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## Frank Keating Is Back Drive By Politics

By Frosty Troy

Getting rid of Oklahoma's income tax is a beautiful theory, killed by a nasty ugly fact: How do you replace the enormous revenue loss?

Facts have never bothered Frank Keating, the former Republican governor who authored a recent anti-tax op-ed for the Daily Disappointment.

He neglected to mention the revenue loss but carried on at length about how badly the income tax was hurting Oklahoma's development.

He missed one of the multiple studies on why plants are located where they are. Chief among the reasons are good schools, good roads and easy access to the market being served.

He obviously cut class the day the economics professor taught that the income tax, when properly structured, is the fairest tax of them all – based on ability to pay. The worst is the sales tax, paid disproportionately by the rich, middle class and poor.

Keating, who served two terms as governor [1995-2003] immediately left Oklahoma for Washington as chief lobbyist for the insurance industry. Forbes said he is the highest paid lobbyist – \$1.2 million a year, plus benefits.

He's back in Oklahoma extolling the Republican mantra – cut taxes. Given that the average Oklahoma voter is one of the least informed in the nation, he's finding a ready audience.

Fact: The Tax Foundation, a pillar of conservatism, reported that last year Oklahoma was 50th in combined local, state and federal taxes.

Cut taxes? Oklahoma is 49th in what it spends on a student's public education, 48th in teacher salaries, 47th lowest in property taxes and fifth

in childhood poverty.

There is speculation that Keating misses being a big fish in a little pond and wants the Oklahoma limelight again, perhaps awaiting a U.S. Senate seat or some lesser office.

The Observer has covered nine governors and Keating is by far the worst. The lowest point in his administration was taking \$250,000 from a wealthy financier to use an experimental drug on Oklahoma's prison inmates.



– Steve Hill

He had hit rock bottom with that one when mutual fund pioneer billionaire Jack Dreyfus confirmed the prison inmate story. Keating had lied, saying it was a gift to his children. Dreyfus laughed at that.

Keating told a news conference that he had returned the money. When Oklahoman reporter Paul English asked to see a copy of the check, Keating grabbed his arm and shook him.

Two days later English was sacked. He went to work for the Tulsa World Capitol Bureau, making the Oklahoman pay dearly with scoop after scoop for the World.

Keating brought private prisons to Oklahoma via a friend he met while working in Washington as an assistant U.S. Attorney General.

Union-hating Keating traversed the state campaigning for Right to Work, claiming it would bring unparalleled prosperity to Oklahoma.

It had the reverse effect, eliminating

more than 20,000 high paying industrial jobs in Oklahoma and turning the state into a low wage call center. The state's largest employer today is Wal-Mart.

But never underestimate dramatic change. A Catholic altar boy furious about the siege at Waco bombed the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building.

The attack thrust Keating into the national media limelight. He made periodic stops at the scene of the bombing, but never offered to help the hundreds who were laboring to retrieve the bodies of the living and the dead.

Labor union members from across the metro stopped their jobs and pitched in at the bombing site.

Eventually the media from across the world was in Oklahoma City. Keating then launched a series of speeches across America and appeared regularly on national television.

The Observer files on the Keating Administration are littered with conflicts and Keating juvenile name-calling.

He even sued the Ethics Commission when it ruled that he couldn't use state facilities to run election campaigns. [He lost in district court.]

He was, and is, a fanatic, pure and simple. He sticks to his guns even when they aren't loaded.

Nationally syndicated columnist George Will said GOP kingmakers looked him over as a potential presidential candidate due to his national prominence. [They picked George W. Bush]

Will's column cited the case of Keating's speech to a high school in Duncan in which he chastised a pregnant girl as immoral, winning the hearts and minds of Oklahoma's extensive Christian Right.

He used a silver tongue when necessary. When the Republicans took a drubbing at the polls in the 1996 elections, Keating shifted gears, calling for bipartisanship.

Senate Leader Stratton Taylor hooted, saying, "Oklahoma needs a statesman, not a partisan attack dog we've seen. His penchant for name-calling

See KEATING Page 19

# Observations

## Robbing Schools

Don't kid yourself. The so-called scholarship bill signed by Gov. Brad Henry is the Republicans' last gasp at vouchers in order to send kids with public dollars to private and parochial schools.

HB 3393 would allow students with disabilities who have an individualized education program [IEP] to qualify for \$7,300 to attend any public or private school that meets the accreditation requirements of the State Board of Education.

Oklahoma already has one of the finest special education programs in the nation, pioneering in teachers receiving a special degree and extra funding.

Republicans who pushed the bill very cleverly named it after one of the governor's daughters. Blow in his ear and he will follow you anywhere.

The legislation was named the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program Act to honor the memory of the governor's daughter, who died of a rare neuromuscular disease as an infant.

Had the child lived, imagine how far \$7,300 a year would have taken her in special education.

This is a voucher scheme that will rob the public schools of vital funding – already ranked 49th in what is spent on a child's education.

If the state elects a Republican governor along with a Republican Legislature, you can bet vouchers will become the norm. Left behind will be children of poverty and minorities.

Florida already has 20,000 students receiving such vouchers despite a vastly underfunded public school system.

## It's Your Vote

As much as they may grumble, there is a legitimate reason why the Republicans have been labeled the "Party of No." The Oklahoma party's knee-jerk stance has been to oppose any legislation or policy involving so-

cial, economic or political progress. You name it, the Right has opposed it while pushing abortion bill after abortion bill.

Women's rights, labor organizing, the minimum wage, LGBT rights, welfare, immigrant rights, public education and reproductive rights have been kept on the back burner.

The hysterical rhetoric in opposition predicts that implementing any such policies would result in the end-of-family-free-enterprise-God-America on the one hand, and the imposition of atheism-socialism-Nazism on the other.

Republicans are obstructionist for one simple reason: it's a winning strategy. Opposing progressive policies allows the right to actualize the ideals that both motivate and define their base.

In Oklahoma, the media for the most part genuflect to the rightwing cant. Research an issue? Except for the Tulsa World and the Gazette, where is a reasoned article? A reasoned editorial?

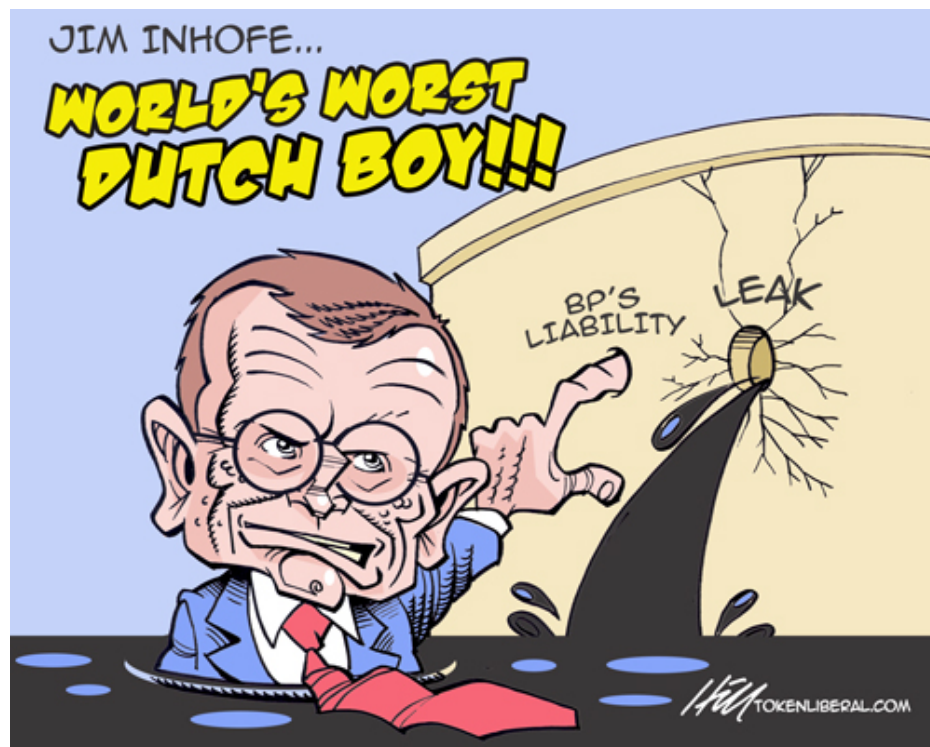
By demonizing and scapegoating politically marginal groups, the Tea Partiers are able to define "real Oklahomans," who are good, versus those defined as parasites, illegitimate and internal threats, who are evil. Oklahomans who are sick of it – including a handful of thinking Republicans – have a chance to do something about it at the ballot box. Let's hope it happens.

## Bye, Bye Rights

Americans just lost one of their most cherished rights as the result of a 5-4 opinion of today's pathetic U.S. Supreme Court.

The court ruled that criminal suspects must clearly state that they don't want to talk with police to exercise their Miranda rights. Silence during interrogation is not enough.

Criminal suspects may not invoke their right to remain silent by simply



– Steve Hill

remaining silent during a police interrogation.

The court ruled that a suspect in police custody must make a simple, unambiguous statement that he or she wants to remain silent or that he or she does not want to talk to the police.

"A suspect who has received and understood the Miranda warnings, and has not invoked his Miranda rights, waives the right to remain silent by making an uncoerced statement to the police," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion.

In a dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the ruling marked "a substantial retreat from the protection against compelled self-incrimination" dating from the Supreme Court's landmark 1966 opinion in *Miranda v. Arizona*.

"The court today creates an unworkable and conflicting set of presumptions that will undermine Miranda's goal of providing 'concrete constitutional guidelines for law enforcement agencies and courts to follow,'" Justice Sotomayor wrote.

Amen!

## Priorities

Across the U.S., poor communities are grossly under-served: education, nutrition, housing and health care. To a large extent, this explains the chasm in life expectancy between white people and so-called minorities.

How much worse does it get? A Brandeis University study recently underscored the growing wealth divide. According to the Federal Reserve, for every dollar of wealth owned by a white family, a black or Latino family owns just 16 cents.

And as this – the great marginalization of America – marches on Democrats, including the President, wrestle with Republicans for a smidgeon of reform.

Is it anywhere close to enough? For all the talk of Wall Street reform, and new consumer protections, and talk of alternative energy policy, the fact remains that for most people, America is a sinking ship. And minority communities are the first to be thrown over the side.

Another Oklahoman has been killed in Afghanistan – billions for war but no help for those at home in real need. More than 15 million are

now unemployed thanks to George W. Bush's reckless politics.

Where are the lifeboats?

## Gone

State term limits took their toll this year – six in the Senate and four in the House. The Senate is losing four Democrats and two Republicans. The House is losing three Republicans and one Democrat.

Johnnie Crutchfield, D-Ardmore, will be sorely missed. Kenneth Corn, D-Poteau, is running for lieutenant governor, where he won't have to be wishy-washy.

Every Oklahoman ought to be relieved to see Senate Leader Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, gone. He's one of the worst Republicans to hit the Legislature in half a century.

The loss of Joe Sweeden, D-Pawhuska, is the loss of a genuine Democrat, while the loss of Mike Johnson, R-Kingfisher, robs the Senate of its top Republican and an all-around good guy.

Nobody will miss House Speaker Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, or Tad Jones, R-Claremore. John Wright, R-Broken Arrow, actually read the bills. The real House loss is Bill Nations, D-Norman, a superb legislator.

We were surprised by the announcement by Sen. Debbie Leftwich, D-OKC, that she would not seek another term. Then all hell broke loose.

Gone is Sen. Randy Brogdon, R-Owasso, running for governor against the red dress in a smile, U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin, a wannabe Tea Party darling.

## Turgid Twins

Sen. James Inhofe, Republican of Oklahoma, is one of five GOP members of Congress using the war in Iraq as an excuse to junket.

Inhofe & Co. parked their wives in Dubai, visiting for about an hour with troops in the Kurdish region, then back to Dubai for a lavish couples' holiday on American taxpayers.

Inhofe is one of the worst junketeers in Congress, often representing The Family, a cult to which he belongs, along with Oklahoma U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn.

