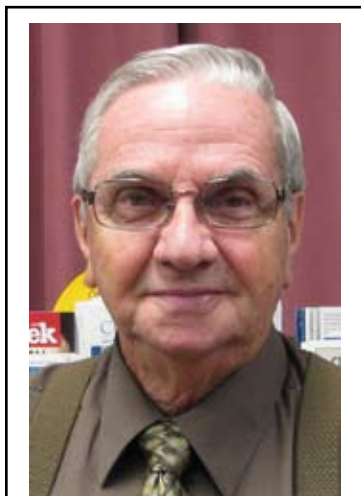
Darla Reynolds-Sparks
 Yukon

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.

'Death' Tax



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

When I was attending a political science class at the University of Tulsa, one of our reading assignments was economist Fernand Lumberg's *The Rich and the Super Rich*.

He calculated that without the inheritance tax, all of America's wealth would wind up in in only 5% of the population's families. We are well on that road today.

In Oklahoma, elimination of the inheritance tax effective this year cost the state revenue stream \$64 million. How many textbooks and library books would that buy?

Since 2001, the federal inheritance tax was cut to exempt more and more estates so that in 2009, only one-quarter of one percent of all estates in the U.S. paid the tax.

In 2009, American estates, including Oklahoma, worth more than \$3.5 million [\$7 million for married couples] were subject to the tax.

The estate tax is not imposed on assets bequeathed to charity. Many well-off individuals take advantage of this unlimited deduction for charitable giving. I am one of them.

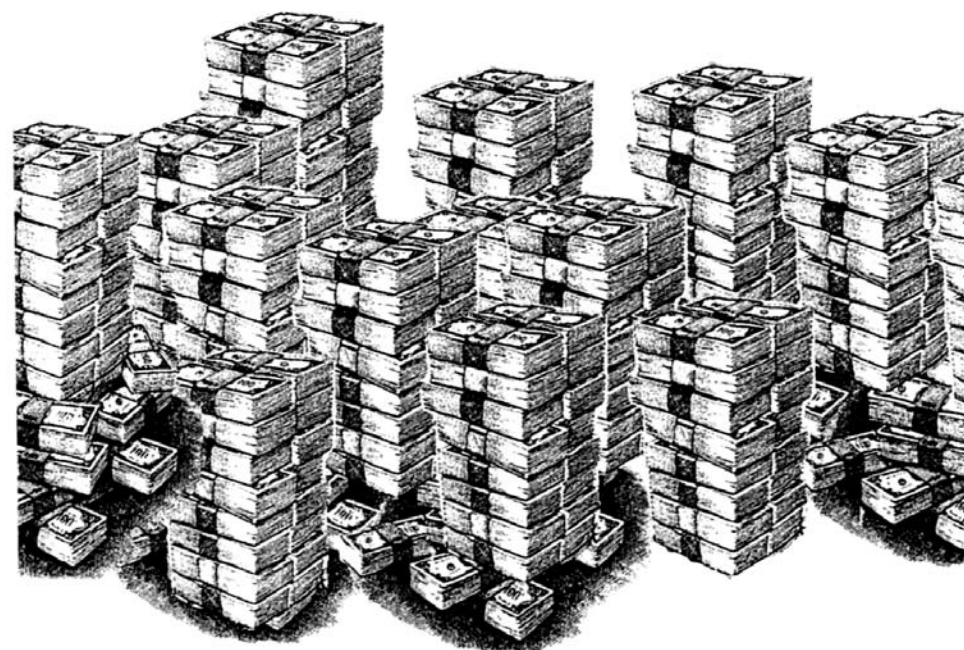
In 2004, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that if the estate tax had not existed in 2000, charitable donations would have been \$13 billion to \$25 billion lower that year.

Contrary, to what Newt Gingrich says [he invented the label Death Tax] the estate tax does NOT affect the vast majority of small businesses and family farms.

The Brookings/Urban Institute Tax Policy Center estimates that in 2009, only 80 small business and small farm estates nationwide owed any estate tax, and these estates paid an average tax of only 14%.

This has not stopped estate tax opponents from spending millions in lobbying and advertising claiming that the estate tax hurts small businesses and family farms. That lobbying paid off in Oklahoma with the help of the Daily Disappointment's billion-dollar family.

In January 2010, the estate tax was completely eliminated for one year. The federal estate tax has been repealed for 2010 and under current law will reappear



in 2011. Congress must permanently reinstate the estate tax for 2010 and subsequent years because it serves these crucial purposes:

The estate tax raises revenue that we need to invest in the American people. When Congress enacted the gradual repeal of the estate tax in 2001, it did not want to own up to the enormous cost of full repeal, which would exceed \$800 billion over 10 years.

Therefore, after a year of outright repeal in 2010, the legislation calls for the estate tax to return to its old levels starting in 2011. Supporters of the Bush estate tax repeal assumed in 2001 that Congress would not allow the tax to be reinstated.

Hello Tea Party members – continuing the repeal will deepen the budget deficit by about \$800 billion between 2012 and 2021. Keeping the estate tax at its 2009 level will cost about \$400 billion over 10 years.

Society only works when everyone contributes to the common good. If everything works out, I will leave my two children a tidy sum. Don't even dare tell me they worked hard for it. It's a gift.

12,000 Homeless Kids

By now it's a well-known fact that Oklahoma ranks fifth nationally in the number of children living in poverty – a problem ignored by Oklahoma's Republican legislative leadership.

What I wasn't prepared for is the report by State Superintendent Sandy Garrett that 12,000 children are homeless – a 32% increase in the past year.

Garrett also said Oklahoma families headed by single mothers – representing 43% of poor children in our state – are almost five times as likely to live in poverty.

We previously reported that 84% of children in Oklahoma City and Tulsa public schools are on free and reduced lunches – the federal indicator of poverty. State-wide, 59% qualify.

So what does our esteemed governor and Legislature do about it? Nothing. In fact, the Department of Human Services faces a draconian cut of 10% to 15% next fiscal year.

OKC Superintendent Karl Springer has issued a call for 20,000 volunteers to help poor children realize their dream.

Despite difficult circumstances, Oklahoma's low-income students usually

score at or above the average of their peers on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Using researched best practices and training provided by the state Department of Education's School Support Teams, many schools are addressing student poverty by using their schools' test score data to target instructional needs.

Tulsa's Madison Middle School is one such school. Madison was previously a school in Need of Improvement; nearly 100% of its students live in poverty. Yet Madison doubled its Academic Performance Index scores from 2007 to 2009, rising from a low of 502 to 1,107. Among other strategies, Madison administrators and teachers learned better ways to use test score data to identify turn-around objectives and track progress.

"All Oklahomans – rich and poor – have a stake in the successful education of every boy and girl," Garrett said. "State and national leaders play a critical role in leveling the economic playing field for children when they fund Pre-K through 12th grade education."

Our leaders would do well to put off capital projects such as roads and bridges, investing in human capital. For poor kids, it's now or never.

Obamacare Tidbits

Thanks to research by The Idea Lobby, there are little known facts about Obamacare that even the Daily Disappointment might applaud.

Those who were most outraged are mollified when major components of the law are explained in plain words. [That doesn't include your average racist, Teapartier or Birther.]

The 2,000-page health care bill includes an individual mandate, a system of exchanges, new government subsidies, and a ban on some of the worst practices of the insurance industry. It doesn't compel anyone to lose their present health insurance.

The Idea Lobby lists these provisions without endorsement or critique [although cobbling them all together does make the aggregate look a little scatterbrained].

Rest assured, someone in the know championed hard for each one, including the Center for Science in the Public Interest, National Indian Health Board, the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care.

- Your W-2. Changes are coming to your tax paperwork. Come next January, the W-2 you receive from your employer [if, hopefully, you have one] will include the cost of employer-provided health care you probably have not quantified before. This will become much more relevant in 2018, when people with the so-called high-cost "Cadillac" plans will have to start paying a hefty tax on it.

- Menu labeling. The legislation mandates that national chains with at least 20 restaurants must post "nutrient content disclosure statements" – in other words, calorie counts right next to the menu offering "Big Mac." To drive the point home, menus will also have to mention your suggested daily caloric intake. The provision has all kinds of addendums to deal with seasonal specials, salad bars, vending machines and condiments, but the main idea is this: Maybe we'll eat less garbage if we can't remain willfully ignorant about how bad it is for us.

- Swag disclosure. The bill contains key elements of the Physician Payments Sunshine Act, a previously bipartisan idea calling for pharmaceutical reps and device manufacturers to disclose all the goodies they give doctors. This includes money, gifts, food, travel, entertainment, grants, just about anything that may constitute a conflict of interest. The "transparency reports" must be submitted to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and will be posted on a publicly searchable Web site.

- Right to pump. Workplaces will have to provide "reasonable" break time and a private location – other than a bathroom – for breastfeeding mothers to pump breast milk for one year after the birth of a child. Women's groups have long sought such guarantees, and this one will apply to all workplaces with the exception of employers with less than 50 employees, where the demand might create

Worst May Be Yet To Come For State Budget



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

The top-of-page-one headlines in the state's two major dailies heralded signs of a faster-than-expected return to economic glory for Oklahoma.

Revenue figures stir optimism: 'With the economy improving, it's time to start spending money,' treasurer tells Oklahomans.

Economy shows life signs: The state treasurer has an upbeat response based on revenue figures, while GOP leaders are cautious.

Without question, state Treasurer Scott Meacham was relieved to finally be delivering positive news on state tax collections – March general revenue funds not only outpaced the same month last year for the first time since December 2008, but also more than tripled what state fiscal experts had projected.

"I think," Meacham said, "we can say that the Oklahoma economy is finally on the mend."

What didn't receive as much media attention

was that Meacham and legislative leaders also warned the worst may be yet to come for the state budget and state services already slammed by 7.5% monthly cuts.

And that Meacham gave a shout-out to state Rep. David Dank, R-OKC, for his tireless efforts to persuade legislative leaders to seriously review millions of dollars in transferable tax credits that may turn out to be nothing more than a license to loot the state treasury.

Meacham's concern about the tax credits was heightened when last month's rosier-than-expected revenue report including this troubling fact: Corporate income tax collections were 57% below anticipated levels.

The next morning, the bleak picture became clearer: David Blatt and the Tulsa-based Oklahoma Policy Institute hosted a breakfast at the OU Faculty House near the Capitol, where Blatt described the state's fiscal crisis in excruciating detail.

Of the state's nearly \$7 billion budget this fiscal year [ending June 30], Blatt noted, \$1.5 billion was financed with non-recurring revenues: federal stimulus dollars, state Rainy Day funds and "cash built up on a good day."

"Unfortunately," he said, "next year is going to be considerably worse."

The state Board of Equalization has certified \$5.4 billion for lawmakers to spend for the 2010-11 fiscal year – \$1.5 billion less than this year's final budget, after cuts. Even if you include \$200 million or so in remaining federal stimulus money, about \$225 million in state Rainy Day funds and the current level of across-the-board agency cuts, the budget hole for next year is estimated between \$500 million and \$850 million.

That means 5,000 or so fewer teachers and much larger classes in the state's public schools. That means the Department of Human services will furlough its employees the state maximum 18 days and serve 105,000 fewer residents. That means the Department of Corrections, already operating at less than 75% of its

necessary staffing levels, could be stretched to the breaking point, risking safety and security for inmates and workers.

The fact is, legislative leaders and Gov. Brad Henry won't spend much time debating further cuts. Most of the state budget is committed to core services, such as education, that state officials agree they want to protect. There aren't enough savings to be had from the deepest imaginable cuts in other state services to significantly cushion the \$500 million to \$850 million hole. And even if March's revenue rebound becomes a trend, it's not at all clear the FY 2012 spending blueprint will improve significantly since federal stimulus money probably won't be available and state Rainy Day funds may not be, either.

That means the real debate – as the Legislature enters its final month and as it approaches the 2012 budget cycle – will be on so-called "revenue enhancements," a fancy way of saying they're going to study ways to generate more money. Can you spell f-e-e-s? Will lawmakers take steps to roll back corporate welfare – including seven distinct drilling incentives for oil and gas producers? Will the state find ways to collect sales taxes lost to Internet sales?

As lawmakers search frantically for new or enhanced revenue streams, they continue to make matters worse. How? Two of the fastest growing segments of Oklahoma's population are seniors and veterans. Each year, state lawmakers enact new tax deductions and financial incentives that reward seniors and veterans but cut state revenues.

"It is a major contributor to our structural deficit," said Blatt, adding, "Here's where good policy and good politics are sharply at odds."

No one knows how this will play out, but one thing seems certain: It's going to be an ugly couple of years, at the very least. Already underfunded schools will suffer. So will state highways. And the poor.

Oklahoma is 50th in overall tax burden, but Republican legislative leaders long ago concluded it's better politics to pretend we're overtaxed than to rally citizens in support of a social compact that seeks a rising tide for all, not just the privileged few.

As Meacham noted, the latest revenue figures primarily suggest Oklahoma's "stay in the poorhouse will be relatively shorter" than originally anticipated. But the poorhouse is still the poorhouse. And we could be there for a very long time if our term-limited legislative leaders and governor punt on the hard choices.

Ethics Reform Bill Stalls In House

The corporate hammerlock on the Oklahoma Legislature is as strong as ever. Case in point: Sen. Debbe Leftwich's and Rep. Gary Banz's proposal to create a two-year, cooling-off period before a former lawmaker could become a lobbyist.

Leftwich worked for five years to end the Revolving Door, but was unsuccessful. This year, though, there was a glimmer of hope: SB 847 passed the Senate by a 40-5 margin.