They both pose as "conservatives" but when it comes to wasting money, they have few peers.

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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

It's official. America's national debt has hit \$13 trillion – \$42,000 for every man, woman and child. Quit blaming Obama – he inherited a nightmare economy.

**Laurel:** To the State Democratic Party for finally picking up on former Gov. David Walters' excellent proposal to move the party forward. Campaign In A Box is a must course for any Democratic candidate this year.

We mourn the passing of Hannah Atkins, first black woman elected to the Oklahoma House – one of her many remarkable achievements.

**Dart:** To Rep. John Sullivan, R-Tulsa, only member of the House congressional delegation to vote against getting rid of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell ban. It passed 234 to 194.

Good news for a change. The State Health Department reports that risky behaviors by Oklahoma youth are decreasing in key areas – cigarette smoking, meth and marijuana use.

**Laurel:** To OU Assistant Professor Yuguang Wang, winner of NASA's New Investigator Award for his research. He also will launch a high school course in remote sensing and numerical weather forecasting.

A reader asked us the other day why we spend so much ink on education. Our reply: Forget about banking, oil, insurance and other issues cluttering up the Legislature – OUR future is in the public school classrooms where we rank a dismal 49th in what we spend on a student's education.

**Dart:** To Oklahoma colleges and universities spending thousands on self-promoting ads at a time when the mentally ill are going untreated. Always a GOP darling, they got away with a 1.9% budget cut.

While most media were sitting on their backsides, covering such non-news stories as car wrecks, OKC Fox 25 did a series on two DHS child abuse cases that led to the retirement of an incompetent social worker.

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma County DA David Prater, opening a probe of legislators suspected of selling a job. When the election is over, Prater is an honest prosecutor – nothing more, nothing less.

A new law creates a re-entry and diversion pilot program to allow non-violent offender parents to receive community based services in order to keep families together. Rep. Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, was the author. Bravo!

**Dart:** To the Broken Arrow School Board, looking for ways to cut millions in district spending, yet finds enough to give Superintendent Gary Gerber a \$14,000 bonus.

You don't have to guess why the Daily Disappointment is hammering Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for calling on Congress to repeal the GOP's trillion dollar tax cut for American's wealthiest 2%. They're among the undeserving fat cats.

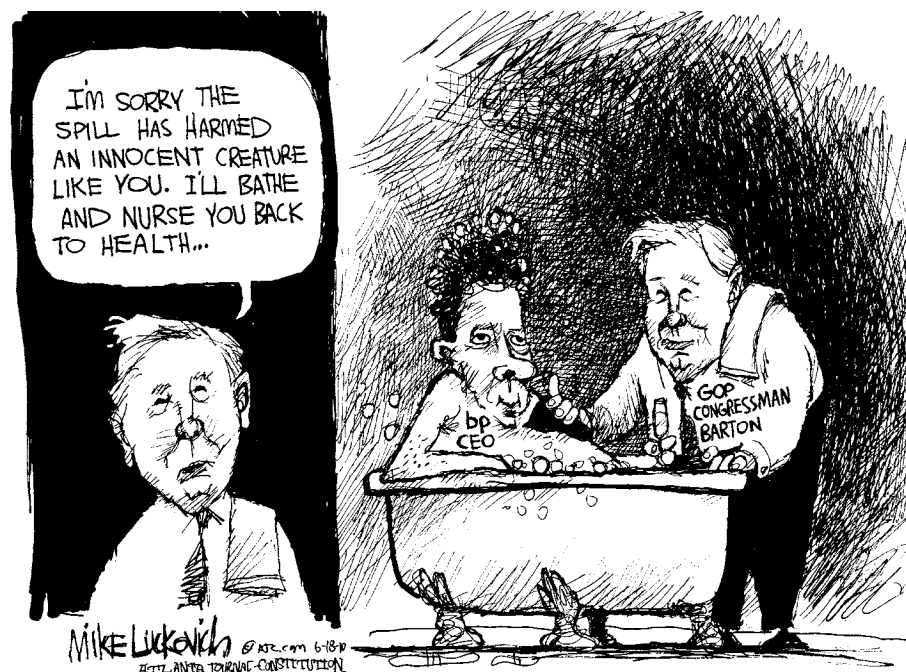
**Laurel:** To 59% of Americans favoring the environment over energy development, finally tuning in on the limitless greed of the big oil and gas industry. [USA Today Poll]

The latest Gallup Poll shows a decided shift on abortion – 47% to 45%. But a majority wants to keep it legal but rare.

**Dart:** To gubernatorial candidate Randy Brogdon, telling a forum that he favors curtailing or eliminating state support for public schools. That would eliminate two-thirds of funding – a fact he didn't mention, or how to replace the funding.

Now that's she's running for governor, Republican U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin is for trimming spending in Washington – all of which she voted for when she sat in George W. Bush's lap.

**Laurel:** To The New Republic Online, first to say the U.S. Supreme Court has become a joke – badly divided and issuing ignorant opinions, such as weakening Miranda rights.



So ex-OU Coach Barry Switzer is selling access to state officials – what else is new? This has been routine since Republicans took control of the State House, then the Senate.

**Dart:** To GOP U.S. Reps. Tom Cole, Mary Fallin, Frank Lucas and John Sullivan, voting against the bill to promote science technology, engineering and math. Democrat Dan Boren was a no-show. The bill passed 262 to 150.

More than 31 million American licensed drivers are 65 or older, third largest age group killed in fatal accidents. In Oklahoma, 13% of fatal accidents involved those 65 and older.

**Laurel:** To Morgan Elizabeth Woolard, 24, Miss Oklahoma and first runner-up for Miss USA. She's an OSU student majoring in Sports Media.

In the past decade 83% of American population growth was nonwhite. Nearly one in four Americans under 18 has at least one immigrant parent. It's driving the Tea Partiers crazy!

**Dart:** To the GOP legislative leadership for putting out a press pamphlet in which they claim public education was cut only 2.9%. State Superintendent Sandy Garrett said it's closer to a devastating 8.9%.

Remember how the senior nutrition programs were going to be saved by legislative Democrats holding out for \$5 million? In fact, it will be a miracle if that amounts covers it. Democrats are terrible at bargaining.

**Laurel:** To 20 state organizations that want Oklahoma included in the Complete College America, enabling the state to increase its number of college graduates. Only 30% of Oklahomans have a college degree.

It is ironic to hear GOP U.S. Rep. Tom Cole's re-election gibberish about cutting federal spending. Where was he when his pal George W. Bush was spending the country into bankruptcy after inheriting a surplus from Bill Clinton?

**Dart:** To Office Juvenile Affairs board for allowing two juvenile detention centers to sink into pest holes. Directors of both have been replaced – not a moment too soon, thanks to monitoring by the Commission on Children and Youth.

If there were such as thing as political malpractice, the Republican legislative leadership would be on trial for gross underfunding for Oklahoma's mentally ill. Privatization is a dodge, not an answer.

**Laurel:** To 585 Oklahomans willing to campaign for office this year. It's easy to criticize but it's a tough job and we applaud people of both parties.

One item to keep a close eye on is the law that permits teaching the Bible as history in public school classrooms. It's a worthy goal if teachers can resist the temptation to proselytize.

**Dart:** To the federal government for spending \$3 for every \$2 it collects, borrowing the rest from future generations. If the Democratic majority in Congress had an ounce of grit they would kill the Bush trillion-dollar tax cuts for the super rich.

It isn't that schools don't teach civics, it's one of those subjects mentally shelved after the report card comes out. Latest example: Only 36% of Americans can name one U.S. Supreme Court member. [Findlaw.com Poll]

**Laurel:** To Wanda Jo Peltier, D-OKC, filing against Rep. Mike Christian, R-OKC, a walking joke of a legislator. Party politics has less to do with it than decent representation.

Surprise! Surprise! Oklahoma City ranks dead last nationally in physical fitness, down from 45th last year. In OKC obesity is a way of life. [American College of Sports Medicine survey]

**Dart:** To Gov. Brad Henry for signing that Republican so-called scholarship bill cleverly named for one of his daughters. It's nothing more than a voucher program for private and parochial schools.

Twenty-eight percent of the 582,051 Oklahomans receiving food stamps are children.

**Laurel:** To Mother Jones Magazine for outing Rush Limbaugh and Sarah Palin for claiming ObamaCare would bankrupt America. To the contrary, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said it will reduce the federal deficit by \$143 billion.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

It has been over three weeks since the House and Senate leaders and governor announced the proposed 2011 budget for the state of Oklahoma. The state agencies were told that their budgets would have very moderate decreases compared to the 2010 budget. Everyone was busy feeling so good about this that they seemed to have ignored the facts!!

I became concerned when I requested an Education, Appropriations and Budget meeting the day after we got the budget to review the line items on the State Department of Education budget. I was told that this would not occur and would not be necessary. That is when I became suspicious and looked at the figures to find that the budget was stated in a "base line" rather than "budget to budget" analysis. This meant that the Education budget would be a 9% cut rather than a 2.9% cut. I immediately sent out an e-mail alert to all of the schools in District 15 explaining this "slick" manipulation of the facts.

Now that is old news!! Wrong! In the Tulsa World recently, the Tulsa Superintendent of Schools, Keith Ballard, shockingly declared, concerning his budget: "That misrepresented what actually happened this year. The cut should never have been reported as 2.9%." This article also reported that Jenks Public School leaders earlier stated, "They [the Legislature] just approved a \$6.5 billion budget. That's fiction. That is a fiction that all school districts will have to deal with."

Our State Superintendent, Sandy Garrett, and OSDE Director of Finance stated almost two weeks after the budget was announced that it was not what it was being sold as to the state's schools. My question remains, why did it take our state education leaders and a superintendent of the largest school district so long to figure that out? Therefore, I would like to have the following question posed to all of the candidates for State Superintendent of Schools: "Will you be willing to document that you have taken at least four high school math classes so that you will know that a 9% cut in the budget is not a 2.9% cut?"

Ed Cannaday  
Porum

*Editor's Note: Cannaday is a Democrat representing House District 15.*

Editor, The Observer:

The event of the Gulf disaster brings to mind another energy related

debacle which personally offends me greatly because of this country's cowardly acceptance of it.

I speak of Citgo's owner, Venezuela, and the billions of dollars that flow from the United States every year to that country and Hugo Chavez. The United States allows Citgo to operate here when Hugo Chavez took over the assets of Conoco, Chevron, Exxon, etc., in Venezuela. That, in addition to disparaging the United States and our President.

Network TV commercials promoting Citgo repulse me as do the leaders of this country who have long allowed such a blatant situation to exist.

Homer H. Hulme  
Chickasha

Editor, The Observer:

The column by Joe Conason [6.10.10] pretends to take Israel from victim to villain. The seven million Israelis live in a region of the world surrounded by 600 million hostile neighbors. Since its establishment in 1947, Israel's neighbors have attacked Israel five times with formal wars, and most recently with thousands of rockets raining down on the north of Israel from Iran's and Syria's Hizbullah client-state of Lebanon, and thousands more on Israel's southern border shot from Iran's Hamas client-state of Gaza. In each instance, Israel has defended itself because there is no other place to go.

Now as Israel continues to defend itself against the rearming of Hamas in Gaza by screening materials destined to cross the border, some like Mr. Conason call that a provocation and imply it's an illegal act. As to the recent attempts to break the blockade, Israel offered the Turkish ship a port in Israel where its cargo could be unloaded and inspected, and anything that was humanitarian aid shipped overland to Gaza. That offer was declined because the leader of the flotilla stated that their intention was to break the blockade, which sadly ended in violence and death.

To Mr. Conason's question, "what is the their [Israel's] strategy?" I would reply that the strategy is simply to survive. The seven million Israelis have no other place to go except for Hamas and Hizbullah's stated goals of pushing Israel into the sea. Or, as the terrorists' patron-state Iran calls for the complete destruction of Jewish state.