But when it was sent to the House last month, it was assigned to the Rules Committee – and there it will die. Banz, a straight-shooting, former teacher, says he was told the measure won't be given a hearing.

Leftwich says the problem is obvious: "In my first term six years ago, there were only a handful of former legislators lobbying, but three of them were former House Speakers, and you know they had a huge advantage when it came to getting their bills heard and passed.

"Today, we have almost 40 former members who are lobbyists. For most private citizens, this just doesn't seem right. We need this legislation to restore public confidence in state government."

Evidently, legislative leaders think the cooling-off period is too great an imposition on free-enterprise hiring practices. Surely this conviction isn't fueled by the fact that several of those leaders will be term-limited soon and in search of employment – lucrative employment.

Why would they care that the Revolving Door fuels public cynicism about the cozy relationship between well-heeled special interests and lawmakers? Or that the public is troubled that legislators can reward their lobbying friends with votes one day and join their payroll the next? They're about to leave office, anyway.

And they sure do want to keep their options open.

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A Candidate's Journey

Cardinal Rule: Never, Never, Ever Give Up

By Amy Corley

I was born in Tulsa. My mother left me and my two sisters at a daycare and never returned when I was 3 years old. I grew up and aged out of the foster care system. I lived in a lot of homes.

I was in a group home when I graduated from high school. I was still 17 so the Department of Human Services worker put me in Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College and the dorm room became my home. When I turned 18 they quit paying for my dorm and education.

I did not know much back then so when the office personnel at the college told me I could not stay there anymore, I just said OK. I did not know how to ask for help. My caseworker had never given me any form of identification and I did not know my Social Security number.

NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

I slept leaning on the side of a convenience store wall some nights because I could not get a job without ID and I had no way of proving who I was.

My caseworker really did not do her job the last day I saw her. She should have made sure I had all of the items I would need to get a job.

Anyway I made it, but I will never forget what it was like. This experience made me strong. Eventually I met David and married him. We have been married 18 years. We have three girls.

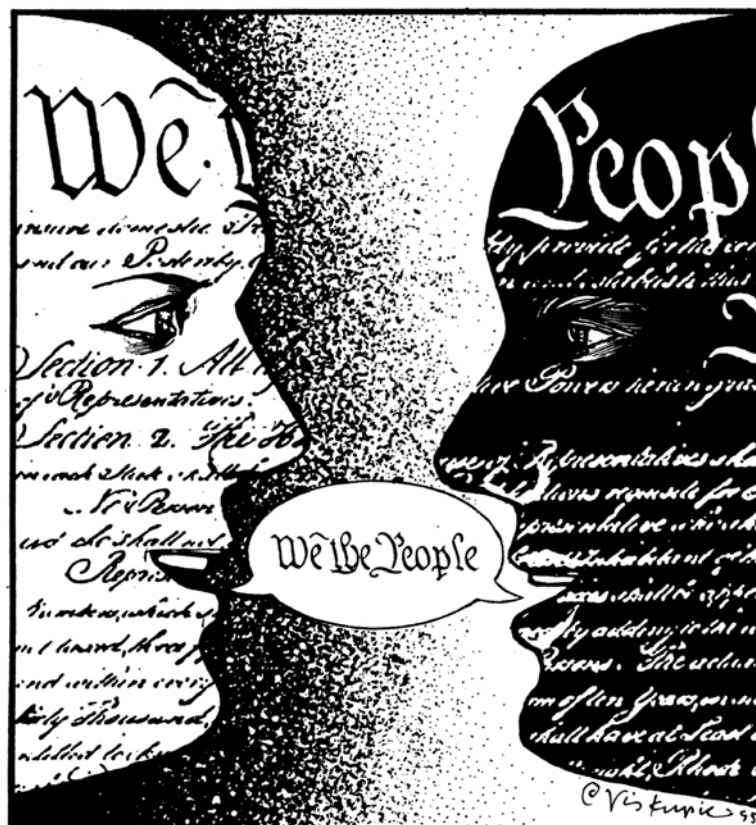
One of our girls has a chromosome abnormality so I had to learn quickly how to advocate for special education and healthcare. Her meds exceed \$10,000 per month.

WORKING AS A VOLUNTEER

I work as a volunteer at McLoud Schools helping first graders with reading. I am a volunteer at the McLoud Nursing Home. I work with the law firm representing kids in the special education classroom.

I began my political career in 2000 when I ran against Robert Worthen. I almost beat him and if I would have had any experience at all I would have won. But you learn from losing what it takes to win.

I ran again in 2004 and lost a primary by four votes. I ran against a fireman who



was also a Democrat but not as good a Democrat as I am.

When I lost by four votes I did my rightful duty, though, and went to every house where I had yard signs and took that fireman to their porches and said vote for this guy.

I believe in helping whoever wins the primary. I don't foresee a primary in my district but I guess it is always a possibility.

FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY

I am very focused on the issues of the community I live in and I make sure to ask myself everyday, "What are you doing with the rest of your life?" This keeps me on track. I try to do something for my brothers and sisters around me because I am sure that at the end of my life this is what will matter the most to me.

What I have done for others will mean more than any material item I may have acquired in life.

I met my dad when I was 24 and he was on dialysis. He got worse after his kidney transplant rejected so I moved him into my home and took care of him

See JOURNEY Page 9

Fallin Struggles With Tenth Grade Civics?

By Walter Jenny

Shortly after Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, several Republican Attorneys General filed lawsuits seeking to have the health care reform legislation declared unconstitutional. Congresswoman Mary Fallin double-dared Oklahoma's Attorney General Drew Edmondson, a Democrat, to join the attack.

"What does Drew Edmondson know that the people of Oklahoma and the attorneys general of 13 other states don't?" Fallin challenged in her press release. "Oklahoma's state Legislature has declared this bill unconstitutional. My office is ringing off the hook with voters declaring it unconstitutional. But Drew Edmondson is still apparently waiting for someone to bring him a copy of the bill. What part of 'unconstitutional' doesn't Drew Edmondson understand?"

What's easy to understand are the politics of the Congresswoman's gambit. She and Edmondson are both running for governor this year. Support for President Obama and his health care reforms is probably as low in Oklahoma as any state in the Union. Rally those Tea Party activists to her side, and she's sure to win in November.

BELLWETHER OF CONSTITUTIONALITY

But her press release should raise the eyebrows of anyone with a tenth grade education in civics. Does she really believe that public opinion is the bellwether of constitutionality? Does she really think the state Legislature can declare a bill unconstitutional?

Did she really want a State Attorney General to make a gut call on the constitutionality of complex federal legislation without at least reading its 2,400 pages of still-damp ink? Did she even read it between her taunting appearances in front of Tea Party protesters at the Capitol?

And she wants to be Governor? That's truly scary.

Actually, the idea of a state legislature trying to nullify an act of Congress cropped up soon after the United States became, well, the United States. Invoking the same doctrine of states' rights, the crisis split the old Republican Party in two and nearly brought about civil war.

SOUTH CAROLINA BALKED

Before the 1820s, Southerners were buying manufactured goods from foreign sources cheaper than from Northern manufacturers. Congress then hiked the tariffs on imported goods to pay for the War of 1812 and to support Northern businessmen. To raise tariffs and taxes to pay for federal expenditures such as the war debt wasn't the issue; that was clearly constitutional. But there was no such authority for tariffs to be skewed to support Northern industries over Southern interests primarily for public policy reasons.

Using this argument, South Carolinians convened a state convention and declared the tariffs unconstitutional and unenforceable in South Carolina. President Andrew Jackson asked Congress for authorization to use military force to

enforce the law, and declared the convention treasonous.

South Carolina's efforts, he wrote, were "incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed." He pointed out the provisions to challenge the constitutionality of laws in the judicial branch and to change Congress in future elections.

FEDERALISM MATURES

Congress proceeded to amend the tariff laws and defuse the crisis as the concept of federalism continued to mature. It left for another day the question whether the federal government was, in Daniel Webster's words, "made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people."

The term "states' rights" is as emotionally charged in Oklahoma as anywhere in the country. A quadrant of this state is called Little Dixie because so many of its white settlers were refugees from the post-Confederate South, and they brought many of their un-Reconstructed grudges with them. Edmondson, a son of Little Dixie himself, is not immune from using the catchphrase when it suits him; a decade ago he invoked states' rights in a Supreme Court case against the Boy Scouts because they discriminate against gays, and it cost him precious political capital.

But to couple that mantra with sheer ignorance of basic legal principles is embarrassing. Try as it might like, the Oklahoma Legislature is not empowered to "declare" a federal bill to be unconstitutional. We should fear the day when constitutionality of laws is determined with a wet finger held in Oklahoma's political winds.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Gov. Raymond Gary was handed the challenge of enforcing the Supreme Court's controversial Brown v. Board of Education ruling in the 1950s. He responded with funding reforms for common education that carried in a statewide vote by better than a three-to-one margin.

Gary then advised each school district that it would not receive state aid if it defied federal integration efforts. That took real moxie, but it worked. Gary's leadership spared Oklahoma the embarrassment of integration clashes that occurred in virtually every other Southern state.

Either Fallin's hysterical remarks were aimed to stir up the hoi polloi in the Tea Party movement, or were seriously naïve. In either case, we deserve better.

- The author lives in Edmond

Editor's Note: Edmondson declined to file a lawsuit, saying it would be fruitless and costly. Republican leaders first weighed a resolution requiring Edmondson to file suit, but then decided they would mount their own legal challenge.

'Worst Person In World'

Russell's Anti-Gay Bill Shelved By Shelton

Republicans meant to make it easier to discriminate against gays, but instead they passed a bill making it easier to discriminate against Christians and other religious groups.

The Oklahoma Senate voted in favor of a bill that it thought was going to reduce protections for gay people by allowing local law enforcement agencies to ignore the expanded hate crimes law passed by the U.S. Congress last year.

Oklahoma took an international black eye once again thanks to Republican antics involving gays and abortion – their two favorite themes.

National network commentator Keith Olbermann named the Senate author, Sen. Steve Russell, R-OKC, as "the worst person in the world" because the measure was intended to prevent law enforcement officials from asking for federal assistance in enforcing the LGBT-inclusive federal hate crimes law.

The Oklahoma bill, however, cited the wrong clause in the federal code, and instead prevented law enforcement from upholding laws against hate crimes based on religion, race or ethnicity.

Eliminating protection for religious groups is pretty much the exact opposite of what the bill's supporters had intended.

HATE CRIME LAW SIGNED IN 2009

In October 2009, President Obama signed into law a change to the U.S.'s protections against hate crimes that expanded protection to cover people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

That law, known as The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, was opposed by Republican lawmakers who feared it would trample on the free speech rights of religious leaders who preached against the lifestyle of the victim who was attacked, notes the Out in Oklahoma City blog.

But "in trying to strip gays and lesbians of protection, the Oklahoma State Senate inadvertently cited the wrong section of the U.S. code," reported Igor Volzky at ThinkProgress.

"The bill stripped rights under Title 18 US Code Section 245, but protections for sexual orientation and gender identity is actually under Section 249."

Section 245 protects people against hate crimes on the basis of "race, color, religion or national origin." Thus the very same religious leaders who worried that the federal hate crimes statute would criminalize their opinions almost ended up losing hate-crimes protection themselves.

SHELTON KILLS THE BILL

Russell, the bill's author, attempted to change his opt-out bill but it was killed in the House after a deft procedural maneuver by state Rep. Mike Shelton, D-



OKC.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma, the Cathedral of Hope, the Justice and Witness Commission of the United Church of Christ and the Cimarron Alliance all hailed its defeat.

"The ACLU of Oklahoma applauds the brave actions of Rep. Shelton in his attempt to provide security and peace of mind to those minorities who have traditionally been the victims of hate crimes," said Tamy Cox, ACLU of Oklahoma Legislative Counsel.

"Rep. Shelton is, in the face of personal attacks and extreme hostility, standing against Sen. Russell's efforts to make Oklahoma unsafe for its minority residents. His efforts are to be congratulated as courageous and commendable.

"Sen. Russell claims SB 1965 is intended to protect free speech rights of Christians and religious authorities who preach against homosexuality," Cox continued. "Contrary to Sen. Russell's assertions, however, hate crimes legislation does not constitute censorship. All Americans are free to express their opinions; Sen. Russell is simply hiding behind fabricated claims of censorship to push his own agenda. His claims are insulting to those minorities whose blood has been shed in the name of racism and bigotry. Rather than accepting Sen. Russell's fictitious and baseless harms of hate crimes legislation we must remember the real harm incurred without the protection provided by such legislation."

Russell may not be the worst person in the world but he is doubtless the worst member of the State Senate.

Cease And Desist: No Nukes In Oklahoma

By Sidney Williams and Morton S. Skorodin

Conservatives, liberals and others must speak out against nuclear power before it is too late. Our state Legislature is going along with the Obama Administration's promotion of nukes, as pro-nuclear bill SB 1668 is cruising through the legislative process.

Nuclear power is intrinsically death-dealing. Let's remind ourselves of some of the specifics: forced abortion, childhood leukemia, cancer with early death commonly, many other illnesses, including sterility and developmental disabilities from exposure in the womb.

Please communicate your opposition to nuclear power with your state legislators [mention SB 1668] at 800.522.8502, 877.299.3468 [TDD], or <http://www.capitolconnect.com/demoassoc1/legislatorsearch.aspx>.

The nuclear stuff is very dangerous – 0.089 microgram of one radioactive substance, Polonium 210, is enough to kill a man! That means that one pound even-

ly divided could kill about 5.1 billion people!

Our descendants will have to watch over our nuclear droppings for millions of years.

Do we need a Chernobyl in America to learn the lesson?

The Obama Administration wants 81 new nukes on our soil – new French "socialist" technology, which French insiders warn will blow like Chernobyl.

The finances are bad. The loan guarantees are actually loans. The numbers should be two to five times higher per reactor. A default will come somewhere along the line, be it in 50 years for our grandchildren to fork over for the decommissioning of the power plants, or sooner. Ultimately it will be the American people as taxpayers and ratepayers who will have to take responsibility.

Please – no nukes in Oklahoma.

– The authors, both medical doctors, live in Stillwater

Ex-Felons Would Find Helping Hand

A bill to reduce recidivism and help more Oklahomans pursue better employment opportunities is SB 2070 by Sen. Harry Coates, R-Seminole.

Coates, chairman of the Senate Business and Labor Committee said the bill was suggested by an Oklahoma City-based nonprofit organization, The Education and Employment Ministry [TEEM], which works to help former inmates re-enter society.

"We have dozens of occupations in Oklahoma for which an individual must be licensed by the state, whether they want to be an architect, an occupational therapist or an audiologist. The problem is, a person who has been convicted of a felony is barred from being licensed, no matter what the crime was," Coates explained.

"SB 2070 would enable an individual to pursue a license as long as the crime they were convicted of is not related to that occupation."

Tony Zahn is the executive director of TEEM. He believes SB 2070 will help guide more people into productive roles in society, and result in fewer former inmates returning to crime and to prison.

"If I can't get a job for a trade that I am trained for, what are my alternatives? One of the big reasons for recidivism is not having a job that pays a living wage," Zahn said. "This legislation removes the barrier to successful reentry into society."

According to data from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, 8.2% of Oklahomans have been convicted of a felony. Coates said the legislation is a common sense approach to dealing with individuals who have already paid their debt to society, and now want to become productive members of their community.

"The saying is true – it isn't enough to just be tough on crime. We have to be smart on crime, too," Coates said. "These are individuals who have been held accountable for their actions – we just want to make sure that once they've done their time, we're not putting up road blocks that could force them back down the wrong road."

Nighs Helping Legal Aid

George and Donna Nigh, the state's Governor and First Lady from 1979-87, will serve as statewide co-chairs of Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma's 2010 Campaign for Justice. The campaign, which provides funding for free civil legal services in Oklahoma for elderly and low-income persons, has a goal of raising \$750,000 for the non-profit law firm with 21 offices serving clients in all 77 counties. For more information, call 405.557.0049.

Preterm Births Cost Lives And Money

Preterm births in Oklahoma are a public health crisis. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health [OSDH], preterm births impact more than one in eight Oklahoma families.

Currently, Oklahoma's infant mortality rate of 8.0 deaths per 1,000 live births is higher than the U.S. rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births.

"This can and must change," said State Health Commissioner Terry Cline.

Preterm infants face an increased risk of lifelong health consequences such as breathing and feeding problems, cerebral palsy, and learning problems. Besides health costs, there are the emotional and human costs that also take their toll on families.

COSTS SOARING

National statistics show the costs associated with the birth of an infant including in-hospital care, outpatient visits, and prescriptions for mother and baby averaged \$15,047 for a baby born at term.

However, if the baby was born preterm, the average cost rose to about \$64,713 per birth. In Oklahoma, there are almost 6,000 babies born preterm, costing an estimated \$300 million annually [based on 2007 costs].

"Preterm birth is the leading cause of death in the first month of life, which is tragic for families, communities and the entire state," Cline said. "We know that assisting mothers in getting healthy before they become pregnant can help them have a better pregnancy and prevent many preterm births.

"It will take more than an individual effort, however, to aggressively work on reducing preterm births in Oklahoma. To produce a healthier population, we must take a serious look at changing policies, improving provider services and payments, and increasing community outreach."

TERMS OF PRETERM

A birth is considered preterm if it occurs prior to 37 completed weeks of gestation. Infants born prior to 34 weeks gestation are considered "early" preterm deliveries, while infants born between 34 weeks and 36 weeks and 6 days are considered "late" preterm deliveries.

A recent Oklahoma Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Study [PRAMS] conducted by the OSDH, revealed the following:

- Socioeconomic status was an important predictor of preterm births. Women lacking a high school education and women who were not covered by private insurance were at higher risk of early preterm birth than more educated women or those with private insurance.

- Women receiving recommended levels of prenatal care were less likely to deliver preterm than women who had less than recommended levels of prenatal or no prenatal care.

- In agreement with prior studies, smoking during the last three months of pregnancy was moderately associated with a higher risk of early and late preterm birth.

- African-American mothers were twice as likely to have an early preterm birth compared with white and Native American mothers.



- Almost one in four births to women with a history of preterm labor were early or late preterm [8.91% and 13.13%, respectively], supporting national data indicating a history of preterm labor is a strong predictor of preterm delivery.

Some of the PRAMS recommendations include:

- Advocate for the provision of preconception care in all health insurance packages for all females and males of reproductive age and promote preconception care as a necessary piece of medical care.

- Preconception health care looks at medical, behavioral and social risk factors in order to improve the woman's health and help reduce risks to her future baby. Educate health care providers to view every interaction with a female or male of reproductive age as an opportunity for preconception health counseling.

- Include special attention on informing and promoting the health of females of reproductive age – especially African American and Native American women – in efforts such as Turning Point and other community-based coalitions focused on the issues of tobacco use and obesity.

- Support implementing an Oklahoma Maternal-Infant Quality Care Collaborative among Oklahoma perinatal care providers and hospitals with obstetric services and other partners to ensure that mothers and newborns receive safe, high-quality perinatal care. This would be accomplished by identifying and removing barriers to providing safe, quality perinatal care; providing comprehensive, evidence-based education, best practice resources and patient educational resources; and collaborating to standardize perinatal care across the state.

- Formally designate levels of neonatal care in Oklahoma hospitals to clarify what equipment, facilities and staff are required to care for certain types of mothers and newborns. Decisions regarding delivery and transfers of mothers and newborns can be made according to designations.

- Challenge private and public stakeholders to participate in the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review [FIMR] Projects based in the major metropolitan areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa by becoming involved in activities and projects that are based on or result from the Case Review and Community Action Team process.

- Educate mothers with previous poor birth outcomes, such as infant death, premature labor, and pre-existing medical conditions, to ask for appropriate referrals to specialists before becoming pregnant.

- Enhance the perinatal telemedicine network for rural women with high-risk pregnancies, with a particular focus on Native American and African American women in rural areas of the state.

JOURNEY

From Page 7

for three years.

In 2000 right when I was running for office he took a turn for the worse and had both legs amputated. The doctor would not let me bring him home from the hospital and placed him in a nursing home. He died 32 days later.

I still have not forgiven myself for not pitching a fit and saying he must go home with me. At that time my two year old with Turner Syndrome had just had her 17th surgery and I just did not have the energy to argue with the doctor about my dad's care. I would give anything to redo that day.

MOM NEVER VISITS

My mother lives two hours from here but has never been to my home. I wish she would.

I began taking classes on advocacy for kids with disabilities. I am really good at it and have been doing it since 1999. I have been successful in getting children services at their local neighborhood school. In 11 years I have lost only one case.

I have represented over 500 children all across the state of Oklahoma, regardless of their ability to pay. Perhaps I have kept some out of prison because when I got to them they had been suspended for life from school and I got them back in.

In 2000 I won an award from President Clinton [Elizabeth Monroe Boggs Award]. Six hundred people nationwide were nominated but for some reason I won. I think it was the letter that Donna Nigh wrote about me?

VOLUNTEER GUARDIAN

I am also a volunteer guardian for Michael Neale who lives in a group home operated by DDS. What a sorrow the way they run these group homes. I became a CASA [CourtAppointed Special Advocate] in Oklahoma County in 2002. I advocate for a lot of kids.

I think when our systems get so big that there is no accountability, we need to clean house. There really is a crisis in customer service in America today in that we do not treat people with dignity and respect. People are even rude and mean to the customers. We the taxpayers are the customers.

How many times this week did you call for something and get an automated

voice option? Why can't we go back to real people and real solutions? I think until we value human relationships the way we should, we will not see a lot of improvement in our way of living.

Accountability belongs to everyone if they would just use it. People have to matter. They matter to me. I have been walking in my district since March of 2009.

LOOKING THEM IN THE EYE

I shake their hands and look them in the eye and say, "What do I need to do for you to get your vote?" Most of them are speechless but they also look very impressed and interested.

Sometimes I have to spend 40 minutes on a porch. If that is what they need to decide to vote for me, that is what I do.

I have met a lot of people who are looking for someone who will work and be accountable to them. They believe in me. This is something [incumbent state Rep.] Randy Terrill cannot do as well as I do. That is why I know I will win. The voters are listening to me. They remember what I say on their porch. This is a good thing.

I have my National Certification as an Education Advocate. I was one of the first 25 people in the United States to earn this certification. I am a certified NAPAS/PEA advocate [National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems/Partners in Education Advocacy] and I am currently a student who will graduate in November from the OAALA [Oklahoma Aging Advocacy Leadership Academy].

Wow! I never read the Older Oklahomans Act before this class but it really is an awesome piece of legislation. If only we would carry it out and be accountable for the things we do for the aging.

Oh, I remember [Observer Founding Editor] Frosty Troy saying we are living in one of the worst generations of parents we ever had. I agree. Someone needs to say that more.

I hammer on parents all the time about "do your best." We really need to hold parents accountable.

Children have to matter.

– The author is a Democratic candidate for House District 53

BOOKS

A Cautionary, Uplifting Political Saga Of Race

By David W. Blight

THE BRIDGE

The Life and Rise of Barack Obama

By David Remnick

Alfred A. Knopf

656 pages, \$29.95

On that night of Nov. 4, 2008, when Barack Obama strode onto the stage in Grant Park in Chicago to acknowledge to an enraptured world that he had just been elected the first African American president of the United States, millions watched with a sense of transcendent joy. Millions more in America, it appears, felt deep racial or ideological dyspepsia.

How improbable was the election of this young biracial, multinational Hawaiian-Kansan intellectual?

According to David Remnick, author of *The Bridge*, very improbable! Yet, in this engaging if long work of "biographical journalism," Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker*, charts a crooked but persistent logic by which Obama rises from lonely and shiftless obscurity to the Oval Office.

Along the way, Remnick gives rich texture to some important generalizations: that the disastrous presidency of George W. Bush carved out a unique space for Obama to step in, that race was pivotal in the narrow victory of Obama over Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primary, and that Obama's "insistent reasonableness" and "flexibility of mind" have delicately positioned him to be just "black enough" and "white enough" to turn history upside down. At least for the moment.

AVOIDING SENTIMENTALITY

Remnick largely avoids the sentimental attractions of Obama's "rise," although the book is laced with narrative touches that can reawaken the tears of election night for Obama admirers.

Among them:

- The young Obama in Kenya, kneeling and weeping between the graves of his father and grandfather, demonstrating his desperate quest to understand who he is in relation to the absent, dishonest, unknowable Barack Obama Sr.;
- Obama arriving a day late in Hawaii to see his mother before she dies of cancer, marching up a cliff with his sister, Maya, to drop Ann Dunham's ashes into the Pacific Ocean, illustrating how important this wandering, smart if naively idealistic woman had been in his life;
- Obama walking through airport security in Boston, mobbed by admirers after giving the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Party convention, as history collides with everyday racial America: a security worker does not recognize Obama and forces him through body searches, as the candidate takes a congratulatory cell-phone call from Mikhail Gorbachev.

IDENTITY, AMBITION AND RACE

Remnick's sparkling narrative is marred occasionally by endless quotations, some so long the reader cannot remember the identity of the speaker.

Through a huge array of interviews and by steeping himself in African American history, Remnick employs three overall themes: identity, ambition and race.

A conventional biographer in some ways, Remnick delves deeply into Obama's complicated extended family on three continents – Africa, America, and Asia [Indonesia].

Nearly half of the book is devoted to Obama's struggle to fashion a black identity despite and sometimes strengthened by the loving influence of his white grandparents. And, although Remnick treats Obama's remarkable first book, *Dreams From My Father*, as a serious work in the African American tradition of autobiography, he could still interpret more thoroughly just what drove such a young man to write his globe-trotting and yet deeply American story.

OBAMA'S LITERARY TALENT

Obama is a gifted writer for a professional politician; he hears language musically in his head. How did that happen? Did he simply read his way to his talents? All writers and leaders of rare ability are one part mystery and many parts practice. But Remnick leaves this mystery too hurriedly to get to the main events.

Ultimately this book is a political biography, and therefore a study in ambition, thwarted and enabled by the American dilemma of race.

"Life is not a bunch of accidents, especially for someone with a huge vision for himself," said an older rival about Obama. "He planned it out."

Indeed he did. Obama would encounter many strokes of good luck in his rapid political rise, but a combination of raw ambition and genuine desire to "make a difference" drove this man's ascendancy.

Remnick effectively demonstrates the key turning points: election to the Harvard Law Review, his three frustrating years as a community organizer in Chicago, his networking and ruthlessly elbowing his way to election to the Illinois state Senate, his failed run against Bobby Rush for Congress from the South Side, and then both his rapid rise as a U.S. Senate and presidential candidate, all at breakneck speed.