And that leads us to the biggest threat of all to Israel and ultimately the entire world - that being the de-



velopment of nuclear weapons by Iran. Mr. Conason suggests the best course for Israel on this matter is to build regional alliances and security arrangements. A first step toward that goal will come the day these 600 million neighbors cease terror attacks and adopt a real commitment to the recognition of Israel's right to exist within safe and secure borders.

Michael Barlow  
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

The June 10 Observerscope reported: "Single motherhood soared to 41% of all births last year, testing the limit of five years maximum on welfare and unemployment capped at 99 weeks."

I heard the same figure quoted on the radio on June 9.

Perhaps the conservatives are looking at the wrong sex for their vengeance, punishing the wrong sex. Why not try a program of castration for the first offense. My guess is the problem would go away!

Bill Sitler  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I was at the OKC City Council meeting [6.15.10] when Mayor Mick Cornett got up and walked out and stayed gone for about an hour, until all the people with disabilities had spoken, begging the city not to cut off their bus services.

The council voted to maintain most of the bus services, but at a much higher cost. Right now, a person can ride the bus for \$1.25 and transfers are free. Transfers are very important because the number of bus-lines in OKC is so limited. With the price hike, the first fare will be \$1.50 and if you have to transfer, you pay \$1.50 again. So most riders will pay \$3.00 to get where they are going.

Many of the people who ride the bus are our most vulnerable citizens who can't afford to pay \$6.00 a day to go to work and back.

Obama and Congress sent our city \$10 million for transit this year. You'd think they could maintain the same level of service they had last year. It looks to me like they are trying to keep the bus ridership as low as possible. I once heard that, because our bus service was so bad, it was heavily subsidized by the federal government. Maybe that is part of the reason. Also, they want to force everyone to drive a car. OKC spends \$7 million a year

on downtown parking. Of course you know the air pollution down there is terrible, but they don't care. They have just sold two of their parking lots and are talking about building two more. So that will further increase the number of parking spaces downtown and the air pollution.

Fannie Bates  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

According to a recently released study by the nonpartisan, nonprofit, independent think tank U.S. Strategic Perspective Institute, the obvious truth is "that America's 13 million-plus illegal immigrants are here to stay." Why? Simple math. First, it's logistically impossible to gather 13 million people - the population of Los Angeles and New York City combined or Illinois alone - in one place to house and feed while arranging deportation.

If such an exodus could be organized, according to the study, it would require "16,666 buses, more than 13 billion gallons of fuel and about 48 million pounds of food [around 195 million meals] simply to transport them to the nearest border."

That solution, the Institute suggests, will not - cannot - ever be implemented. As such, "it's probably time to consider how to integrate . . . this population into mainstream America."

One benefit of this idea is that "13 million new taxpayers could net America more than \$50 billion a year in tax revenues." In addition, one logical way to deal with the crisis of funding Social Security and Medicare is to have more workers per retiree, and the simplest way to do that is to integrate these young immigrants into mainstream America.

Are you and politicians listening?  
Frank P. Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

## Frosty Troy's Who Killed Free Enterprise?

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

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

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## Frosty Troy's Notebook

# Top Governors



**FROSTY TROY**  
Founding Editor

I was chosen State Capitol Correspondent by the Tulsa Tribune in 1960, lucky to cover one of the most turbulent and progressive periods in Oklahoma history.

I have covered nine governors and I admired all of them with one exception, that horse's ass Frank Keating, who was anti-public education, madly in love with the country club set and self-proclaimed Right to Work champion.

I am frequently asked who my favorite governors were and I don't hesitate. First is Republican Henry Bellmon, second is Democrat Howard Edmondson.

Both were enormously popular and were willing to spend their popularity making major – sometimes painful – changes in state government.

That no longer exists at the State Capitol – a lackluster governor and a Republican Legislature bent on crippling public education, ignor-

ing poor children and the mentally ill.

The average Republican legislator had the Tea Party mentality long before the movement emerged in Oklahoma and across the nation.

Fiery, redheaded J. Howard Edmondson was mid-term when I arrived in 1960. Wow! He unsuccessfully took on crooked county commissioners, but it wasn't until 1981 that the FBI did what the Legislature wasn't willing to do.

The FBI statewide county commissioner indictments still holds the national record as the most felony convictions stemming from a single scandal.

Edmondson waged a fierce legislative battle to produce the Merit System under which state employees had to be qualified and no longer had to be sponsored by a legislator or other VIP.

The Merit System also ended kickbacks in state offices. Reporter Hugh Hall of the Oklahoma City Times and I broke the story about the State Auditor requiring employees to kick back 15% of their salary. He called it a "flower fund."

A gigantic taxpayer savings was made when Edmondson pushed through Central Purchasing, requiring sealed competitive bidding on all state purchases.

Unfortunately he had to exempt higher education to win passage. Today tens of millions of taxpayers dollars are wasted by higher education's good ol' boy system of picking contractors.

He was successful in reducing Oklahoma's lengthy ballot – even electing mine inspectors. Today's Republican Legislature wants to lengthen the ballot – at least nine questions on the Nov. 2 ballot.

He is best remembered for eliminating prohibition. Oklahoma as a "dry state" was a joke, with hundreds of bootleggers across the state – some home-delivered! You could order a cocktail at most country clubs.

I was assigned by the Tulsa Tribune to travel with a Billings wheat farmer, Henry Bellmon, a really nice country guy but given little chance of becoming Oklahoma's first Republican governor.

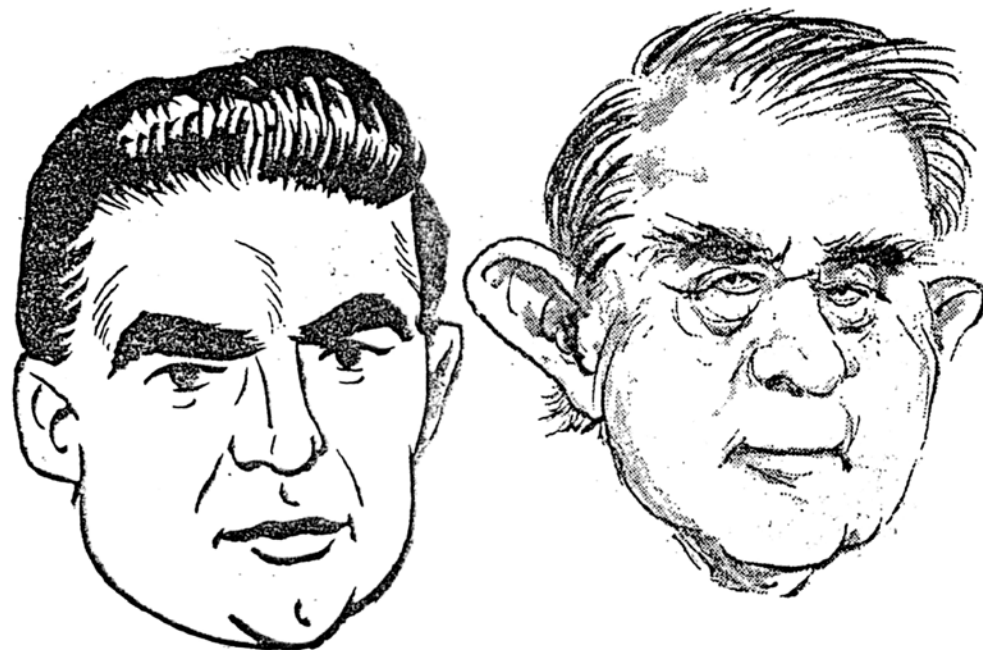
Because my newspaper was solidly Republican, I had covered Bellmon's revival of the moribund Republican Party. He was tireless as state chairman and that eventually paid off.

He surprised most voters when he promised to continue Edmondson's reforms. The Baptist anti-booze crowd loved his refusal to serve liquor at the Governor's Mansion or any state affairs. He was dubbed "Buttermilk Bellmon."

After his upset election, his first term was lackluster, battling Democratic majorities in both houses of the Legislature.

Because the Tribune had no Sunday paper, I had to work Saturdays. I kept the pressroom door closed because tourists would bother me.

Imagine my surprise when there was a pounding on the door. I opened it and



Gov. Bellmon handed me a handwritten "press release." He walked off before I could question him.

It was his pledge to address the plight of the mentally ill. I had an exclusive page one story! The Legislature subsequently responded favorably – thanks in large part due to Democratic Speaker J.D. McCarty, a Bellmon nemesis.

His popularity with Oklahomans continued to grow and he subsequently won two terms in the U.S. Senate. He was named one of the Top Ten Senators by Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

While he was in Washington, The Tribune turned me loose and I did a long series of stories on the tragic condition of most public schools.

He and his wife Shirley weren't happy in Washington and they returned to Oklahoma [carting their possessions home in a truck] and he announced for governor again.

In his first term he had campaigned against Welfare Director Lloyd Rader, calling him a dictator. Surprisingly, they ended up as fast friends.

He singled out the "rural old guard" for its chronic corruption – corruption that had been slowed by Edmondson's reforms. Democrats retaliated by ditching Bellmon's legislative agenda.

He told me prior to his formal announcement that he was going to run again. I kiddingly said, "Why? You were terrible the first time."

He laughed.

His second term as governor was dedicated to reforming public schools, creating Task Force 2000, made up of leaders from all walks of life, including business and labor.

The result was House Bill 1017 and it included a major tax hike. He was unable to win over most Republican legislators so he romanced the Democrats.

When the necessary majority balked at passing 1017, he threatened to call them back in yet another special session.

Finally, on a chilly, rainy day as hundreds of teachers and supporters marched around the State Capitol, it was passed by one vote. He handed me one of the pens at the Blue Room signing ceremony, turning my face red.

The celebration soon ended when the anti-tax Daily Oklahoman publisher Eddie Gaylord led a campaign to put 1017 funding on the ballot. The campaign was one of the most virulent on record, but the good people of Oklahoma prevailed.

Eddie Gaylord then spearheaded the successful drive for State Question 640 which now prohibits a tax hike without a three-fourths vote. In other words, never.

Bellmon lived to see much of the Edmondson and Bellmon reforms bite the dust as Republicans took over the House. When they captured the Senate, all was lost.

See NOTEBOOK Page 19

## Why The Observer?

It is a paradox of our times: How can it be that we have access to more information about our government and politics than ever before – but we understand less?

There is 24-hour cable television news. Talk radio and TV pundits. Add the blogosphere. Yet some Oklahomans cannot identify their member of Congress, much less their local representatives.

The reality is, Oklahoma's mainstream media are failing – not because they don't try but because newspapers are cutting way back on staff and some papers have even folded.

Want evidence? Not one commercial television station assigns a fulltime reporter to cover state government and the Capitol. Only the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority is there fulltime.

May we suggest an antidote if you are reading The Observer for the first time? For four-plus decades The Observer has unflinchingly spoken truth to power, shining the spotlight on critical issues in-depth, following important trends that the state's media routinely ignore.

The Observer is smart, insightful and contextual, providing the kind of information necessary for Oklahomans to be good citizens and even better stewards of our great state.

Where else but The Observer can you find complete and continuing covering of the poor, the mentally ill and others in crisis? [What do you unto the least of my brothers ...]

Where else can you find complete and unvarnished inside stories about our governor, legislative leaders and lobby politics?

When Republicans took over and promised to pass "education first" only The Observer held them accountable because they never did.

When they promised regional average teacher pay and didn't deliver, we nailed them for you.

As the late great Gov. Henry Bellmon said, after the election, we're not Republicans or Democrats – we're Oklahomans and Americans and should be fighting to make this a better place for oncoming generations.

In short, The Observer is an essential resource for today's Oklahomans of all political stripes.

We're unremitting in fighting for decent public education and a return to helping the poor and the mentally ill. [We take no joy in the fact that the Oklahoma County jail is the state's largest mental institution – 271 patients there.]

For in-depth analysis, critical thinking and a willingness to open up for other ideas, there is no substitute for The Oklahoma Observer.