HARDLY A BORN CAMPAIGNER, ORATOR

Remnick finds ample evidence that Obama was not a born campaigner, nor even a born orator. His political education was a winding path, but he displayed a breathtaking ambition that almost nothing could derail, not even his exceedingly skeptical wife, Michelle. Her constant reticence about her husband's political ambitions and her wishes that he might go into lucrative legal jobs to make

money provide Remnick an odd leitmotif in the book. Michelle Obama remains in this volume an intriguing but undeveloped background presence.

What is clear is the persistent evolution of a brilliant, moderate, centrist-liberal political temperament that has always animated Obama's style and substance. For those inspired or exasperated by Obama's nearly congenial consensus-building, this book provides a careful historical grounding.

Most of all, Remnick has written a political saga about race, cautionary as it is uplifting. Ever since he left Occidental College to do his final two years as an undergraduate at Columbia, Obama became a very serious student of black and American history.

EXTRAORDINARY AUDACITY

It took extraordinary "audacity" to believe he could hop from one office to the next, then aspire to be president only two years after leaving the Illinois Senate. While his success owes much to time and place, to the elite schools and institutions that aided him, and to a rich inheritance from the civil rights movement of which Obama is deeply aware, his stunning achievements are also very much his own personal triumphs.

Remnick rightly would have us view Obama, though, in the long view of Amer-

See BRIDGE Page 12

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2.4 Million Jobs Lost To China, More Coming

By Art Levine

Concern about massive 2.4 million in jobs losses due to unfair Chinese trade practices is reshaping the American political battle lines over trade, with labor winning new and sometimes unlikely supporters in its fight for stronger policies to protect American workers.

"We're picking up new allies, and senators are signing on to introduce a bill that takes a tougher line on unfair trade than we've seen in the past," Bill Samuel, the AFL-CIO's legislative director, told Truthout magazine.

The study shows that Oklahoma has lost more than 20,000 industrial jobs to China.

In addition, he believes the administration is more "open" to taking a tougher stance, including possibly ruling that China is a currency manipulator in an upcoming Treasury Department evaluation – as ongoing high unemployment ramps up the political pressure on the administration and China.

SCREW-YOU STANCE

To top it all off, China's screw-you public stance is only fueling anger on Capitol Hill.

After meeting with Commerce and Treasury Department officials, China's deputy commerce minister, Zhong Shan, proclaimed, "The Chinese government will not succumb to foreign pressures to adjust our exchange rate." In addition, China reported – perhaps even honestly – that it experienced its first trade deficit in six years this month.

As Bloomberg news quoted one Chinese economist: "A trade deficit will beef up Chinese leaders' arguments in fending off pressure from the U.S. for the yuan [the Chinese currency] to appreciate."

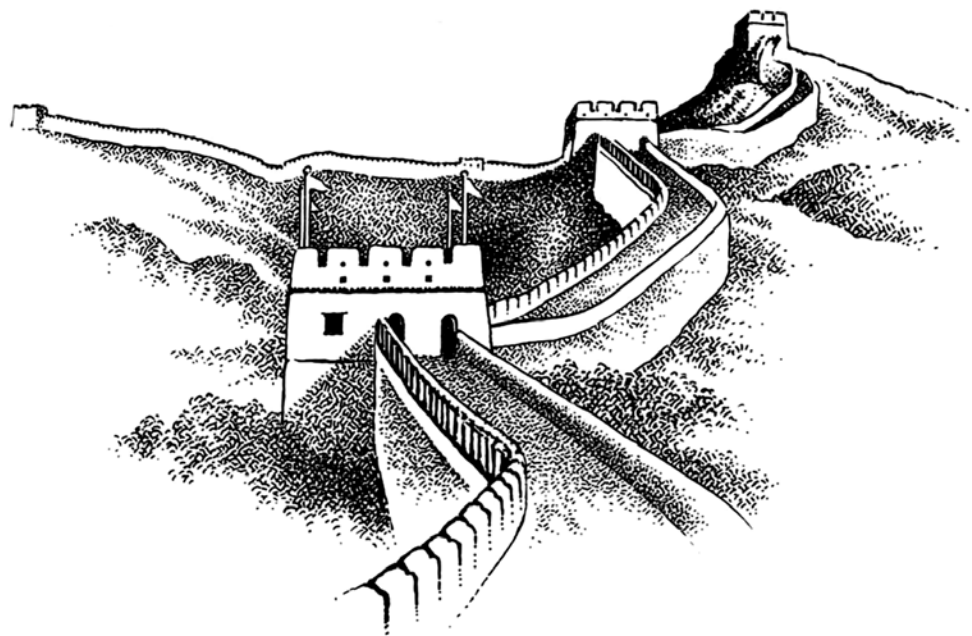
Yet, a new report released by the Economic Policy Institute [EPI] substantiated how between 2001 and 2008, 2.4 million U.S. jobs were eliminated or displaced due largely to the flooding of the U.S. market with Chinese goods priced artificially low due to apparent Chinese government currency manipulation.

THE TRADE DEFICIT SOARS

For instance, EPI reported that a surge in imports in cheap Chinese computer and electronic parts alone accounted for a roughly \$75 billion increase in the trade deficit with China, leading to trade-related job losses in that high-tech sector of 627,700 jobs, with the hardest hit areas in California and Texas.

It's not that surprising, then, that the liberal Sen. Charles Schumer, D-NY, has joined with Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC, among others, to sponsor legislation designed to force the Obama Administration to declare that Chinese currency is "misaligned."

The result is that the Chinese yuan is undervalued in ways that make Chinese goods and services unfairly low in price, thus worsening a \$420 billion U.S. trade



deficit.

An undervalued yuan means that fewer American dollars are needed to buy Chinese products, a pricing advantage worth between 20% to 40% on the international marketplace. A finding of currency manipulation can pave the way for protective import duties to compensate affected industries hit by Chinese currency rigging.

ARTIFICIALLY PEGGED YUAN

Currently, the Chinese government artificially pegs the yuan [also known as the renminbi] to be worth nearly seven per dollar, when a dollar should be actually worth just four or so yuan if actual trading conditions applied.

China has acquired \$2 trillion in reserves, including \$453 billion in US treasury bills and other securities. So, China isn't investing in the U.S. for altruistic reasons, but to add another weapon in an economic fight with the United States.

As the Financial Times reported, the U.S. business community can no longer resist political pressure for Washington to take a tougher stand against China on trade issues, according to a senior figure from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

So with millions of workers and thousands of businesses affected by China's predatory trade practices, Congress is starting to listen. Indeed, the shocking statistics in the new EPI report – "worse than we could have expected," Schumer said – showed the job losses in each state and each Congressional district.

Strikingly, the hardest hit districts were once the jewels of American high-tech innovation: Silicon Valley.

Three Congressional districts in the San Jose and Palo Alto area had 60,000 jobs lost or displaced.

At a Congressional hearing, Harvard University historian Niall Ferguson, author of *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*, observed, "If we don't label China a currency manipulator, we will look like the wimps of the western world."

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New Grads Have Fewer Worries Than Most

By Robert Reich

Many of my students at Berkeley who will be graduating in June are worried about the job market. I understand their worries. But they and other new college grads have less cause for concern than most American workers. Let me explain.

Since the start of the Great Recession in December 2007, the U.S. economy has shed 8.4 million jobs and failed to create another 2.7 million required by an ever-larger pool of potential workers. That leaves us more than 11 million jobs behind. [The number is worse if you include everyone working part-time who'd rather it be full-time, those working full-time at fewer hours, and people who are overqualified for the jobs they're in.]

This means even if we enjoy a vigorous recovery that produces, say, 300,000 net new jobs a month, we could be looking at five to eight years before catching up to where we were before the recession began.

A VIGOROUS RECOVERY?

Given how many Americans are unemployed or underemployed, it's hard to see where we get sufficient demand to support a vigorous recovery. Outlays from the federal stimulus have already passed their peak, and the Federal Reserve won't keep interest rates near zero for very long.

Although consumers are beginning to come out of their holes, it will be many years before they can return to their pre-recession levels of spending. Most households rely on two wage earners, of whom at least one is now likely to be unemployed, underemployed or in danger of losing a job. And even households whose incomes have returned are likely to be residing in houses whose values haven't – which means they can't turn their homes into cash machines as they did before the recession.

While consumers have been shedding their debts like mad – often simply by defaulting on loans – their remaining burdens are still heavy. At the end of last year, debt averaged \$43,874 per American, or about 122% of annual disposable income. Most analysts believe a sustainable debt load is around 100% of disposable income, assuming a normal level of employment and normal access to credit – neither of which we are likely to have for some time.

THE WEALTH EFFECT

Some economic cheerleaders say rising stock prices are making consumers

feel wealthier and therefore readier to spend. But most Americans' biggest asset is their homes. The "wealth effect" is felt mainly by the richest 10%, whose net worth is largely stocks and bonds. The top 10% accounted for about half of total national income in 2007. But they were only about 40% of total spending. A vigorous jobs recovery can't be based on 40% of what was spent before the economy collapsed.

What's likely to slow the jobs recovery most, however, is the indubitable reality that many of the jobs that have been lost will never return.

The Great Recession has accelerated a structural shift in the economy that had been slowly building for years. Companies have used the downturn to aggressively trim payrolls, making cuts they've been reluctant to make before. Outsourcing abroad has increased dramatically. Companies have discovered that new software and computer technologies have made many workers in Asia and Latin America almost as productive as Americans, and that the Internet allows far more work to be efficiently moved to another country without loss of control.

Companies have also cut costs by substituting more computerized equipment for labor. They've made greater use of numerically controlled machine tools, robotics and a wide range of office software.

LOWER WAGES, BENEFITS

These cost-cutting moves have allowed many companies to show profits notwithstanding relatively poor sales. Alcoa, for example, had \$1.5 billion in cash at the end of last year, double what it had on hand at the end of 2008. It managed this largely by cutting 28,000 jobs, 32% of its work force. But for workers, there's no return. Those who have lost their jobs to foreign outsourcing or labor-replacing technologies are unlikely ever to get them back. And they have little hope of finding new jobs that pay as well. More than 40% of today's unemployed have been without work for over six months, a higher proportion than at any time in 60 years.

The only way many of today's jobless are likely to retain their jobs or get new ones is by settling for much lower wages and benefits. The official unemployment numbers hide the extent to which American workers are already on this

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Coburn Ignites Firestorm

GOP Must Decide: Big Tent Or Pup Tent

By Ruth Marcus

There is something weird going on in the Republican Party when Oklahoma Sen. Tom Coburn is the voice of reason.

There is something dangerous going on in the Republican Party when he is vilified for it.

Coburn has said he favors the death penalty for "abortionists." He opposes "any and all efforts to mandate gun control on law-abiding citizens." During the debate over health-care reform, Coburn said that "what the American people ought to pray is that somebody can't make the vote tonight." He is the Senate's "Dr. No," leading the charge recently against extending unemployment benefits.

I could go on – but Coburn doesn't need me to vouch for his conservative bona fides.

Except for these alleged transgressions: At a recent Town Hall meeting, Coburn called House Speaker Nancy Pelosi "a nice lady" – in the course of criticizing the speaker for telling him she did not want to set a "precedent" by paying for the extension of unemployment benefits.

JEERS AND HISSES

In my world, "nice lady" borders on dismissive with a slight, if unintended, tinge of sexism. In *Conservative World*, that description of Pelosi apparently is heretical. Coburn's comment was greeted with jeers and hisses, but he stuck to his, well, guns.

"Come on now. She is a nice – how many of you all have met her? She's a nice person," Coburn said. "Let me give you a little lesson here. I hope you will listen to me. Just because somebody disagrees with you doesn't mean they're not a good person."

When a woman said she worried about the health-reform law because the Internal Revenue Service would be empowered to put people in jail, Coburn politely – and accurately – disagreed. "The intention is not to put anybody in jail," he said. "That makes for good TV news on Fox, but that isn't the intention."

Coburn went on: "What we have to have is make sure we have a debate in this country so that you can see what's going on and make a determination yourself. So don't catch yourself being biased by Fox News that somebody is no good. The people in Washington are good. They just don't know what they don't know."

PREDICTABLE YAPPING

The howling was swift.

Rush Limbaugh: "Well, who cares if she's nice? ... Al Capone was a nice guy. Hitler had friends, for crying out loud. ... So Coburn says, 'There's no intention of putting anybody in jail.' No, no, no. ... Somebody tell Tom Coburn she was specifically asked about possible jail time, and she said 'the legislation is very fair in this respect.'"

Glenn Beck: "The Republican that I'm supposed to defend because he's so unlike Nancy Pelosi was defending Nancy Pelosi."

Mark Levin, who manages to make Limbaugh and Beck sound like calm voices



– Steve Hill

of reason: "We don't need you hack, detestable politicians telling us a damn thing. Most of you are a bunch of pathetic, unethical morons. And so, no, Mr. Coburn, we won't be told to sit down and be quiet. We won't be told by you to watch CNN to balance off Fox. You got that, pal? Who the hell do you think you are? You sound like a jerk, to be perfectly honest about it. You, the jerk, who backed John McCain."

No surprise that Coburn's Oklahoma twin, James Inhofe, was distancing himself from the remarks. "There's nothing nice about Nancy," Inhofe told a local radio show. "She disagrees with everything we believe."

'WORST PERSON IN WORLD'

Impressively, Coburn managed, the same week, to be Keith Olbermann's "Worst Person in the World" for blocking unemployment benefits.

The late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan liked to say that everyone is entitled to his own opinions but not his own facts. In the modern update, no one would be entitled to either: Dissenting opinions are not tolerated. Facts that clash with preconceived ideas must be ignored if not outright denied.