# Nothing Like Scandal To Spice Up Elections



ARNOLD HAMILTON  
Editor

Remember when Republicans were the minority party in the state Legislature? Remember how they demonized Gene Stipe, broad-brushing Democrats as the party of backroom, good-old-boy dealing? Remember how they vowed to end corruption if given control? Remember how they promised transparency?

Fast forward six years: A GOP House Speaker is forced to give up the gavel amidst tax problems and an ethics cloud. The Senate president pro tem's political career is short-circuited by tax woes. The Republican powers-that-be routinely deep-six serious efforts at ethics reform and shining light on the legislative process itself.

And now, at least three lawmakers are targets of a multi-county grand jury set to investigate charges of public corruption, stemming from the alleged misuse of drug enforcement agency money.

Six measly years of GOP control in the state House and two in the state Senate – the blink of an eye, politically – and Republicans who promised better, much better, are churning out scandals at an embarrassing rate.

It isn't as if the Neanderthal majority hadn't already shamed Oklahoma enough, both nationally and internationally, during this year's session – rolling back reproductive rights to the dark ages, ranting about the need for an armed state militia to protect against the federal government and lashing out against Islam or immigrants.

Now, someone – the grand jury will have to determine who – sneaked a last-minute "woolly booger" into a bill aimed at creating an \$80,000 a year position in the state medical examiner's office to help coordinate the agency's less-than-15-mile move from Oklahoma City to Edmond.

There's nothing necessarily illegal about that, except ... The Oklahoma County district attorney has reason to believe Republicans conspired to establish the high-paying, pension-enhancing job for a Democratic senator in return for her agreeing not to seek re-election – thus creating an open seat that Republicans would be well positioned to win.

Gee, it seems only yesterday that Republicans across the country were excoriating the Obama Administration for employment overtures to Rep. Joe Sestak and Andrew Romanoff in ham-handed efforts to keep them from challenging incumbent Democratic U.S. senators in Pennsylvania and Colorado, respectively.

What makes the Oklahoma case even more egregious is that lawmakers are alleged to have played corrupt, power politics with a vital state agency already reeling from its share of mismanagement and scandal.

The medical examiner's office serves a vital role in Oklahoma's criminal justice system – as an independent, science-based source of facts that help determine guilt or innocence, especially in murder and manslaughter cases, and provide victims' families the truth about what really happened to their loved ones.

In recent years, though, state lawmakers have let the agency down, failing to provide the funding necessary to keep it cutting edge. And the agency's leadership has let the people of Oklahoma down, its well-documented turmoil ranging from sexual harassment of workers to questionable forensics, sloppy record-keeping to mishandling of evidence.

"I told [the agency's spokeswoman] that if it weren't for bad luck, they wouldn't have any luck at all," says retiring Democratic Rep. Lucky Lamons, who worked tirelessly to solve problems in the medical examiner's office.

Lawmakers, of course, insist they took important steps this session to clean up the mess, paving the way, for example, for the medical examiner's office to escape its antiquated facilities near the Capitol and relocate to Edmond, near the University of Central Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation's swank new digs.

But news that Oklahoma County DA David Prater planned to take allegations about the proposed transition coordinator's job to the multi-county grand jury, convening in July, prompted Gov. Brad Henry to veto the legislation, even though, as he noted, it included "many important reforms and efficiencies" designed to get the medical examiner's office back on track.

Since they gained control, Republican lawmakers have a track record of meddling in state agencies, making things worse. An obvious example is the state Ethics Commission, the constitutionally-mandated watchdog that's supposed to ensure candidates, their financial supporters and lobbyists play by the rules.

Legislative leaders have worked overtime to muzzle the watchdog, not only starving it financially, but also brow-beating its executive director in public and threatening – in a childish fit of pique – to even tinker with its name [of course, the Legislature has no authority to do so since it is a constitutionally-mandated agency approved by the voters].

But the Oklahoma County prosecutor's suspicions about how and why lawmakers tried to create a transition coordinator in the medical examiner's office are totally different. Prater has confirmed publicly that Republican Reps. Randy Terrill of Moore and Mike Christian of OKC and Democratic Sen. Debbe Leftwich of OKC are in the investigative crosshairs.

The goal allegedly was to persuade Leftwich to not seek re-election, creating an opening for Christian. On the session's final day, Leftwich announced she would not run again. Almost immediately, Christian declared he would seek her seat. When the district attorney confirmed he had been presented troubling evidence about the matter, Christian changed his mind and filed for re-election to his House seat. Terrill, Christian and Leftwich all have denied any wrongdoing.

[For the record, Leftwich confided to friends months before session's end that she would not be seeking re-election to the Senate seat she has held since 2004, when she succeeded her late husband, Keith.]

Not surprisingly, the news also sparked considerable speculation that other lawmakers – including higher-ups in both the Senate and House – could be implicated in the scheme aimed at bolstering the GOP's 26-22 Senate majority.

No one knows how this will play out, of course. But there is one thing you should know before the grand jury convenes: Prater is widely regarded in central Oklahoma as a straight-shooter, a scrupulously careful and fair prosecutor who doesn't over-reach.

Want to know how highly regarded he is in Oklahoma County? He didn't even draw an opponent this year. Yes, he's a Democrat, but he's never displayed any penchant for partisan prosecutions or political witch-hunts.

That should be heartening for Oklahoma's taxpayers or anyone who cares about honest, good government. Political investigations can be explosive any time, but especially during election years.

Terrill and Christian both drew multiple opponents. Perhaps they would have anyway. Both may survive politically, but in a year of widespread anti-incumbency fervor, nothing can produce defeat like scandal.

Could enough voters lose faith with House Republicans to propel Democrats to victory in those south OKC districts – and elsewhere? It's way too early to tell. Let's see what the headlines say as the real dog days of summer unfold.

This much is certain: Republicans now control the Legislature with an iron fist. They cannot attempt to sidestep their promises of honest, clean, ethical government by claiming both parties do "it" – whatever "it" is.

The dirt on their hands is of their own digging.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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# ALEC Behind Opt-Out Of Obama Health Law

The push behind the Legislature's attempt to opt out of ObamaCare came from the far rightwing American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC].

The authors of SJR 59, Sen. Dan Newberry and Rep. Mike Thompson, claimed a constitutional amendment is needed in addition to the recently passed HJR 1054, a statutory change.

"The statutory measure will ensure that we have something on the books immediately, but Oklahomans want our Constitution to be clear on the matter as well," said Thompson, an OKC Republican who no doubt hopes it will bolster his bid for the 5th Congressional District seat.

"Putting it in the voters' hands ensures that an activist liberal judge cannot strike down the legislation, which is something a statutory change could be vulnerable to."

## PRESERVING THE STATUS QUO

"Our legislation allows Oklahomans to vote to preserve the system we have now, one with a close, functional relationship between doctors and their patients instead of one dictated by Washington bureaucrats," said Newberry, R-Tulsa.

"Nationally, a majority of Americans oppose the federal law and 42 other states have filed similar legislation."

Preserve what, Sen. Newberry? Oklahoma has more than 635,000 citizens with no health care at all and the Legislature was too busy cutting taxes rather than helping the poor and near poor.

Ironically, a Pew study showed that when it is explained in detail, an overwhelming majority of Americans favor ObamaCare.

Constitutional scholars think the rightwing "opt out" campaign is mostly hot air. Eventually the U.S. Supreme Court will have the last word.

SJR 59 was based on ALEC's model Freedom of Choice in Health Care Act. The measure has already been enacted in statute form by the Virginia, Idaho, and Arizona legislatures, and constitutional amendments will appear on the Arizona and Florida ballots.

Statutory measures have also passed one chamber in Missouri and Tennessee, and active citizen initiatives are underway in Colorado, Michigan, and Mississippi.

## STRONGEST PROTECTION

"ALEC believes that a constitutional amendment provides Oklahomans with the strongest protection of their individual rights," Thompson said.

"A key argument in the states' constitutional challenge of ObamaCare will be that states have the authority to protect the liberty of their citizens. Many state constitutions already provide citizens with greater protection of individual rights."

SJR 59 would ensure that the protection of health freedom is enshrined in the Oklahoma Constitution, which is the organic law of the state and reflects the most fundamental values shared by its citizens.



"State constitutions were intended to be the first line of defense against federal overreach," said Thompson, echoing the rhetoric of the conspiracy-obsessed Tenthers fringe.

"The passage of House Joint Resolution 1054 and the ballot placement of Senate Joint Resolution 59 will fully shield Oklahoma from a federal takeover of our healthcare system."

Don't bet on it.

# Sardis Deal Makes Little Dixie Fightin' Mad

By Bob Jackman

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board emergency meeting agenda: Vote to accept or reject Oklahoma City's offer to buy 87% of water storage rights at Sardis Lake. It was approved in what was an obviously predetermined, done-deal.

Gov. Brad Henry delivered on his promises to Oklahoma City to help make them "Water Masters of Oklahoma." Henry did not attend the meeting but the OWRB director acted like he was.

OWRB tried to spin it like it's only about Sardis Lake water storage rights, not about the lake's water rights allocations! Oh, really: A lake's storage rights and its water allocations are welded together like Siamese's twins joined at the hip – they always go in lock step together.

Three of the five senators honored by The Oklahoma Observer as the 2010 session's best – Jerry Ellis, Jim Wilson and Jay Paul Gumm – were there, plus from rural districts Reps. Brian Renegar, Paul Roan, R.C. Pruett, Dennis Bailey, and Ed Cannaday.

## WHAT TRANSPARENCY?

They spoke with reason and passion to the board in opposition to granting Sardis storage rights to Oklahoma City; against granting without transparency and any open negotiations with other bidders invited.

Chief Gregory Pyle of Choctaw Nation and Chairperson Brenda Edwards of Caddo Nation were present. Pyle, in his gentle, statesman's manner, voiced opposition and made an offer from Choctaws to match or better OKC's offer. Sen. Wilson offered a touching story, describing the transfer of Sardis to OKC as a regional rape, plundering the poor – but it had already been decided before the meeting.

The meeting room had a standing room crowd – the majority from southeastern Oklahoma. Many drove there from Little Dixie after given short notice of the meeting. To make the 9:30 a.m. meeting in time to get a seat, most left the house at 5 a.m. for long drives to Oklahoma City. Then long silent angry drives back to feed cattle, get some pasture mowing and spraying done before dark.

This may have been the largest united gathering ever of elected Oklahoma state officials with regional Tribal elected leaders together protesting against the State of Oklahoma.

Little Dixie woke up from its long slumber, fighting mad over its threatened water rights.

## OKC'S ARROGANCE, GREED

Little Dixie, southeastern Oklahoma's forgotten, sad pocket of poverty now has a group of outstanding independent-minded state politicians actually fighting for their people and speaking up for their best interests, as opposed to the Gene Stipe era when all ran to him for guidance!

Oklahoma City, by its arrogance and greed, has made a major mistake. The OKC city manager angered Sen. Ellis and Chief Pyle and lots of others. They have retained former Oklahoma Attorney General Larry Derryberry and others to mount a legal challenge against the OWRB and their enabler's actions cannibalizing democracy.

According to information I've received, multiple lawsuits will be filed against OKC, OWRB and the State of Oklahoma, plus possibly OWRB's individual board members over Sardis Lake. Tribes and others have necessary funds for protracted litigation; they will fight with years of pent up fury.

## METRO RULING CLASS

One OWRB member is another example of the metro ruling class's pompous behavior – which helped wake up and bring unity to Little Dixie.

Her condescending, harsh, talking-down to meeting's audience of courteous, recently honored elected public officials and Tribal top leaders plus long-time rural citizen veterans of Oklahoma water wars; telling them how fair and equitable the OWRB is!

It was straight out of the corporate upper crust's playbook on how to treat and handle lowly ankle-biters from southeastern Oklahoma. By doing so she showed her posterior: Didn't know what she didn't know about the history of dirty water allocations and mismanagement, current and past by OWRB in bed with its cronies here and across the Red River.

Property rights [water rights] are one of the foundations of our civil society and political system. It is being tested in Oklahoma's Kiamichi River basin.

It is a public fight. Join in.

– The author is a geologist living in Tulsa

# Rex Duncan Gives State Another Black Eye

Who knew that Oklahoma had liberal judges, much less ones who might want to impose Muslim laws on the good Christian state of Oklahoma?

MSNBC's Contessa Brewer asked Oklahoma Rep. Rex Duncan, R-Sand Springs, about his ballot measure to make sure that judges in his state do not follow international or Sharia law, because we all know that Oklahoma is just being overrun by Muslims these days.

Or maybe not. Digby was kind enough to transcribe this madness. Go read the rest of her post for her take on it. And as she said, sadly, no, this is not a joke. Man, how I wish it was. These wingers all love separation of church and state unless it means imposing their own brand of Christian fundamentalism on the rest of us.

**Duncan:** Oklahomans recognize that America was founded on Judeo Christian principles and we're unapologetically grateful that God has blessed America and blessed our state. State Amendment 755, the Save Our State Amendment, is a simple effort to insure our courts are not used to undermine those founding principles and turn Oklahoma into something our founding fathers and our great grandparents wouldn't recognize.

**Brewer:** Do you believe that there's imminent danger of judges using Sharia law when deciding cases?

**Duncan:** It's not just a danger, it's a reality. Every day, liberals and uh, just ...

**Brewer:** Ok, and the reality has it happened in your state of Oklahoma that judges have ...

**Duncan:** It has not. This is a pre-emptive strike to make sure that liberal judges don't take the bench in an effort to use their position to undermine those founding principles that are international or Sharia law.

The other part of the question is to prohibit all state courts from considering

international or Sharia law when considering cases, even cases of first impression.

**Brewer:** I'm sorry, but Mr. Duncan, less than 1% of your state is Muslim. So where would that threat come from?

**Duncan:** It's a growing threat frankly. This again is a pre-emptive strike. They understand that this is a war for the survival of America, it's a cultural war, it's a social war. It's a war for the survival of our country.

And other states have looked away and kow-towed to political correctness, have lost the chance perhaps to save their state. I believe Oklahoma voters at a margin greater than 90% will approve this state amendment and when we do, other red states and maybe even some lesser blue states will decide their states are worth saving, too.

**Brewer:** Are you worried about other kinds of religious fundamentalism creeping into the decisions judges make when it really should be based on secular law?

**Duncan:** It ought to be based on federal and state law, and any effort to do anything else – it's frankly the face of the enemy and we need to call it what it is. Oklahomans are going to do that and they're going to show other states what it looks like to take a leadership role in saving their own future and saving the sanctity of their own court system.

As Digby said, "Somebody's got to stop all those liberal judges from imposing ultra-conservative Sharia Law and stoning gays and women who stray from God's path. Oh, wait ... what are we talking about again?"

– The blog post, including video of Brewer's interview with Duncan, appears on the Crooks and Liars web site at <http://videocafe.crooksandliars.com/heather/bring-crazy-ok-rep-wants-save-us-liberal-j>

## Seeking To Create 'Fuller And Better' Lives

By Richard E. Cooper

I am probably the candidate for Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction with the least experience. I have never been in business or politics. I have never been a principal or school superintendent or coach. I have never helped establish a charter school or organize educational foundations. I am sometimes envious of those who have been able to do so many different jobs. I guess I'm just not that talented, or maybe I lack the motivation. Over the last three decades all I have done is teach.

I began my career in a district with kindergarten through high school all in two attached buildings, teaching six different courses a day, sixth through 12th graders. I have been in schools where I was one of only two language arts or social studies instructors. I once became the only "English" teacher at a junior high teaching writing, after the other instructor approached me and explained how she would much rather concentrate on grammar and avoid "all that writing stuff." I once created the teaching materials and put together the learning materials for a high school government class the school had neglected to offer for a number of years, even though it was part of the state curriculum. But I had three weeks, so there was no need to panic. Now that I think about it, teaching has kept me from being able to do many other jobs.

While others were establishing themselves in the worlds of business and politics, I was trying to figure effective ways of helping students begin to understand the complicated world around them. We studied and discussed economics, history, geography, writing, government, literature, art, music, but mostly we learned from each other about service and respect and joy and beauty and all the other important elements of a good education that will never be on

the test. I never considered becoming a counselor or a principal. However, I owe much to the dedicated ones I have worked with, who made my work easier because they did such a fine job at what they did. I'm biased toward teachers, but I'm smart enough to know that without great administrators and support staff, teachers would be unable to do what they love to do.

Although I no longer work in one specific building or classroom, I am still a teacher. As a matter of fact, I now work in as many as 30 different teachers' classrooms in 18 separate school districts in the state. I may come in contact with 200 or more students on a weekly basis, as I model lessons or team-teach with the participants I serve as a "master teacher" in a Teaching American History Grant project. I spend my days now, when not on the road, developing activities and materials to use in the U.S. History classroom. I sift through volumes of good history content and pedagogy information, distill it down to its essentials, and translate it into something useful to teachers who have very little free time for professional development, but who want it and appreciate it. I have the ideal teaching job – the individuals I teach go back to classrooms and teach others, and I am able to see the effects of my work almost immediately.

Educator and historian Lawrence A. Cremin once wrote, "The aim of education is not merely to make citizens, or workers, or fathers, or mothers, but ultimately to make human beings who will live life to the fullest." That quote best represents my philosophy of education, and it reflects the values and attitudes, which have guided my work in education for the last 29 years. Education is not a business; we do not manufacture products, we help "make human beings." We help make future

doctors and lawyers and engineers, ranchers and farmers, and yes, future citizens and workers and fathers and mothers.

When I think about all the experiences I have missed, I remember what I used to tell my students, "Good enough isn't good enough." I probably was good enough to go into business or politics, and I would have been a "good enough" principal and maybe even a district superintendent. But then I would have

missed all the opportunities I have had to help students become better than just good enough. My vision for Oklahoma public education is this – that long after our students graduate, they will be able to look back on their days in public school, and honestly say, "What I learned there has made my life fuller and better."

– The author lives in Ada and is an independent candidate for Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction

## Rep. Kris Steele Is Legislator Of The Year

The Oklahoma Women's Coalition has honored Oklahoma's House Speaker-designate for his leadership and efforts to reduce the high rate of female incarceration in the state.

State Rep. Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, was named the 2010 Legislator of the Year by the coalition, an award formally presented at the group's June 24 annual meeting.

"I am humbled by this special recognition," Steele said. "As policymakers, we have the responsibility to work toward creating a better future for all Oklahomans. The Oklahoma Women's Coalition does a great job of advocating for the improved status of women and children in our state, and it is an honor to join with them in their cause."

Steele authored HB 2998, legislation recently signed into law that authorizes re-entry and diversion pilot programs for non-violent offender parents to receive community-based services in lieu of incarceration. Its intent is to encourage the state to allow primary caregivers of minor children to receive rehabilitative services while maintaining contact with their children, Steele said.

Oklahoma incarcerates more women than any other state in the nation. Its incarceration rate for women is 131 per 100,000 residents, almost twice the national average of 69 per 100,000. Most prison inmates, 68%, are in prison for non-violent offenses.

"Oklahoma ranks first in the nation for the number of women incarcerated per capita," said Jean Warner, PhD, chair of the Oklahoma Women's Coalition. "The coalition made this issue a priority this year. We partnered with other organizations, like the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, to examine this issue and look for solutions. Rep. Steele has been a leader in moving this issue forward."

Diversion programs could save the state approximately \$56 per day, or \$20,000 per inmate, according to the coalition.

"By implementing effective diversion and re-entry programs, we'll help stop the cycle of intergenerational incarceration and strengthen Oklahoma families," Warner said.

# Tobacco Panel Pushes The State Health Plan

A state advisory committee has adopted a formal resolution to urge state legislators to enact each of the tobacco-related policy recommendations of the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan and to reject all attempts by tobacco industry representatives to influence any legislation designed to reduce the toll of tobacco in Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan recommendations call for the enactment of tobacco prevention policies including extending state law to protect all workers from secondhand smoke, restoring local rights to communities on tobacco issues, prohibiting use of state driver's license information scans for marketing of tobacco products, and indexing state tobacco excise taxes to the national average.

"These are common sense health recommendations that Oklahomans support," said Sara Smith, Regional Communications Director for the High Plains Division of the American Cancer Society and member of the Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee.

"Most states are adopting strong policies to counteract the tobacco industry. Oklahoma is still lagging behind."

## IMPLEMENTATION URGED

The State Board of Health presented the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan to the Oklahoma Legislature in December 2009.

The five-year plan – developed through an extensive process involving broad-based workgroups and community listening sessions – focuses on key priorities and outcomes including developing and initiating appropriate policies and legislation to maximize opportunities for all Oklahomans to lead healthy lives.

According to the plan, "... Key state and local policy changes will be essential to effectively counter tobacco industry influences" and "... the impact of smoking on poor health is so profound that transformation of Oklahoma's health status from a very unhealthy state, to a healthy state, will not be possible unless there is a major reduction in tobacco use."

"Important initial steps were taken during the 2010 legislative session, but there is still much to do to accomplish critical policy goals of the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan," said State Health Commissioner Dr. Terry Cline.

"We know the tobacco industry will oppose ongoing efforts to reduce our state's tobacco problem. Regardless, Oklahoma needs to move forward. People's lives are at stake. We need to put the health of Oklahomans above profits for the tobacco industry."

The resolution, unanimously adopted by the Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee, notes that previously-released internal tobacco industry documents reveal that a common practice of tobacco companies has been to expect their paid lobbyists at the State Capitol to "invest heavily in the campaigns of desirable candidates" and to "use events, charitable contributions, and



entertainment of standing committees" to try to influence legislation.

## RACKETEER INFLUENCE

The resolution also notes that a 2009 U.S. Court of Appeals decision found 11 tobacco companies guilty of violating the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act [RICO], concluding that a "culture of fraud" permeates the tobacco companies' business practices and that "... their continuing conduct misleads consumers in order to maximize Defendants revenues by recruiting new smokers [the majority of whom are under the age of 18], preventing current smokers from quitting, and thereby sustaining the industry."

"Sadly, tobacco company lobbyists at the State Capitol are affecting the health of our state," said Dr. Katherine Little, an Advisory Committee member representing the Oklahoma State Medical Association.

"The days of letting 'Big Tobacco' influence policymaking in Oklahoma must end."

Tobacco use is Oklahoma's leading preventable cause of death and disease, killing more Oklahomans than alcohol, auto accidents, AIDS, suicides, murders and illegal drugs combined.

The 20-member Oklahoma Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee was created in 2001 by the Oklahoma Legislature. The Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan is available at [www.health.ok.gov](http://www.health.ok.gov).

# Make A Difference Going Through Life

By Tom Ivester

I went to a banquet recently at OU to hear a guy named Greg Mortenson. He wrote the book *Three Cups of Tea* which describes how Mortenson's attempt to climb the K2 Mountain in Pakistan led to the fundraising for and building of schools in the remote region.

He failed in climbing the mountain and got lost on the way down. He almost died and wandered into a village that nursed him back to health. He vowed to return and build a school for the people there.

The book has sold more than 3.6 million copies, been published in 41 countries, and is now required reading for U.S. senior military commanders and Special Forces who deploy to Afghanistan.

Mortenson quoted a senior U.S. military official who said schools are the difference in producing "educated patriots or illiterate fighters."

## GIRLS ARE EDUCATED

The man is amazing with the work he's doing to bring education and peace to that war-torn area. In short he builds schools for girls in a region that doesn't value girls.

I took a student and Senate page from Merritt High School with me to the dinner. After the banquet I took the page up to the front to meet David Boren, president of OU. By coincidence the Merritt student had already decided to go to OU

See DIFFERENCE Page 14

# Is Proposed Christian Prison Constitutional?

Americans United for Separation of Church and State warned corrections officials in three states not to use public funds to send inmates to a proposed "Christians-only" prison in Oklahoma.

Corrections Concepts Inc. has proposed building a private prison in Wakita that will indoctrinate prisoners in fundamentalist Christianity and will be staffed solely with "born-again" Christians.