Certainly, Republicans hold no monopoly on inflammatory rhetoric or self-defeating demands for ideological purity. Remember when Howard Dean and company declared the Senate health-care bill not worth passing?

In the angry age of the Tea Party, however, Republicans appear particularly inclined in this direction. It's up to Republicans whether they want to be a big tent or a pup tent. The latter does not strike me as a particularly smart political strategy. More worrisome, it augurs a continued politics of vilification and polarization that is as unhealthy for the country as it is unpleasant to participate in.

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GRADS

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downward path. But if you look at income data you'll see the drop.

Among those with jobs, more and more have accepted lower pay and benefits as a condition for keeping them. Or they have lost higher-paying jobs and are now in new ones that pay less. Or new hires are paid far lower wages than the old. [In January, Ford Motor Co. announced that it would add 1,200 jobs at its Chicago assembly plant but didn't trumpet that the new workers will be paid half of what current workers were paid when they began.] Or they have become consultants or temporary workers whose pay is unsteady and benefits nonexistent.

WELL EDUCATED LESS VULNERABLE

This shift also helps explain why the unemployment rate for Americans with

BRIDGE

From Page 10

ica's unfinished racial history. He draws his title from a quote from John Lewis, the Georgia congressman who was badly wounded in the assault by police on the march from Selma in 1965.

"Barack Obama," says Lewis, "is what comes at the end of that bridge in Selma."

Just what hovers over that changing horizon today across the metaphorical bridge, as an inventive, vicious, right-wing assault on Obama's presidency draws new energy from revived hate groups as well as the mainstream Republican Party, remains to be seen.

Remnick provides a splendid guide as we stay tuned to this epic American story.

– David W. Blight teaches American history at Yale University and is the author of *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* as well as a forthcoming biography of Frederick Douglass. This review first appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

college degrees is now only 5%, while it is 10.5% for those with only a high-school degree, and 15.6% for Americans with less than a high-school diploma. The jobs of well-educated Americans, although hardly immune to foreign outsourcing and technological displacement, have been less vulnerable to these trends than the jobs of Americans with fewer years of education.

The likelihood, therefore, is that as the economy struggles to recover and today's jobless begin to find work, the median wage will continue to fall – as it did between 2001 and 2007, during the last so-called recovery.

More Americans will be working, but for pay they consider inadequate. The approaching recovery will be tepid because so many people will lack the money needed to buy all the goods and services the economy can produce.

Americans will once again be employed, but they will also be back on the downward escalator of declining pay they rode before the Great Recession.

Robertreich.org

A Prayer For Leroy

Leroy goes to a revival and listens to the preacher.

After awhile the preacher asks anyone with needs to be prayed over to come forward to the front at the altar.

Leroy gets in line, and when it's his turn, the preacher asks: "Leroy, what do you want me to pray about for you." Leroy replies: "Preacher, I need you to pray for my hearing."

The preacher puts one finger in Leroy's ear, and he places the other hand on top of Leroy's head and prays and prays and prays – he prays a blue streak for Leroy.

After a few minutes, the preacher removes his hands, stands back and asks, "Leroy, how is your hearing now?"

Leroy says, "I don't know, Reverend, it ain't 'til next Wednesday!"

Coburn Often Plays God In DC

Dr. No's Arrogant, Autocratic Rule Heartless

By Edwin E. Vineyard

A few doctors give the impression that they think they are gods. Nearly everyone has known one or two. It appears that Oklahomans may have one of those as U. S. Senator.

Doctors are usually very bright people. They have to be bright to pass the difficult regimen of medical college and to master the essentials of their profession. The problem comes when they go outside their sphere of knowledge and assume the same confidence of opinion in areas of less knowledge or expertise.

Of late, Dr. Tom Coburn, Oklahoma's junior United States senator, has taken up the practice of substituting his own judgment, or conscience as he puts it, for the wisdom of the entire Senate body. Several times he has blocked Senate consideration, and probable vote of approval, for legislation significant to people. A while back he did that on an issue of medical benefits for veterans. He did that on a humanitarian bill, bringing protests outside his Oklahoma offices by young people.

COBURN'S HYPOCRISY

Most recently, "Senator No" blocked extension of unemployment benefits for some 240,000 recipients, labeling it as an insignificant matter not worth its costs. Under the stupid Senate rule that allowed him to do this, he kept the other 99 senators from being able to vote up or down on the measure.

Singlehandedly and arrogantly, Dr. Coburn assumed an omniscience he thinks the entire Senate does not possess – therefore should never get to vote on something he doesn't like.

Dr. Coburn says that he wants to block anything that is "not paid for," meaning accompanied by a tax or by a cut in some other expenditure. Noble as that sounds, that is not the history of the senator's votes. During the past administration he repeatedly voted for legislation, such as Iraq War costs and deficit budgets.

Dr. Coburn has repeatedly voted for tax cuts for the wealthy, although each one of those votes added greatly to the nation's financial deficit.

ARROGANT AND AUTOCRATIC

But blocking a Senate vote on a measure is not the same as voting against the same bill working its way through. Blocking democratic consideration is assuming an arrogant, one-person, autocratic ruling posture. Dr. Coburn says, "My conscience will not permit me to vote for [the measure] because it will add to the deficit burden of our children." This seems somewhat hypocritical in view of past votes, but again, he can salve his conscience by voting against the measure – not by blocking other senators from having a vote one way or the other.

We suspect that Dr. Coburn's real problem with this particular issue was that he does not really believe in extending unemployment benefits at all. Many Republicans oppose that ideologically, and they are quite open in stating, "It is time for these people to get a job." Never mind that jobs are short, and unemployment high, and that we are trying to keep consumer spending up to work out of the

King Coal Says, 'Live Free Or Die'

By Jim Hightower

By gollies, one group in our country has what it takes! One group has done more than just strut around at teabag rallies, barking loudly about nullification, secession, militias and other big-talk threats to stop federal intrusion into our lives and businesses.

This group has put the walk to the talk, acting again and again in recent years to restrain the reach of government so people can prosper. And last week, the fates delivered a fresh and forceful example of the benefits that our society receives from this group's all-out devotion to its "live free or die" ethic.

Of course, 29 West Virginia coal miners did actually have to die because of the group's success at hogtying the feds – but hey, the freedom to prosper comes at a price.

Those 29 miners suffered a terrible and unnecessary death when methane gas was illegally allowed to accumulate in the Upper Big Branch mine ... and then exploded.

DON'T BLAME FATE

"A tragedy," wrote the media. "A horrible accident," decried politicians.

B.S. The fates did not blow up these 29 people. They are dead because self-serving profiteers in the coal industry have routinely used their enormous political clout to fend off commonsense safety regulations by the big, bad government, thus making these "accidents" inevitable.

In the case of Upper Big Branch, the profiteer is one of America's biggest coal corporations, Massey Energy Co., along with its right-wing, multimillionaire CEO, Don Blankenship.

King Coal, as the industry is known both in Appalachia and on Capitol Hill, deploys more than 100 Washington lobbyists and doles out millions of dollars in campaign donations. All of this political firepower is used to sidetrack the simplest safety measures and muzzle the federal mine safety watchdog. How tight is the muzzle? Deliberate violations of safety rules that lead to deaths are treated as misdemeanors!

3,000-PLUS SAFETY VIOLATIONS

Upper Big Branch has been cited by the feds for more than 3,000 worker safety violations since 1995, and its record of dangerous disregard has gotten worse in recent years. Last year it had nearly 500 violations, roughly double the number

recession.

If this is what he thinks, then he should be honest and say that. But he should stop blocking a democratic vote on the issue.

COBURN'S ETHICS CHALLENGES

Dr. Coburn has some ethics issues which he needs to be forthcoming about. He has told two stories about his role as a go-between in negotiating a financial settlement for his friend, Nevada Sen. John Ensign, with the husband of his paramour demanding money. It would be good to have the truth about that ethics issue.

Further, Dr. Coburn has been associated with a group of fundamentalists, masquerading officially as a "church," but offering deluxe, low-cost room and board arrangements for congressmen on "C" Street near the Capitol. From the facts emerging, this "church" tax exemption is questioned, and below the market room rates offered to congressmen may constitute unethical, as well as unreported taxable "gifts." Dr. Coburn and a dozen other congressmen face potential ethics and legal issues resulting from this long term arrangement.

Those who are involved in this cozy arrangement have some explaining to do, Dr. Coburn included. Other than to attack the journalists doing the investigating and reporting, there has been little response so far. The possibility exists that Dr. Coburn's conduct has not been as pure as the driven snow. The public has a right to know.

SIX MORE YEARS?

It appears that Oklahoma will be stuck with Dr. Coburn for another six years by default. Thus far he has no opponent in either party. Too bad; he can't really be that popular. But Dr. Coburn basks in the pledges of millions in support from the right-wing political group called Club for Growth, a tool of rightist billionaires, which also finances the Tea Party express bus and other operations of the fringe. They love Dr. Coburn's irresponsible negative stance. Apparently all this scares strong opposition away.

In spite of all the above, we will credit Dr. Coburn for showing some awareness of the need to tone down the rhetoric and emotionalism of the present hostile political divide in the nation. He is being attacked in his own party for saying this, and also saying that he thinks Speaker Nancy Pelosi is a "nice lady," underserving of the vicious attacks and threats made against her.

We suspect also that there may be a personal connection between the senator and President Obama. From certain subtle cues, there seems to be a genuine bond of some sort between them. If so, we think that the senator could do the nation a great deal of good if he would focus his efforts on expanding that kind of bi-partisanship and reducing the rancor that dominates politics today.

That would seem to be the Christian, biblical "peace-maker" thing to do.

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

in 2008, including ones that create life-threatening conditions for miners. Yet its "punishment" was \$168,393 in fines, with no effective requirement to improve conditions. This is chump change to Massey, which had \$56 million in profits last year.

In 2003, CEO Blankenship blithely declared, "We don't pay much attention to the violation count." Indeed, Upper Big Branch received 53 fresh citations last month alone, including problems with its mine ventilation system, which is supposed to prevent methane explosions. On Monday morning, April 5, federal inspectors issued two more citations at Upper Big Branch, then left. That afternoon, the mine exploded.

In a radio interview, Blankenship expressed his bottom-line compassion for the dead in these words: "Violations are unfortunately a normal part of the mining process."

JUST LIKE BAD POTATO SALAD?

Such callousness is King Coal's calling card. After a series of mine fatalities in 2006, for example, federal regulators considered requiring better seals to keep methane from seeping from one mining area to another. The New York Times reports that, at a 2007 hearing on the proposal, the president of the Kentucky Coal Association demanded that officials ignore the pleas by victims' widows for new safety seals. He accused the government of reacting hysterically to the deaths: "Did you know that 750 people die each year in the U.S. from eating bad or ruined potato salad?" he asked.

Astonishingly, federal regulators under the George W. Bush regime swallowed the "bad potato salad" defense, sparing this multibillion-dollar-a-year industry the minor expense of installing better safety seals.

Less than a week after such lax safety enforcement killed the 29 West Virginia miners, coal company lobbyists were again swarming Washington. They expressed the industry's usual "deep concern" for workers, but warned against rushing to impose any new safety regulations. After all, the government has no business intruding into people's lives, right?

As Blankenship put it in 2009, "Politicians get emotional" about disasters, then try to enact rules that are "as silly as global warming." Live free or die.

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Church Mistreatment Of Women Must End

By Barbara Santee

It is admirable that Sam Miller, a self-described Jewish businessman, defends the Catholic Church against the current barrage of criticism regarding the rape of little boys by priests [Observer, 3.25.10]. He points to the admittedly admirable work the Church does in terms of education and health care.

As a person reared in the Southern Baptist tradition and now a Unitarian, I too am grateful to the Church, especially for the work they do in the health care area, since I have been a beneficiary of that care numerous times and it has saved my life on at least three occasions.

However, I am not now speaking as a Baptist, a Unitarian or a former patient. I am speaking as a woman who is appalled by the monstrous damage the Church has done to women by following dogmatic policies that demean, degrade, endanger, and even kill people of my sex.

Mr. Miller refers to the 637 Catholic hospitals in the United States, and he points out that they treat not only Catholics, but people of many beliefs. And therein lies the rub. Does he know that when a Catholic Church and a secular church merge together, that the Catholic guidelines on reproductive health issues always dominate?

MONUMENTAL PROBLEM FOR WOMEN

In Tulsa, there are four major hospitals. Three of them are controlled by the Catholic Church. In smaller communities where a merged hospital may be the only hospital in town, this is a monumental problem for women.

Does he know that if a woman goes to one of these hospitals, even after having been viciously raped, she will not receive any emergency contraception to forestall the possibility of becoming pregnant by her rapist?

Does he know that if a woman is delivered by caesarean section in a Catholic hospital, she cannot be sterilized while she is on the operating table because those hospitals do not do sterilization procedures. She must be sewn up, and taken by ambulance to a secular hospital [that may be in another town] that will do this very simple "snip-snip" procedure. This procedure would add perhaps \$60 to her bill if done during the cesarean in a secular hospital; but if her cesarean is in a Catholic hospital, she will have to pay for a second hospital admittance and a second operation, potentially thousands of dollars; and this unnecessary expense probably will not be covered by any insurance.

[For more information on these types of mergers, go to <http://www.merger-watch.org/>, a site that also gives information about pharmacists who refuse to fill prescriptions for certain types of birth control because of their religious objections.]

NO STERILIZATION PROCEDURES

Neither men nor women can receive any kind of sterilization procedure in a Catholic hospital – no tubal ligations, no vasectomies, no matter how many children they have or their state of health. They cannot obtain any kind of commonly used birth control methods such as condoms, pills or the IUD.

Yes, the Church will teach them about the so-called "rhythm method" or abstinence, both of which have extremely high failure rates because they require young, healthy, virile people not to have sex for days, weeks, months, or even years at a time.

Not too realistic given that the sexual urge is one of the strongest drives in the human body and starts around 12 or 13, or even younger. Once a young person has had that first orgasm, the chances against stopping the second one are close to nil. Pardon the pun, but Pandora's box is an apt analogy here.

Surely he knows that no Catholic hospital will permit any doctor to perform an abortion. Worldwide, it is estimated that 500,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related complications. Some 200,000 of these deaths are the result of clandestine abortions, many of them performed in Catholic-dominated countries which have outlawed abortion because of pressure from the Church. [The same kind of pressure the Church is now trying to exert on our government in this country.]

VIAGRA YES, BIRTH CONTROL NO?

I'm sure he is aware that the Church places obstacles in the way of any "artificial" form of birth control, including the "pill," yet within two weeks of Viagra coming on the market, the Pope publicly gave that male "pill" his full blessing. The birth control pill artificially prevents pregnancy. Viagra artificially produces an erection.

If artificiality goes against God's plan for human reproduction, it seems they have shot themselves in the foot. Perhaps if they had aimed a little higher, that would have solved their erection problem.

Mr. Miller refers to the 2.6 million students educated in Catholic schools. These students are taught mostly by nuns who are not permitted to become priests. The children in those schools are taught misogyny by example in those schools. Competent, intelligent, caring, dedicated women are bypassed for priesthood simply because they happen to be women. [Now that I think about it, how many cases of nuns raping children have we heard about? There may be an isolated case somewhere, but the overwhelming cases of molestation has been done by male priests.]

Mr. Miller talks about the sexual peccadilloes of Protestant clergy with women, as if in some way, that absolves the offending pedophile priests of their monstrous crimes. The investigation into the sexual misconduct of Catholic priests has not even scratched the surface of their other sexual misconduct – how they

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have sexually abused and misused women. This is the next huge scandal just waiting to happen that the Church will not be able to keep the lid on for much longer.

OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY

There are many priests who have had affairs [straight and gay] and even fathered children; and these are also covered up and hidden from public eye, just as the child rapes have been. [I refuse to call these cases child molestations. They are rape, pure and simple. Calling them "molestation" lessens the horrific crimes that were committed.]

The Pope condemned his critics in the rape cases by saying he would not be "intimidated by ... petty gossip." It is apparent to any rational thinker that he is totally out of touch with reality on this issue.

It makes one wonder why this or any Pope is to be taken seriously as a moral authority on reproductive issues impacting millions, if not billions, of women. The *Humanae Vitae* encyclical of 1968 was simply an attempt to intellectualize and institutionalize misogyny and sexual tyranny over women.

It is a shame that the faithful Catholics who have remained true to their calling – priests and nuns – have been painted with the same brush as the child rapists in their midst. But the burden of collective guilt falls on the entire body of the Church, not just on the Pope or a few isolated perverts in its ranks. The entire structure supported and protected these pedophiles, and, therefore, they aided and abetted the men who committed the crimes.

A COVER-UP

By continuing to uphold and defend a morally corrupt and misogynist institution like the Catholic Church, even its good servants are perpetuating the evil that dwells within. They turned away, kept silent, and permitted the disgraceful rape of thousands of children to continue.

And the Pope was right in the middle of that cover-up. He should be forced to step down immediately. He has shown by his actions he is not morally fit for an office that is supposed to uphold and perpetuate the values taught by Jesus Christ. If he is Jesus' emissary on earth, then all we need ask ourselves is this: Would Jesus have permitted the rape of small children to continue unabated and, even worse, to be covered up? That is the litmus test that should be applied to this situation and to this Pope.

You don't have to be a Christian to know the answer to that question.

Perhaps the Church will be able to purge the child rapists in its midst; but in the meantime, women all over the world continue to suffer irreparable and unforgiveable damage perpetuated by the medieval doctrine of the Church on reproductive issues. The Church hierarchy continues to ignore its share of responsibility for the deaths of thousands of women. They even refuse to admit there is a problem. Silence is consent. Silence is complicity.

STOP ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN

The Catholics with conscience need to clean up their own act and refuse to permit these atrocities against women to continue. A majority of them have spoken out about the crimes against children and many have left the church because of this, but it is high time they began to speak out about the Church's war on reproductive justice for women.

As painful as it will be, they need to walk away until the Church elders come to their senses, and stop the lethal policies they have in place that hurt and kill women.

I'm sure someone will berate me for not being a Catholic scholar and misunderstanding the intent of Catholic doctrine on reproductive issues. But no matter how the Catholic hierarchy twists its logic with platitudes and Latin encyclicals to give the appearance of moral legitimacy and respect for human dignity, the end result is still the same – a disingenuous philosophy turned on its head to justify discrimination against women and control of their sexual and reproductive power.

– The author, a Tulsa resident, holds a PhD from Columbia University and a Masters of Public Health in Population Planning from the University of Michigan. She has been a Pro-Choice scholar and activist for 40 years.

Rank Privilege

During training exercises, a lieutenant who was driving down a muddy back road encountered another car stuck in the mud with a red-faced colonel at the wheel. "Your jeep stuck, sir?" asked the lieutenant as he pulled alongside. "Nope," replied the colonel, coming over and handing him the keys. "Yours is."

PUBLIC FORUM

Not-So-Happy Day For Too Many Women

By Cecil Acuff

Mother's Day, the time for acrostic poems.

"M is for the miracle of being. O is for its origin in love. T is for the tenderness of seeing. H is for a home no wind can move. E is for the ecstasy of living. R is for the recklessness of giving."

Together, they spell ... May 9, 2010.

All this sentimental stuff is OK, but to American Business, Mom's Day means the second most profitable gift-giving day after the Christmas spending orgies, when some businesses make one-third of a year's profit.

Perhaps the only recognition of Mothers in early America were by mothers whose sons had fought or died in the American Civil War [same as today: men wage war, women pray peace. Right?]

There were only local celebrations in the 1870s and 80s, none nationally.

Otherwise, it seems the U.S. holiday was born with the ideas of two women – Julia Ward Howe [author, Battle Hymn of the Republic], who tried to create a Mother's Day for Peace in 1873 [it only lasted 10 years], and Anna Jarvis, who celebrated the first Mother's Day at her church in Grafton, WV, May 10, 1908, the day of the death of her mother, Ann Jarvis.

Ms. Jarvis wished to honor her mother's efforts in creating Mother's Work days that improved sanitation and reconciliation after the Civil War.

After much debate, Congress [did they feel apple pie more important?] passed, and President Woodrow Wilson established the official Mother's Day in 1914. Ms. Jarvis, back then, angrily wrote about the commercialism, saying that buying a card is a poor excuse for the letter one is too lazy to write.

Since Anna Jarvis distributed 500 carnations at the 1908 celebration, carnations have become the official Mother's Day flower.

Conversation between two business men: "Your wife work?" "Nah, she stays home with the kids." When hubby comes home from the office, wifey may ask, "How's your day, honey?" "Great, we finally got that contract – what's for dinner?" The bring-home-the-bacon guy greets the kids briefly and loves his family, but, you know, he's got all this stuff on his bread-winning mind.

Much has been said about a mother's complex role – the joy, boredom, exhaustion, and sorrow. Family experts say, "Nothing else will make you as happy, sad, proud, tired, or disgusted."

And, nothing's as difficult as helping the young develop individuality while wife struggles to keep her own.

Felicity Huffman of TV's *Desperate Housewives*: "I find motherhood incredibly challenging and difficult, and those words are anemic compared to the experience."

All this without a regular paycheck.

Salary.com estimates that an at-home Mom should be paid \$131,471 yearly. But Mom has no choice; she can hardly go on a sit-down strike!

Mothers are treasured, revered, and honored with a special day worldwide, then why are females, mothers or not, beaten, raped, or otherwise abused worldwide?

Women's rights in Iran started in the 1900s. Reza Shah sought to establish a secular state, then during the reign of his son, women gained rights to vote, become parliament members, and could attend college and become teachers. After the 1979 revolution, that all changed.

Today, the Islamic Republic's laws are among the harshest worldwide. They penalize women in the areas of clothing, marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Polygamy is legal, and the testimony of one man carries the same weight as that of two women. There are few rapist convictions.

In 2009, public protests by thousands of men and women scandalized traditionalists by praying side by side in streets around Tehran University, advancing women's rights more than any formal movement could have.

An organization, Feminist Majority, recently warned that the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan would be an abandonment of Afghan women and



children. Presently, women are not safe; three of the Feminist movement were kidnapped, beaten, tortured, and threatened with death by the militia of a warlord if they continued their work.

An Afghan law was passed in 2009, legalizing marital rape. A husband may withhold food from a wife who fails to provide sexual service at least once every four days – the interval assumes hubby has four wives, a practice permitted.

The law denies or severely limits women to inherit, divorce, or have guardianship of their children. It forbids women to marry without permission and legalizes forced marriage. It legalizes marriage to and rape of minors, and gives men control of all their female relatives.

Women may leave the house only for legitimate purposes, in effect, giving men the right to deny women access to work, education, voting, shopping or whatever chosen. Women are treated as property, slaves, and the law considers the rape of females of any age as a property crime.

Restitution is to be made to the owner, usually the father or husband, rather than a crime against the victim.

Afghani women's lives are dangerous, either publicly or at home. Eighty-seven percent are beaten regularly. Rape is an everyday occurrence in all parts of the country. Females, even young boys, are raped by people in charge – police, prison guards, soldiers, or hospital staff. Women rarely tell because the blame and shame is theirs, they are guilty of adultery, and can be punished – jailed, beaten – or murdered by family members to preserve family honor.

In America, many times, a rape charge, true or false, is tantamount to guilt in the eyes of virtually everyone. The difficulty of proof of rape requires that intimate lives be bared to the public in order to get convictions. In a recent year, one of every six women has been the victim of rape or attempted rape. Victims are three times more likely to suffer from depression, six times from PTSD, 13 times to abuse alcohol, 26 times to abuse drugs, and four times more likely to contemplate suicide.

Paraphrasing John F. Kennedy: "And so ... ask not what your Mother, or any female, can do for you; ask what you can do for your Mother, or any female."

Remember the uniqueness of all Mothers, expressed by Rudyard Kipling in 1894.

*If I were hanged on the highest hill
I know whose love would follow me still.
If I were drowned in the deepest sea
I know whose tears would come down to me.
If I were damned of body and soul
I know whose prayers would make me whole.
Mother O' Mine, Mother O' Mine.*

May gentle readers and their gracious and honored Mothers have a happy and satisfying day!

– The author lives in Perkins

A Virtuoso ... When It Comes To Whistling

By Norm Rourke

Music has always been one of the joys of my life. My stepdad was an accomplished fiddler and had a country band that played the VFW and American Legion dances on Friday and Saturday nights throughout central Florida. He couldn't read a note of music. He learned by ear and frankly he was darned good.

I've always liked music in spite of the fact I'm not a musician or a singer and can't read music either. But like any kid growing up – even in the Dark Ages – I listened to music on the radio. My musical tastes included country, pop, classical and even the pre-rock music that eventually melded into rock. I'm still a fan of just about all types of music.

Hoping to develop musical talents, I've tried spoons, harmonica and even a kazoo. Unfortunately I never became skilled at these "instruments." Even though I sing along with the likes of Rod Stewart, ABBA [yeah, I like ABBA] and others, I'm definitely not a singer. In church when I begged to be in the choir,

the choir director threatened me with excommunication if I even thought of putting on a choir robe.

I love music! It brightens my day. It brings joy to my heart. So how do I fulfill my musical urge?

I whistle. I'm a great whistler. Not the tongue behind the front teeth screeching whistling that most people do when they don't know how to whistle. I "arrange" tunes as I whistle. Arrangement is fun. By putting a new twist on most tunes I can give them a little edge.

Whistlers aren't and never have been music pop stars. No Grammys are awarded for Best Whistler. In the Big Band era Bing Crosby did a bit of whistling occasionally. A fellow named Ted Weems who had an orchestra that was sort of popular in the 1940s and early 1950s did a piece in which some whistling was done. But no one remembers what it was. Heck no one ever heard of Ted

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PTSD, Infertility And Other War Consequences

By Bob Nichols

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and its effects on U.S. soldiers and their families is a ghastly story with no end. PTSD is, in large part, though, an entirely Pentagon, or American war machine, inflicted wound.

Boot camp and combat is bad enough; and such forced inhumanity as committing war crimes against civilians causes soldiers to suffer the mental trauma of PTSD. In addition, there is an unseen agent or disease vector at work here as well.

There, on the battlefield, the happy boys sent off to war by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's Fleet Week – an event responsible for a big chunk of the enlistments in the U.S. Navy and Marines – will probably come in deadly contact with another San Francisco Bay Area product: depleted uranium, aka DU, and weaponized ceramic uranium oxide gas and aerosols, UO.

DOSED FOR 20 YEARS

Iraq and virtually all the rest of the Middle East and Central Asia have been continually dosed for almost 20 years with thousands of tons of weaponized ceramic uranium oxide gas, also known as “depleted uranium.”

When used as directed, the depleted uranium bullets, shells and bombs become a lethal uranium gas or aerosol. The poison uranium oxide gas aerosols last for billions of years and never stop indiscriminately maiming and killing, which is a war crime in itself.