The Dallas-based firm recently announced that discussions are under way with corrections officials in Oklahoma, Kansas and California about signing contracts to house prisoners.

In response, attorneys with Americans United wrote to officials in the three states, advising them that using public funds to send inmates to the sectarian facility would likely spark legal action.

Americans United asserts it would be unconstitutional for government to support a prison that indoctrinates inmates in one faith and limits hiring based on religion.

"Taxpayers should never be forced to support religious indoctrination," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "This scheme is fraught with constitutional problems, and no state should subsidize it."

In letters to corrections officials, AU attorneys pointed out that a federal appeals court in 2007 struck down public funding of an evangelical Christian pro-

gram at an Iowa prison. The Christian prison in Oklahoma, they say, would likely meet the same fate.

"If the Department were to provide funding to Corrections Concepts' prison, indoctrination would be the inevitable result ..." Americans United asserted. "And, just as inevitably, the funding of such indoctrination would violate the Constitution."

The AU letters to Oklahoma, Kansas and California were signed by Americans United Legal Director Ayesha N. Khan and AU Staff Attorney Ian Smith.

Corrections Concepts founder Bill Robinson told the Tulsa World recently that the bonding company that has expressed interest in financing the project will not provide funds until states agree to send 285 prisoners to the facility, which is expected to have more than 600 beds.

Robinson first proposed the facility last year. At that time, Americans United wrote to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections and advised it not to back the scheme. Officials there replied that they had no interest in the project. But Robinson now says he has an expression of interest from the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs.

Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, DC. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.

## BOOKS

# Lincoln In The Raw, Frontierisms And All

By Cecil Acuff

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*A Life*

By Michael Burlingame

John Hopkins University Press

2,024 pages, \$125

Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of the much praised 2005 *Team of Rivals, The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, offers a ringing endorsement of Michael Burlingame's two-volume work on Lincoln.

"Scholars, historians, and the public have awaited anxiously, decades, for this book. Its triumphant publication proves it was well worth the wait. Few scholars have written with greater insight about the psychology of Lincoln. No one in recent history has uncovered more fresh sources than Michael Burlingame. This profound and masterful portrait will be read and studied for years to come."

Kearns' book included 757 pages of text and 159 pages of notes. By contrast, Burlingame's set includes 759 pages of text and 183 pages of notes in Volume I, and 839 pages of text and 195 pages of notes in Volume II. That's 1,588 pages!

Kearns Goodwin's tome on Lincoln begins May 18, 1860. Burlingame begins much earlier. Lincoln's father, Thomas, shared only a few traits with his son – wrestling, humor, story-telling. But qualities which made Abraham Lincoln famous – intellect, ambition, spirituality, idealism, integrity, wisdom, judgment, and leadership were absent in Thomas.

Neighbors could remember little special about Thomas: a plain, plodding man, indifferent to clothes, simple food tastes. He could read a little, but was unable to sign his name. His whole appearance denoted a man of small intellect and less ambition.

But Thomas impressed people as being sociable with common sense. He did use profanity occasionally until he received a scolding from his wife [he never swore again].

Thomas Lincoln prospered neither as farmer or carpenter. He showed bad judgment in his selection of land several times in Indiana and Illinois, and lost money buying and selling farms in Kentucky.

Other losses – deaths of his second son in 1813, his wife in 1818, and his daughter in 1828 – all led Thomas to a self-assessment: "Everything that I ever teched either died, got killed, or was lost." He made scant use of his land, usually clearing only a few acres. He worked to sustain life, and no more.

Thomas' depression was partly genetic. His brother Mordecai and his sons were prone to melancholia, depression, and gloomy spells. Naturally, Thomas's indolence, lack of ambition, and disdain for education put him at odds with his smart, enterprising son.

Observers say that Thomas Lincoln never showed that he thought much of his son, and treated him unkindly.

Abraham Lincoln's aversion to his father persisted into adulthood. He never once invited Thomas or his wife to Springfield during the 24 years Lincoln lived there. He rarely lent money to his sire. When his law practice took him near his father's home, Abraham Lincoln stayed with Dennis Hanks.

As Thomas lay dying in 1851, his 42 year-old son refused his sire's deathbed appeal for a visit. Abraham Lincoln icily told his stepbrother that a meeting now might be more painful than pleasant. Lincoln didn't attend the funeral, nor have a tombstone placed on his father's grave.

William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner and biographer, said Lincoln was deeply hurt by his father's cold and inhuman treatment, whipping him for minor indiscretions, to such an extent that Thomas drove him from home. Sometimes Thomas had thrown out Abraham Lincoln's books. Lincoln left home at age 22.

Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky at a farm of infertile ground. During his first seven years, Abe had a reputation as a quiet, bashful, polite boy who liked solitude, noted for keeping his clothes clean, and for being a good wrestler.

The first challenge facing the homesteading Lincolns after they moved to Indiana was clearing the land. Abraham set to work with his axe – he commented later that for the next 15 years he almost constantly felled trees, chopped them into logs, cleared undergrowth, dug stumps, and grubbed up roots for drying and burning.

When not so engaged, he harrowed, hoed, plowed, weeded, harvested, or butchered, which was his most lucrative work, 31 cents a day. The hog was clubbed, doused in scalding water, and its bristles removed. Then the gambrel run through the animal's hocks, then hoisted, 200 pounds-plus for butchering. Abraham Lincoln termed this regimen the roughest work a young man could do.

Once the family had cleared land and planted a small crop, Thomas and family built a one-story, 18 by 20 foot log cabin. It was high enough to accommodate an overhead bedroom, reached by pegs stuck in the wall. For 13 years the family lived in the cabin with little furniture; beds of poles, a slab table, and stools. Thirteen people would eventually crowd together in this dismal abode, which afforded little comfort or privacy.

Even in the best of cabins in southwestern Indiana in these times, males dressed and undressed in view of females; nothing was thought of it. No shame, false shame, or delicacy existed.

Lincoln expressed reluctance, in an interview in 1860, to communicate the facts and incidents of his early life. He seemed painfully impressed with the extreme poverty of his surroundings, and questioned a proposal to have a biography written. "It's a folly to make anything of my early life. It can all be condensed to

a single sentence which you'll find in Gray's Elogy: 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' That's my life, and that's all you or anyone else can make of it."

Lincoln never overcame his linguistic background. Even in his presidential years his speech betrayed his frontier roots. He began his Cooper Union speech by saying, "Mr. Cheerman." As president, he said "unly" for "only," "own" for "one," "wall" for "well," "thar" for "there," "was" for "were," "git" for "get," "ye" for "you," "rare" for "rear," and "one of 'em" for "one of them."

George Templeton, who recorded some of these Hoosierisms, called the president's grammar "weak" and deemed him a barbarian, Seythian, or gorilla, in respect of outside polish. He heard Lincoln say, "Me and the Attorney General's very chicken." When a magician at the White House asked for the president's handkerchief, Lincoln replied, "I ain't got any."

Little wonder that Abraham Lincoln made Easterners roll their eyes and grind their teeth!

Michael Burlingame won the Lincoln Book Prize of 2010; \$50,000, awarded by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in conjunction with the Civil Institute at Gettysburg College.

It is sad, indeed, that America knows so little past the "spin" of present-day politicians. But, it takes the probes of history to do that.

– The author lives in Perkins

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# The Christian Fascists Are Growing Stronger

By Chris Hedges

Tens of millions of Americans, lumped into a diffuse and fractious movement known as the Christian right, have begun to dismantle the intellectual and scientific rigor of the Enlightenment.

They are creating a theocratic state based on "biblical law," and shutting out all those they define as the enemy. This movement, veering closer and closer to traditional fascism, seeks to force a recalcitrant world to submit before an imperial America.

It champions the eradication of social deviants, beginning with homosexuals, and moving on to immigrants, secular humanists, feminists, Jews, Muslims and those they dismiss as "nominal Christians" – meaning Christians who do not embrace their perverted and heretical interpretation of the Bible.

Those who defy the mass movement are condemned as posing a threat to the health and hygiene of the country and the family. All will be purged.

## CONVERTED OR REPRESSED

The followers of deviant faiths, from Judaism to Islam, must be converted or repressed. The deviant media, the deviant public schools, the deviant entertainment industry, the deviant secular humanist government and judiciary and the deviant churches will be reformed or closed.

There will be a relentless promotion of Christian "values," already under way on Christian radio and television and in Christian schools, as information and facts are replaced with overt forms of indoctrination.

The march toward this terrifying dystopia has begun. It is taking place on the streets of Arizona, on cable news channels, at Tea Party rallies, in the Texas public schools, among militia members and within a Republican Party that is being hijacked by this lunatic fringe.

## BECK QUOTES NAZI LOVER

Elizabeth Dilling, who wrote *The Red Network* and was a Nazi sympathizer, is touted as required reading by trash-talk television hosts like Glenn Beck.

Thomas Jefferson, who favored separation of church and state, is ignored in Christian schools and soon will be ignored in Texas public school textbooks.

The Christian right hails the "significant contributions" of the Confederacy. Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who led the anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s, has been rehabilitated, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is defined as part of the worldwide battle against Islamic terror. Legislation like the new Jim Crow laws of Arizona is being considered by 17 other states.

The rise of this Christian fascism, a rise we ignore at our peril, is being fueled by an ineffectual and bankrupt liberal class that has proved to be unable to roll back surging unemployment, protect us from speculators on Wall Street, or save our dispossessed working class from foreclosures, bankruptcies and misery.

The liberal class has proved useless in combating the largest environmental disaster in our history, ending costly and futile imperial wars or stopping the corporate plundering of the nation. And the gutlessness of the liberal class has left it, and the values it represents, reviled and hated.

## DEMOCRATS WON'T ACT

The Democrats have refused to repeal the gross violations of international and domestic law codified by the Bush Administration. This means that Christian fascists who achieve power will have the "legal" tools to spy on, arrest, deny habeas corpus to, and torture or assassinate American citizens – as does the Obama Administration.

Those who remain in a reality-based world often dismiss these malcontents as buffoons and simpletons. They do not take seriously those, like Beck, who pander to the primitive yearnings for vengeance, new glory and moral renewal.

Critics of the movement continue to employ the tools of reason, research and fact to challenge the absurdities propagated by creationists who think they will float naked into the heavens when Jesus returns to Earth.

The magical thinking, the flagrant distortion in interpreting the Bible, the contradictions that abound within the movement's belief system and the laughable pseudoscience, however, are impervious to reason. We cannot convince those in



the movement to wake up. It is we who are asleep.

## GOOD VS EVIL

Those who embrace this movement see life as an epic battle against forces of evil and Satanism. The world is black and white. They need to feel, even if they are not, that they are victims surrounded by dark and sinister groups bent on their destruction.

They need to believe they know the will of God and can fulfill it, especially through violence. They need to sanctify their rage, a rage that lies at the core of the ideology. They seek total cultural and political domination. They are using the space within the open society to destroy it.

These movements work within the confining rules of the secular state because they have no choice. The intolerance they promote is muted in the public assurances of their slickest operators. Given enough power, and they are working hard to get it, any such cooperation will vanish.

The demand for total control and for a Christian nation and the refusal to permit any dissent are on display within their inner sanctums. These pastors have established within their churches tiny, despotic fiefdoms, and they seek to replicate these little tyrannies on a larger scale.

## EDGE OF POVERTY

Many of the tens of millions within the Christian right live on the edge of poverty. The Bible, interpreted for them by pastors whose connection with God means they cannot be questioned, is their handbook for daily life.

The rigidity and simplicity of their belief are potent weapons in the fight against their own demons and the struggle to keep their lives on track. The reality-based world, one where Satan, miracles, destiny, angels and magic did not exist, battered them like driftwood.

It took their jobs and destroyed their future. It rotted their communities. It flooded their lives with alcohol, drugs, physical violence, deprivation and despair. And then they discovered that God has a plan for them. God will save them. God intervenes in their lives to promote and protect them.

The emotional distance they have traveled from the real world to the world of Christian fantasy is immense. And the rational, secular forces, those that speak in the language of fact and evidence, are hated and ultimately feared, for they

See FASCISTS Page 12

## Mural Whitened To Erase Hispanic Boy

Racism is alive and well in Arizona. The Arizona Republic reports that a Prescott, AZ elementary school principal ordered a public mural edited to "fix shading" in the faces of non-white children depicted in the artwork.

The "Go on Green" mural, which covers two walls outside Miller Valley Elementary School, was designed to advertise a campaign for environmentally friendly transportation. It features portraits of four children, with a Hispanic boy as the dominant figure.

R.E. Wall, director of Prescott's Downtown Mural Project, said he and other artists were subjected to slurs from motorists as they worked on the painting at one of the town's most prominent intersections.

"We consistently, for two months, had people shouting racial slander from their cars," Wall said. "We had children painting with us, and here come these yells of [epithet for blacks] and [epithet for Hispanics]."

Wall said school Principal Jeff Lane pressed him to make the children's faces appear happier and "brighter" – in other words whiter.

"It is being lightened because of the controversy," Wall said, adding that "they

want it to look like the children are coming into light."

Coming into light! This may be the politically-correct way to explain the white-washing – literal and metaphorical – that took place at Miller Valley Elementary School, a public school, but in reality the principal and the school district caved to the racist, xenophobic pressures that have swept through the entire state.

City Councilman Steve Blair spearheaded a public campaign on his talk show at Prescott radio station KYCA-AM [1490] to remove the mural.

In a broadcast, according to the Daily Courier in Prescott, Blair mistakenly complained that the most prominent child in the painting is African-American, saying: "To depict the biggest picture on the building as a black person, I would have to ask the question: Why?"

This – sigh – elected representative can't even tell the difference between black or Latino, but surely even had he recognized it as a brown face rather than a black one, he still would've railed against this public school mural as feverishly as he did.

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# Infuriated By The Cell Phone Racket

By Scott Thill

If you're not angry with AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Sprint – America's four national wireless providers that reportedly control 90% of the market – then here's some ridiculous news to raise your righteous ire.

Perhaps you'd be interested to know about one of the most outrageous cell phone scams? It's simple: Charge customers for being forced to listen to 15 seconds of unnecessary voicemail instructions reminding them how to leave a message after the beep.

According to New York Times technology writer David Pogue, if Verizon customers leave voicemails or check their messages twice a day, the mammoth New Jersey-based telco takes in around \$620 million. In return, you lose wasted hours of your life and have to pay for it.

Speaking of Verizon, have you heard about the representative who refused to shut down a dead man's service, even though his daughter produced a death certificate and needed the account closed so settlement of his estate could proceed?

## SPYING ON AMERICANS

Do we need to even talk about AT&T's various controversies, from censoring Pearl Jam to allegedly helping the National Security Agency unlawfully monitor the American people's communications?

The telco giants' latest disgrace, according to a recent Federal Communications Commission report, has been given the egregious name of "bill shock." Which is a misnomer, actually: it's certainly not shocking to find, as the FCC explains, that "30 million Americans – or one in six mobile users – have experienced ... a sudden increase in their monthly bill that is not caused by a change in service plan."

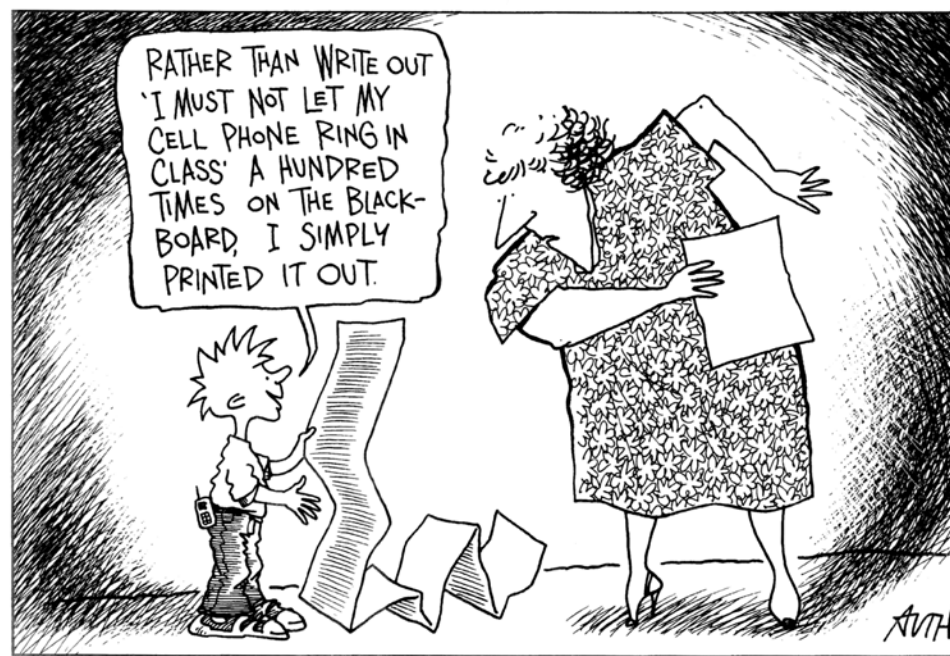
It's even less alarming to discover that "nearly half of cell phone users who have plans with early termination fees [ETFs] – and almost two-thirds of home broadband users with ETFs – don't know the amount of the fees they're accountable for."

In fact, AT&T just nearly doubled its \$175 early termination fee to \$325 in May. That cold, capitalist logic is built specifically for bottom lines and earnings reports, not for flawless customer service. ETFs are financial shackles to mediocrity, and they're just the start.

## COST OF TEXT MESSAGING

According to Wisconsin Democratic Sen. Herb Kohl, the telcos have fortified their industry monopoly with other scandalous pricing. Between 2006-08, the cost of sending and receiving a text message rose 100%.

The average American consumer pays approximately \$500-\$600 a year for wireless service, which is practically more than any other developed nation. Of course, iPhone addicts – who are chained to Apple's exclusive contract with AT&T until the probably inevitable Verizon contract arrives in 2011 – pay around



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twice that annually in various subscription fees.

This in spite of the fact that AT&T, Verizon and Sprint continually rank among the worst in the nation when it comes to customer service. Or that such early termination fees are arguably illegal, depending on which judge you ask.

"We want consumers to know that they can avoid the ETF by using prepaid phones," FCC spokesperson Rosemary Kimball said. "And we have recently released a public notice asking for comments from consumers and the industry on how customers can be made aware they are about to incur unexpected charges."

"We asked whether a model like that used in the European Union, where customers must be alerted when they are about to incur roaming charges, would work in the United States."

## FUNCTIONAL DUOPOLY

This geographical reality has produced a wireless market that is a functional duopoly. Although Verizon and AT&T are only half of the big four carriers, they actually control 60% of the wireless market between them. Can you hear me now?

Bringing transparency and purpose to that random pricing is a primary objective of the FCC, which seems to have finally come to its senses under the leadership of chairman Julius Genachowski, who was nominated by President Obama and confirmed by Congress in 2009.

He's a long way from the national joke that was FCC chairman Michael Powell, son of Colin, who disastrously deregulated the industry while simultaneously levying ridiculous obscenity penalties on networks airing Janet Jackson's breast, Bono's expletives, Howard Stern's show, and even Saving Private Ryan.

But the new Obama FCC regime is going to have its hands full bringing AT&T and Verizon to heel, although its task will be helped by the telco titans' continuing insults. But they're not giving up without a fight, especially when they can charge anything for whatever.

© Alternet

# FASCISTS

From Page 11

seek to pull believers back into "the culture of death" that nearly destroyed them.

## WILD CONTRADICTIONS

There are wild contradictions within this belief system. Personal independence is celebrated alongside an abject subservience to leaders who claim to speak for God.

The movement says it defends the sanctity of life and advocates the death penalty, militarism, war and righteous genocide. It speaks of love and promotes fear of damnation and hate. There is a terrifying cognitive dissonance in every word they utter.

Violence must be used to cleanse the world. These Christian fascists are called to a perpetual state of war. "Any teaching of peace prior to [Christ's] return is heresy ..." says televangelist James Robinson.

Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, instability in Israel and even the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are seen as glorious signposts. The war in Iraq is predicted, believers insist, in the ninth chapter of the Book of Revelation, where four angels "which are bound in the great river Euphrates will be released to slay the third part of men."

The march is inevitable and irreversible and requires everyone to be ready to fight, kill and perhaps die. Global war, even nuclear war, is not to be feared, but welcomed as the harbinger of the Second Coming. And leading the avenging armies is an angry, violent Messiah who dooms hundreds of millions of apostates to a horrible and gruesome death.

## IT DOESN'T REQUIRE FACTS

"What convinces masses are not facts," Arendt wrote in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, "and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system which they are presumably part. Repetition, somewhat overrated in importance because of the common belief in the masses' inferior capacity to grasp and remember, is important because it convinces them of consistency in time."

Ideological, theological and political debates are useless with the Christian right. It does not respond to a dialogue. It is impervious to rational thought and discussion.

The naive attempts to placate a movement bent on our destruction, to prove

to it that we too have "values," only strengthens its legitimacy and weakens our own.

If we do not have a right to be, if our very existence is not legitimate in the eyes of God, there can be no dialogue. At this point it is a fight for survival.

If we do not act, American fascists, clutching Christian crosses, waving American flags and orchestrating mass recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance, will use this rage to snuff us out.

– Chris Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School, is the author of *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. He was a reporter for many years with *The New York Times*. His latest book is *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*.

# VERY PUNNY

Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine.  
A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.  
Dijon vu – the same mustard as before.  
Practice safe eating – always use condiments.  
Shotgun wedding – A case of wife or death.  
A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.  
A hangover is the wrath of grapes.  
Dancing cheek-to-cheek is really a form of floor play.  
Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?  
Condoms should be used on every conceivable occasion.  
Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.  
A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.  
What's the definition of a will? [It's a dead give away.]  
Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.  
In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.  
She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off.  
A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.  
If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.

# Even Reagan Wasn't A Reagan Republican

By Jay P. Morgan

While Republicans are whining and circling their firing squads around their own people, it's entertaining to look back at some of the Republicans that have been bad enough to make progressives and moderates angry over the years but also good enough to win national elections get ferreted out and essentially ousted by their own party.

The Republican Party is cannibalizing itself while its PR folks stand in front of television cameras and radio microphones, wave their hands, and say "nothing to see here," while the carnage is happening in the background.

The problem with this is that what emerges from the rubble will be a Republican Party that's far, far to the right, much fatter than anyone but the most hard-core right-wingers in the country would possibly predict.

## LEADING PEOPLE TO BELIEVE

It is venomous and vehement enough to make people believe that they actually have the best interest of the public at heart, or in the long run the more moderate conservatives will prevail and this pendulum of right-wingedness will swing back the other way.

In the interim, though, a number of these conservatives have been hanging themselves to prove how conservative they are and to earn the favor of the Tea Party lynch mob, claiming that they're all more conservative than the last person.

They bask in the glow of their own political icons who wouldn't dare align themselves with them if they saw them.

Ronald Reagan is a perfect example – a number of Republicans try desperately to claim that they share his ideology and beliefs, but in reality they're far, far to the right from him and he would call them out on it.

## NEWSWEEK AUTHOR QUOTED

Andrew Romano, writing for Newsweek, has this to say:

"In the year and a half since Barack Obama was elected president, Republicans nationwide seem to have given up on the whole governing thing and chosen instead to play a long, rancorous game of 'I'm More Conservative Than You Are.'"

They've been playing it in Utah, where incumbent Sen. Bob Bennett – lifetime American Conservative Union rating 84% – lost a primary battle.

They've been playing it in Florida, where moderate Gov. Charlie Crist was forced to abandon his bid for the Republican Senate nomination and run as an independent instead.