The deadly radioactive poison was developed by the Manhattan Project in 1945 when they were making the first atomic bombs. The Manhattan Project became the Bay Area's two nuclear weapons labs.

San Francisco's Representative and U.S. House Speaker “Nuclear Nancy” Pelosi and her friends at San Francisco-based Bechtel are all set to make more atomic bombs, too. Bechtel is a nuclear capable corporation and manages the Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab.

URANIUM ISOTOPES GIVEN AWAY

Depleted uranium is called “depleted” only because less than one half of 1% of the uranium isotope 235, the bomb making isotope, is removed when the U.S. government makes atomic bombs. The currently remaining billion and a half pounds of uranium isotopes are often given free to politically connected arms manufacturers. That radioactive uranium is then used to make bullets, shells, missiles, mines and bombs to sell to the U.S. government a second time.

San Francisco based lawyer Karen Parker is an expert in the International Law of Armed Conflict, commonly called “war crimes” law. The law and treaties require that weapons can be “turned off” after the battle is over.

Simple as that. Anything else is a war crime, punishable by hard labor in prison or death by hanging.

MIGRATE TO THE BRAIN

Army and civilian researchers have shown that uranium oxide [UO] poison gas particles migrate right up the olfactory nerve to the brain. This is when the uranium poison gas weapons are used by soldiers as directed by arms manufacturers and military regulations.

In addition, UO particles are small enough to go through combat uniforms and penetrate the skin of soldiers. Once inside their bodies, the poison uranium gas is drawn to their brains, bones, and testicles or ovaries. Of course, this applies to civilians and animals as well.

Over a million U.S. soldiers have been on the ground in Iraq and Central Asia. The medical disability rate is over 60% and “PTSD” is a common diagnosis. Soldiers from the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy report similar medical problems as well.

One milligram [mg] of uranium oxide poison gas is about the size of one of the periods at the end of these sentences. When soldiers can absorb UO through their skin, there is nothing to limit their exposure to one milligram or a thousand. That goes for civilians, too.

RADIOACTIVE BULLETS

Each tiny milligram shoots about 1,251,000 powerful radioactive bullets a day with a range of about 20 cells of the human body for thousands or even billions of years. This is according to noted mathematician and radiation expert, Rosalie Bertell, PhD, GNSH.

She should know. Dr. Bertell serves on several Pentagon radiation committees and has for decades.

Uranium munitions, containing weaponized uranium oxide gas and aerosols, are used by presidential order in U.S. war zones. Privates and corporals do not decide to use these poisonous uranium gas weapons on their own. No, that order comes from the American president.

Uranium oxide gas weapons are called “genocidal weapons.” They maim and kill millions of people, their animals and their land. The actual targets by the U.S. Expeditionary Forces are the populations of Central Asia and the Middle East, about a billion people.

PROBLEMS FOR ISRAEL

The U.S. Expeditionary Forces are quite successful in targeting and dosing these large populations. In so doing the soldiers poison themselves with depleted uranium, too. The American presidents don't care. Should we care if the president doesn't?

There is a Middle Eastern country that requires all 18-year-olds to join national service for several years. This country even has a roughly comparable health care system to America for a population of 7,233,701, according to the CIA World Factbook. The country is Israel.

All Israeli soldiers donate a sperm sample that is immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored in a sperm bank at University Hospital in Jerusalem. Recent



professional analysis shows Israeli sperm concentration has declined by 40% in less than 10 years.

This is a dangerous and precipitous collapse in human sperm concentration. While opinions differ as to the causes, Israel is swimming in a sea of uranium oxide gas partly from its own and American uranium oxide weapons. The DU attacks the sperm and eggs of male and female soldiers. Civilians and animals, too.

THE ITALIAN ECO-MAFIA

In addition, Israel borders the Mediterranean Sea, as do 21 other countries. For 20 years, a branch of the Italian Mafia called 'Ndrangheta in the South of Italy, next door to Sicily, has grown a thriving nuclear waste disposal business into an estimated \$65 billion a year “legal illegal business,” as Mafia operations are called in Italy.

The infamous “EcoMafia” load derelict cargo ships with high level nuclear wastes and used reactor cores, then sink them in the Mediterranean and along the African coasts. As a result, Israelis swim in a radioactive sea.

Since 20% live sperm is considered to be the beginning of infertility, Israel will be sterile in less than 10 years at this rate of decline. The estimated seven million Israeli Jews will have no more children soon after that. This catastrophic development has already occasioned legislative hearings in Israel's Knesset. The hearings were covered by Israeli newspaper Haaretz. Israeli sperm concentration is just an example of what is happening to human sperm all over the Middle East and Central Asia, by the choice and force of will of successive U.S. presidents.

The American war machine has consequences. PTSD is just one of them. The poison gas cannot be contained, undone or recalled. There is no antidote; there is no cure. There is no escape.

– Bob Nichols is a Project Censored Award winning writer and a San Francisco Bay View correspondent. A former bomb maker in a U.S. government factory in rural Oklahoma, he reports on the two nuclear weapons labs in the Bay Area. He can be reached at duweapons@gmail.com.

VIRTUOSO

From Page 15

Weems.

There was background whistling in some of the spaghetti westerns starring Clint Eastwood. These pieces were irritating and badly done.

I recently had a setback in my pride of being a good whistler. While reading a biography of Sir Winston Churchill, the author writing about the World War II period of Churchill's life pointed out in an aside that Hitler was an accomplished whistler [his personal physician said he was always out of tune ... bet that guy didn't practice medicine very long] and could whistle the complete score of some operetta.

Holy cow! Hitler isn't exactly a “star” I want to emulate and look up to as a whistler. Here I am trying to raise the musical consciousness of whistling and find this out.

No matter, I will carry on with my whistling and try to forget that one of the most evil people in history was a whistler. Clearly I won't be doing a rendition of Hitler's favorite composer Wagner.

Nope, I'll keep working on the 1812 Overture. My biggest problem with this piece is trying to sound like the cannons at the end of this great classic.

Perhaps someday my fantasy will come true: The curtain rises, a philharmonic orchestra fills the stage. I step forward in black tie and tails. A handkerchief is in my hand [I'm a Pavarotti fan. The handkerchief was his trademark.] The maestro raises his baton. The orchestra begins the prelude. Stepping forward for my whistling solo I take a big breath, purse my lips and begin...

“Twinkle twinkle little star ...”

– The author lives in Beggs

What If Fox Actually Wants Mob Violence?

By Eric Boehlert

Conservative commentators were atwitter following news that Ann Coulter's speech at the University of Ottawa was canceled in the face of protests. Of course, Coulter has the right to speak her mind on campuses. But in announcing the cancellation, her conservative Canadian sponsor, pundit Ezra Levant, put the blame on out-of-control liberals who had allegedly made it unsafe for Coulter to speak, breathlessly telling reporters that "the police and the security have advised that it would be physically dangerous for Ann Coulter to proceed with this event and for others to come in" and stressing the presence of an "unruly mob" outside.

Naturally, right-wing bloggers south of the Canadian border then went ballistic. Gateway Pundit claimed a menacing mob of 2,000, armed with "rocks and sticks," had surrounded the Ottawa campus building where Coulter was to speak. And yes, a fire alarm was even pulled.

Oh, my!

TRUTH, THE FIRST CASUALTY

But it turns out none of those hysterical claims were true [except for the part about someone pulling a fire alarm without cause]. The 1,000 protesters were peaceful, according to university officials [good luck finding those rocks and sticks]. And no, the police did not cancel the event out of our concern for Coulter's safety. They simply thought the event should have been held in a bigger venue to facilitate the large crowd. [Who invites Ann Coulter to campus and then books a lecture hall that, according to one estimate, holds just 400 people?]

Fact: Coulter and her promoters canceled the show on their own. There were no imminent signs of mob violence or threats of personal harm, just good old-fashioned, raucous, campus-style debate. But faced with a boisterous crowd, Coulter took her marbles and went home, while her conservative allies concocted tales of looming left-wing violence and feasted on the publicity.

Later, whining about her traumatic no-show in Ottawa, Coulter told a reporter, "I would like to know when this sort of violence, this sort of protest, has been inflicted upon a Muslim?"

Oh, so now pulling a fire alarm qualifies as "violence"?

HYSTERICAL HAND-WRINGING

The hysterical hand-wringing was predictable. But the real stunner last week was watching the same conservatives who fretted over Coulter's safety then turn around and excuse and rationalize actual right-wing violence and intimidation stateside in the wake of the historic health care vote. Speaking out of both sides of their mouths with astonishing ease, conservatives denounced liberals who protested Coulter's appearance in Canada, and then played defense on behalf of marauding right-wing radicals who unleashed death threats, threw bricks through office windows, and hurled epithets at politicians. All in the name of sav-



ing America from President Obama's brand of evil socialism.

That form of intimidation and harassment the GOP Noise Machine had no problem with. Indeed, Democrats themselves were to blame for the rash of political violence.

Or so said the Tea Party team at Fox News, where there was little sense of remorse or shame – or even apparent concern – about the unprecedented bouts of violence and intimidation.

Instead, like Sarah Palin, Fox News simply reloaded and kept spraying the poisonous rhetoric all around. Worse, the "news" channel spent parts of last week either denying or rationalizing the uncorked madness. For instance, Glenn Beck suggested the incidents had been concocted. "It's almost as if the left is trumping all of this up just for the politics," said Beck.

Fox News friend Rush Limbaugh agreed: "Our side doesn't do this kind of stuff. It's all made up – 95% of it's made up and it's being done to divert everybody's attention."

And from Andrew Breitbart's Big Government: "We doubt these threats are actually real."

ANGRY VOICE MAILS

Those who weren't denying the acts of violence were busy white-washing them. On Fox News, S.E. Cupp made fun of Democrats who she claimed sought sympathy after being on the receiving end of a "couple of angry voice mails." Cheered Cupp, "I'm glad people are angry."

Hmm, "angry" voice mails? Here's an example of one of the actual hate messages left on a Democrat's voice mail:

"Congressman Stupak, you baby-

killer mother f***er ... I hope you bleed out your a**, got cancer and die, you mother f***er," one man says in a message to Stupak.

By skimming over the unpleasant details, Fox News talkers did their best to trivialize the illegal, terrorist threats made against elected officials. In fact, they were glad Democrats received voice mails like that.

And yes, it's been the rationalizing that's been so disturbing to watch – the way the GOP Noise Machine fervently excused last week's violent behavior and eagerly tried to shift the blame onto the victims of the intimidation, and then demanded to know what the big deal was.

GAS LINE CUT

I mean, who hasn't had the line on a propane tank outside his house slashed by vandals? This stuff happens all the time, right? Didn't scores of members of Congress, immediately following the vote in 2002 to authorize the invasion of Iraq, find their office windows shattered by flying bricks hurled under the cover of darkness by nasty anti-war libs? Didn't they receive a steady stream of specific death threats and watch as relatives [and even their children] came under attack? Doesn't this kind of harassment and intimidation come with the territory, and hasn't it always been pushed out and legitimized by mainstream media outlets?

Um, not in America. But that may be changing as Fox News fuels the hate and does its best to provide cover and refuge for those supporting the intimidation campaign, as Fox News and the rest of the right-wing media rationalize the wave of political violence and do their best to shift the blame onto the targets – onto the

victims – while always avoiding responsibility. [Did anyone on the left suggest Rep. Eric Cantor, R-VA, was to blame when a YouTube nut job posted a threat against his life?]

Note how so many embraced the frightening notion that because conservatives didn't like health care reform, the violence was expected and nobody should have been surprised because Democrats, by passing the bill [i.e. desecrating the Constitution], pushed people too far. "So why are people angry?" asked Fox News' Steve Doocy. "Maybe because they didn't want this bill?"

RISE OF MOB RULE

Talk about the rise of tyranny and the minority-rule mob.

And that's where the fear of the perpetual angry mob comes in, and perhaps why Fox News, rather than lamenting the ugly and cowardly eruptions, seems to be encouraging it, or at least rationalizing it. Perhaps Fox News wants that threat of mob intimidation on the table, and Fox News, the de facto Opposition Party, wants Democrats to be thinking about the political consequences of further upsetting that unhinged mob.

As the blogger known as Digby noted:

They know that serious violence is very likely. They are simply inoculating themselves against the charge that it was their inflammatory rhetoric that caused it. It will be the Democrats complaining about their inflammatory rhetoric that made the teabaggers snap. If they'd just stayed quiet and not made daddy mad, he wouldn't have had to hit them.

INVOKING SEPT. 11

And speaking of irresponsibility, who helped created the red-hot aura of right-wing hysteria over health care reform? Who has been driving the dangerous insurrectionist rhetoric? The right-wing media, of course. This was Beck, just days after the vote: Get down on your knees and pray. Pray. It's September 11th all over again, except that we didn't have the collapsing buildings.

That's right, the U.S. government [by moving to help insure millions more Americans] had unleashed a surprise terrorist attack against the defenseless civilian population. But no, Glenn Beck doesn't incite people. Why would anybody think that?

And why would anybody think there was a connection between Fox News' hate speech and the recent police blotter of violent and frightening political incidents:

Rep. Tom Perriello's, D-VA, brother's address was erroneously posted online by a Tea Party blogger who invited activists to descend on the house. A gas line outside the brother's house was cut.

Rep. Bart Stupak, D-MI, was the target of threatening faxes and phone calls, including death threats. Some of the faxes included "racial epithets used in reference to President Obama," according to CBS News.

FLYING BRICKS

A brick was thrown through the
See VIOLENCE Page 18

Today's Journalism Ranks As A Disaster

By David Sirota

No matter how much Pulitzer Prize triumphalism hides it, the fact remains that journalism these days is a disaster [Hate mongering Kathleen Parker, a winner? Arraaaag.]

Unfortunately, retrospection dominates the news industry's self-analysis. Like dazed tornado victims, most media experts focus on what happened and why, oh lord, why?

The queries are important, though just as critical are two prospective questions: [1] If, to butcher a Chinese aphorism, every crisis is an opportunity, then who is making an opportunity out of journalism's current crisis and [2] are those opportunity-maximizers actually parasites destroying journalism for the long haul?

The answer to the initial question is three groups, starting with the Access Traders. These are reporters like The New Yorker's Ryan Lizza, Newsweek's Jonathan Alter and NBC's Chuck Todd, who, while covering politics for major media, are also signing separate contracts to write books chronicling White House gossip.

Facing a crisis in audience share, these correspondents' employers encourage the double-dip opportunities, hoping book exposure will result in residual attention. But the simultaneity is problematic. As the Washington Post's Howard Kurtz notes, hard-hitting stories in these reporters' day jobs "might alienate potential [book] sources and flattering ones might loosen tongues."

EFFECT DELETERIOUS

The dynamic's deleterious effect on journalism is obvious.

"The oozing conflicts lead to things like a glowing New Yorker profile of [Obama aide] Rahm Emanuel followed by an even more one-sided love letter to [Obama aide] Larry Summers, both from Lizza," says Salon.com's Glenn Greenwald.

"It's what causes Alter to proclaim one day – when Obama favored it – that real health reform 'depends on whether Obama gets approval for a public option' only to turn around – once Obama said [the public option] was unnecessary – and proclaim that the left is foolishly obsessing on the unimportant public option.

"And it's what leads Todd, in the form of 'covering the White House' for NBC, to serve as an amplifying vessel and justifier for whatever the White House happens to be saying."

Add to this the Double Agents – those making opportunities out of journalism's revenue crisis. Knowing cash-strapped media outlets are providing platforms to corporate advocates rather than spending extra money to employ their



own independent voices, various chameleons at once posture as journalists and get paid as business spokespeople.

SERIOUS CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Richard Wolffe, for instance, has appeared on MSNBC as a supposedly objective pundit while also being employed by a business advocacy firm.

Likewise, Jeff Birnbaum heads a lobbying and PR company while writing a Washington Times column – and a recent one attacked Democrats for defying industries that pay his company.

Birnbaum, of course, was previously the Washington Post correspondent covering the lobbying industry, and so his career shift also puts him in the last group: the Former Watchdogs.

To understand why these turncoats so threaten journalism, consider not only Birnbaum, but also Stephen Labaton. This New York Times financial reporter just announced he is taking a job with Goldman Sachs – a move that makes you wonder if Labaton watered down his Times coverage in order to get his new gig.

THE DAMAGE IS DONE

As with similar revolving-door situations, it's a legitimate worry – after all, Labaton knew Goldman probably wouldn't hire a muckraker who had been aggressively exposing bank transgressions.

Then again, maybe Labaton did nothing wrong. Either way, though, the damage is done because the concern now can – and must – be aired, which itself helps destroy the idea that traditional news is impartial and trustworthy.

In aggregate, this all ends up answering the original query: Are many of today's opportunity-maximizers destroying journalism? Clearly, yes – and unless media sachems institute some basic ethics rules, the parasites within their ranks could end up making sure there's no journalism industry left to save.

– David Sirota is author of best-sellers *Hostile Takeover* and *The Uprising*

VIOLENCE

From Page 17

window of the Democratic Party office in Rochester, NY. The note attached read: "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice," roughly quoting 1964 Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater.

Rep. Anthony Weiner's office in Kew Gardens, NY, had to be evacuated after suspicious white powder was found in an envelope mailed to the office.

A thrown brick smashed a window

at Rep. Louise Slaughter's district office in Niagara Falls, NY.

Slaughter also received a message claiming that "snipers were being deployed to kill those members who voted yes for health care," according to Politico.

A tossed brick demolished a window at the Sedgwick County Democratic Party headquarters in Wichita, KS. Earlier in Oklahoma, bricks were thrown through the windows of the

Cleveland County Democratic headquarters in Norman.

There were confirmed accounts of Tea Party protesters hurling anti-gay slurs at Rep. Barney Frank, D-MA, on the eve of the health care vote.

"Vandals also smashed the front door and a window at Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' office in Tucson early Monday, hours after the Arizona Democrat voted for the health care reform package," reported the Kansas City

Star.

Fox News' response to the mayhem? "This happens all the time," shrugged paid contributor Stephen Hayes. His colleague Charles Krauthammer added, "I'm sure a lot of this is trumped up."

It's a chilling prospect, but one that seems more and more plausible: What if Fox News actually wants mob violence?

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OBAMACARE

From Page 5

an "undue hardship."

- Postpartum depression. In addressing another priority for women's groups, the bill singles out the problem of postpartum depression for expanded funding, worker training, public education and research. The National Institute of Mental Health is due to conduct a national longitudinal study of women with postpartum depression, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services must produce a study on the benefits of PPD screening.

- Tanning tax. Starting July 1 of this year, there will be a new 10% excise tax on indoor tanning services [in legislative speak, "a service employing any electronic product designed to incorporate [one] or more ultraviolet lamps and intended for the irradiation of an individual by ultraviolet radiation, with wavelengths in air between 200 and 400 nanometers, to induce skin tanning"]. Something called "phototherapy" is excluded.

- Adoption credit. Beginning with your 2010 taxes, the federal adoption credit goes up by \$1,000 to \$13,170 per child and now becomes refundable.

- Indian health. The bill incorporates aspects of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, a goal of organizations who point out American Indians have the worst health disparities of any minority group in the U.S., particularly dealing with suicide, alcoholism and tuberculosis. The law increases funding and support on tribal lands for behavioral health and substance abuse, health care worker recruitment and facilities construction.

- Background checks. The Secretary of Health and Human Services is tasked with developing a national system for conducting criminal background checks of prospective health care workers who would deal directly with patients in long-term care facilities or private homes. This is one of a suite of changes aimed at protecting seniors in nursing homes.

- Abstinence education. The bill restores federal funding for abstinence-only education, the sex-ed technique that urges students to wait until marriage [while eschewing talk of contraceptives]. Researchers dispute the effectiveness of the strategy, and it was getting the cold shoulder from the Obama Administration. The health reform bill, however, allocates \$250 million for such programs over the next five years.

Just So You Know ...

Dear Lord, in the past year you have taken away my favorite actor [Patrick Swayze], my favorite actress [Farah Fawcett], my favorite musician [Michael Jackson] and my favorite salesperson [Billy Mays]. Just wanted to let you know my favorite TV and radio personalities are Bill O'Reilly, Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Sarah Palin.

Wingnuts Besmirch Our Reputation

As A CEO, Would You Consider Oklahoma?

By Kenny Belford

Without a radical shift in attitude, and soon, Oklahoma is going to become doomed. We've elevated loons to key positions all across our state and we've given them power to influence and direct policies impacting all of us, with the apparent consensus of the population.

Every week seems to bring more news of quality jobs departing Oklahoma, and nothing is on the horizon to offset that news. Wonder why?

Imagine you're a CEO of a corporation looking to relocate, or expand operations, or a corporation attempting to make a decision on which locations to downsize or eliminate. As your staff performs the due diligence research they report back the following:

1. Both of Oklahoma's U.S. senators belong to a secret religious cult that teaches them they're above all normal societal constraints, because they're among "the chosen." Apparently their electorate doesn't support the concept of "all men are created equal," since both senators have exceptionally high approval ratings.

2. One of the senators is America's leading science denier.

'SENATOR BAG-MAN'

3. The other senator served the role as a pimp as he attempted to negotiate the fee for after the fact sex for one of his fellow cult members. He was first elected to the Senate campaigning on the perils of "rampant lesbianism in southeast Oklahoma public schools."

4. Recently one member of Oklahoma's congressional delegation stood on a Capitol balcony cheering on teabaggers as they spit on and yelled "n-----" at Black members of Congress attempting to enter the building. This member of congress is currently the leading Republican candidate for governor.

5. The state legislature is obsessed with guns. In recent months they've attempted to pass laws allowing college kids to bring guns with them to the classroom. They attempted to pass laws allowing citizens to strap on six-shooters [think of Gunsmoke] before heading out for a shopping excursion to Wal-Mart.

OBSESSED WITH HOMOSEXUALITY

6. Government officials in Oklahoma are obsessed with gays. One state legislator has claimed "gays are more of a threat to America than terrorists." Recently the state Legislature debated a proposed law that would make it a criminal offense for any member of Oklahoma law enforcement to cooperate with federal

authorities investigating a hate crime. That piece of legislation was authored after gays were added, giving them protection under existing federal law.

7. Under Republican control in the House and Senate, funds have been slashed for education and social programs. Oklahoma currently ranks at or near the bottom on most lists of quality of life measurements.

8. Although the portion of the Constitution referencing separation of church and state is centuries old established law of the land, Oklahoma elected officials repeatedly squander taxpayer money in futile attempts to justify and defend lawsuits over the erection of Ten Commandment monuments on government property.

STATE SOVEREIGNTY

9. Currently Oklahoma legislators are supporting a move by fellow teabaggers to "create a new volunteer militia to help defend against what they believe are improper federal infringements on state sovereignty."

State Sen. Randy Brogdon, a Republican candidate for governor who has appealed for Tea Party support, said supporters of a state militia have talked to him, and that he believes the citizen unit would be authorized under the Second Amendment to the Constitution.

The founding fathers "were not referring to a turkey shoot or a quail hunt. They really weren't even talking about us having the ability to protect ourselves against each other," Brogdon said. "The Second Amendment deals directly with the right of an individual to keep and bear arms to protect themselves from an overreaching federal government."

THESE ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

Another Republican lawmaker, state Rep. Charles Key, said he believes there's a good chance legislation for a state-authorized militia will be introduced next year.

Those are the priorities of Oklahoma that are frequently headlines in the news. If you were a CEO, does that sound like the kind of environment you'd be willing to stake tens of millions of dollars in investing in your company's future? Would your executives even consider accepting a relocation to an area like that?

For those who remember the comic strip "Pogo," a profound statement was once uttered that seems to sum it up: "We have met the enemy, and they is us."

- The author lives in Tulsa

MILITIA

From Page One

prevent any "unconstitutional law" from taking effect in Oklahoma, using any means necessary.

As one blogger noted, "There are arguments to be made as to whether the Second Amendment's intent was to protect the right to bear arms for hunting and recreation, or to repel foreign invasion."

There is no argument, historically, that the purpose of the Second Amendment was to keep the federal government in check.

Oklahoma [along with 49 other states] already has a state militia. It's called the National Guard. At the time the Second Amendment was written, there was no such organization.

There wasn't even supposed to be a standing army. Times and laws have changed to make such a "minute-man" style of army both unnecessary and unwise.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms,

which has taken any meaning out of the whole "well-regulated Militia" part of the Second Amendment. But this isn't an issue about whether individuals can possess firearms.

If the argument for an armed force protecting a state from an "overreaching federal government" sounds familiar, it should.

In 1957, the governor of the state of Arkansas ordered the National Guard [the state militia, remember] to prevent black students from attending a previously all-white high school.

Arkansas' governor at the time, Orval Faubus, believed the Supreme Court's decision requiring schools to be desegregated was an "overreaching federal government" intruding upon the rights of the state of Arkansas.

In 1962, then-governor George Wallace attempted to use the Alabama National Guard to prevent the integration of the University of Alabama.

Wallace believed that the federal court's decision that the state could

not prevent blacks from attending the school was the act of an "overreaching federal government" intruding upon the rights of the state of Alabama.

Because in 2014 people will face a tax penalty if they don't purchase health insurance, some want to mobilize private armies with the blessing of the Oklahoma Legislature?

On The Daily Show comedian Wyatt Cenac played a supporter of health-care reform and was asked his response to the violent and separatist language used by healthcare opponents. He said, "Bring it on, I mean, we've got guns, too."

Apparently no one told the Oklahoma Legislature that he was kidding.

Republican U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin, leading in polling for the GOP nomination for governor, quickly distanced herself from the armed militia talk.

Days earlier she had helped wave a Tea Party banner at the nation's Capitol. She explained that she only meant to deliver the message on the banner,

"Don't Tread On Me."

Both Brogdon and Fallin have been romancing the Tea Party, given its huge following in Oklahoma, reddest state in the Union.

State Republican Chairman Gary Jones said he was concerned that Tea Party activists were frustrated, pushing personal agendas.

He said Oklahomans are very conservative but the Tea Party folk risk alienating mainstream Republicans if they continue their rants.

Blasted by leaders of both political parties and other legislators, Brogdon later told the AP a militia could be an "auxiliary force" in times of emergency because the Oklahoma National Guard falls under federal control.

That's a far cry from his initial stance.

The late H.L. Mencken said it best: "There are some politicians who, if their constituents were cannibals, would promise them missionaries for dinner."

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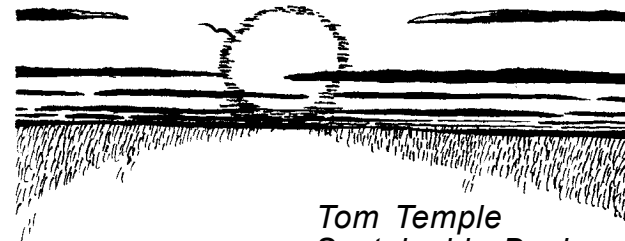
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