They've even been playing it on the national stage, where the RNC recently toyed with the idea of imposing a purity test on potential GOP candidates. Comply with eight of the party's 10 "Reaganite" principles, the thinking went, and you're worthy of funding. Fall short, and you might as well be Leon Trotsky.

## RETURNING TO ITS ROOTS?

Conservatives would claim that the Republican Party can only regain power by "returning to its roots" and banishing heretics.



But a funny thing happened on the way to winning national elections again: the GOP has drifted so far right that it's retroactively disqualified the only Republicans since 1960 who've actually managed to, you know, win national elections.

Based on their public statements, policy proposals, and accomplishments while in office, none of the modern Republican presidents – not Richard Nixon, not Gerald Ford, not George H.W. Bush, not even Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush – would come close to satisfying the Republican base if they were seeking election today.

The point is not that these guys were liberals. It's that the GOP is at risk of becoming so dogmatic that it would exclude even its most iconic members. Pre-emptively ruling out the sort of pragmatic policies that have worked in the past is a novel strategy, and it clearly plays to the passions of the moment.

## STRATEGY MAY NOT WORK

But unless the demographic evidence is wildly inaccurate and the country is, in fact, growing more and more rightwing over time, it's probably not a strategy that's going to work particularly well in the future.

Romano goes on to target five Republican Presidents that were very definitely conservative, but probably wouldn't meet the expectations of the Tea Partiers, and yet should you breathe their names around them they'd wistfully sigh for the good old days – and this is part of the problem with the Tea Party mob; they're utterly ignorant of history, and lacking the critical thinking skills to look back in time and realize that they really don't have much to be worried about.

Which in the long run may actually be a good thing for progressives – as they eat themselves alive and further marginalize themselves from the rest of America, they'll falter on their own.

# Airlines Battle Workplace Democracy

By Jim Hightower

If you ever want to spook a smug, stuffed-shirt corporate CEO – I mean spook him so bad that he jumps clear out of his Guccis and screams louder than Little Richard – sneak up behind him and shout "union!" They hate that.

Corporate chieftains get the heebie-jeebies at the mere mention of unionization for the exact same reason that millions of workers perk up at the idea: power. In today's plutocratic, corporate-controlled economy, the most direct and effective way for working folks to assert their interests and restore a measure of fairness to America's economic system is for them to unite in unions.

Indeed, while the corporate powers and their political apologists constantly insist that the union movement is passe – neither needed nor wanted in our modern, globalized workplace – more than 60 million Americans [over half of the workforce] say they would join a union if they could. Well ... why can't they?

Because those at the very top [corporate executives, board members and financiers] personally profit by holding down everyone else, so they don't want the mass of working stiffs having any real say over such critical matters as offshoring, downsizing, wages, benefits and working conditions.

Unions – which allow employees to amass their strength, coordinate their interests and participate in company decisions that affect them – are a direct democratic threat to the centralized autocracy preferred by the pampered few at the top.

Thus, for the past three decades or so, the autocrats have retained lawyers, lobbyists and lawmakers, deploying them in a determined effort [mostly out of the public eye] to monkey-wrench the rules of unionization in ways that make it hard to impossible for workers to join together.

For example, perhaps you've never gotten around to reading the Railway Labor Act [it didn't make many best-seller lists]. But the RLA, which governs unionization elections in both the railroad and airline industries, has a wicked little plot-twist you might enjoy. When a vote is taken among workers in either of these two industries to determine whether they want to form a union, the law requires that all employees who do not vote be automatically [and autocratically] counted as

having voted against the union.

Come on, even Agatha Christie wouldn't have tried something that twisted! Those who did not cast ballots [because they were sick, didn't care, were intimidated, had a family emergency, whatever] should not be counted at all, as happens with no-shows in every other American election.

Happily, the Obama Administration has recently issued a new rule repealing this electoral absurdity. But – Holy Kafka! – assorted airline corporations have gone bonkers, bananas and batstuff, screeching that this small step toward the bright light of logic is a demonic perversion of the Founders' democratic ideals. The industry has unleashed its political hounds to howl in protest and demand a reversion to the good ol' autocratic system.

Sen. Johnny Isakson of Georgia was especially noisy, which is no surprise, since he's a longtime retainer of Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines, whose labor force is largely non-union. Delta has profited enormously from RLA's quaint, anti-democratic method of skewing unionization votes [it has even included at least one dead employee as a non-voting "no" vote], so it is going all-out to stop the rule change.

Thus, Isakson, whose No. 1 campaign funder is Delta, quickly rose up on his hind legs last month to declare that deleting non-voters from the "no" column was an "assault on employee rights."

No one ever said Johnny was bright, but – wow! – that's dim. How about we apply Isakson's thinking to ... well, to him! In his last election, there were 8.6 million eligible Georgia voters, but only 1.8 million cast a ballot for him. Golly, Johnny, that means 79% of Georgians either voted against you or – gasp! – did not vote at all. In other words, those non-voters you love would've unceremoniously drummed you right out of the Senate.

Hmmm, the more I think about it, the more I like the no-vote inclusion – as long as it applies to all of the hypocrites like Isakson. But I doubt he'd vote for that.

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## Race And Gender

# About Gifted Classes In The Public Schools

By Chauncey DeVega

What now of the gender gap in public education?

Is it not an irony that at every level of educational attainment that girls outperform boys. Yet, men somehow grow up to rule the world?

It is also little commented upon that there is an informal system of "affirmative action" for men in college. Funny, that point is too infrequently mentioned in our debates on "preferences" and college admissions. Makes one think does it not?

As detailed by the New York Times, this pattern of gendered outcomes is mirrored even in the talented and gifted programs in our public schools.

Educators and experts have long known that boys lag behind girls in measures like high school graduation rates and college enrollment, but they are concerned that the disparity is also turning up at the very beginning of the school experience.

### THE ISSUE IS UNCLEAR

Why more girls than boys enter the programs is unclear, though there are some theories. Among the most popular is the idea that young girls are favored by the standardized tests New York City uses to determine admission to gifted programs, because they tend to be more verbal and socially mature at ages 4 and 5 when they sit for the hour long exam.

"Girls at that age tend to study more, and the boys kind of play more," said Linda Gratta, a parent at the Anderson School on the Upper West Side, one of the most selective.

"But it's a mixed bag. The day of the test, you could be the smartest boy in the world and just have a bad day." She said that Timothy, her first-grade son, had approximately 10 boys and 18 girls in his class.

Biases and expectations among adults are often in play when determining which children count as gifted, and fewer boys appear to end up in gifted programs nationally.

### BOYS OVER-REPRESENTED

"A study by the National Academy of Sciences reported that boys were over-represented in programs for learning disabilities, mental retardation and emotional disturbance, and slightly under-represented in gifted programs," said Brace A. Bracken, a professor at the College of William & Mary who wrote one of the two exams that the city uses to test gifted children. He said the implications of the study were "disturbing."

The piece is powerful. But, it is also noteworthy for how race and class are omitted from the equation. As is repeatedly documented, take the gender gap in school achievement at large, and then multiply it for young African Americans and Latinos.

Black and Latino boys are significantly more likely to be in remedial programs, labeled ADHD, suspended, or be placed on the lowest tracks in their respective schools.

### LIMITED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Some of these outcomes are the result of limited social capital and a lack of resources and parental involvement. Likewise, faulty metrics for determining intelligence and "intellectual ability" explain some other results. Sadly, good old fashioned laziness and racism still account for a good part of these disparate outcomes.

Here, my beef with the talented and gifted programs, as well as tracking, is a personal one. Upon entering the fourth grade, I was initially put into the lowest cohort. I had always been in the highest track, but I was summarily demoted.

For the grace of God, and one great [yet really tough] former Army Sergeant who was my teacher, I would likely have flunked out of school and become the highly successful criminal mastermind I was always meant to be.

I was bored, finishing my work in two minutes, and consequently getting in trouble. This teacher clearly knew something was up and contacted my parents. Together they discovered that I had been put into the wrong track. A simple bureaucratic mix up?

### STUDENT TEACHER DID IT

No, upon some research it was discovered that a student teacher had done the placements that year. Under time constraints she put all of the black kids in the



lowest track. Why? Her explanation under threat of lawsuit: "it seemed efficient given that black kids do badly in school." True story.

I was also not allowed into our school's talented and gifted program. My mother, being a perennial striver, wanted to know why I was not admitted. Once more, social networks, race, and class rule the day.

Apparently, although I had met all the criteria for admission, certain spots had been promised to a select group of students and their families. Another threatened lawsuit later I was reluctantly admitted – black folks love threatening to sue people, by the way [I don't know if we ever follow through, though].

### NOT ONE DOING WELL TODAY

I refused to go on basic principle. You don't want me. I don't want you. Funny thing, to my knowledge not one of those "talented and gifted types" are doing well today.

That was not my last run-in with the evil gatekeepers of "honors" and "talented and gifted programs." In high school I would eventually break down the barriers and join up. Predictably, I would be run out by an English teacher who stated that my writing and analytical skills were sub par.

I vividly remember the paper in dispute – it was an essay on Silas Marner. I had developed a thesis on greed, gender, and white racial identity. I was flatly told those were not elements in the book and that I must not be able to fully comprehend the text.

Being the obstinate respectable negro that I am, I left the class [she made it clear I would get an "F"] and swore revenge in my best Wrath of Khan impression. Funny thing, I made true on my promise. And yes, she was terrified.

### DIDN'T GET FULL HONORS

Like many students, I didn't get my full honors, Phi Beta, uppity top of the class awards and bonafides until college. Doubly curious, whenever I sit down with a bunch of respectable negroes from the striving middle and working classes, there is some version of the above story.

Moreover, and almost to the one, we remember being the only non-white kids in those spaces. I would hate to be so reductionist, but could it be that in many schools "honors" and "talented and gifted" are coded as "Whites Only" spaces?

Do others have similar tales of whoa and triumph in the face of the honors cabal? What does it say about our educational system, that so many who are not judged to be among the best and the brightest in either elementary and secondary school, rise to the top in college and/or leave formal training and become stars on their own?

Is the system that broken?

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## DIFFERENCE

From Page 9

and told President Boren about it.

We talked back and forth and after a bit President Boren asked the student if he had applied for the Presidents Leadership Class at OU. The student said he had not.

### BOREN WOVES THE STUDENT

President Boren reached up and took the Merritt student's name tag and put it in his wallet. He said, "I suggest you apply for that class because tomorrow I'm going to personally recommend you be accepted."

The President's Leadership Class is a big honor which President Boren personally teaches. I felt so excited for this kid. What an opportunity.

We all need inspiration. We all need people to show they care and then go that extra step to actually do it. People make a difference every day and you never know what impact it will have.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, JUNE 25, 2010, PAGE 14

No matter how small or how simple it might seem we have the opportunity to make a difference. It might be a kind word, an act of service or just acknowledging a fallen soul on the side of the road.

Don't just pass by through life. We all can make a difference.

– The author, an Elk City Democrat, represents District 26 in the State Senate

## NEVER TOO YOUNG

A child in church services for the first time watched as the offering plates came around. When they neared his pew, he piped up so that everyone could hear: "Don't pay for me, Daddy; I'm under five."

# There's No Energy In Obama's Energy Plan

By Alexander Cockburn

Every president since Nixon has tried to sell an energy plan, and the only one to yield any tangible results was Reagan's consummated pledge to rip the Carter-installed solar system off the roof of the White House. Carter wore his cardigan and America laughed and turned up the heaters in their SUVs.

In his mid-June address from the Oval Office, Obama mumbled about windmills, solar panels, renewable energy and ending America's dependence on fossil fuels. He barely touched on his energy bill, becalmed in the Congress because Senate leader Harry Reid has told him it will never pass. He didn't even allude to his actual energy plan, which is to accelerate deep-sea drilling [on hold till the blue ribbon commission gives the green light, which it will], issue federal insurance guarantees for a new generation of nuclear plants, sponsor "clean coal" and bail out the ethanol industry.

Nuclear power could make the BP catastrophe look like chickenfeed. So-called "clean, low-sulfur coal," mined by mountaintop removal, is an environmental disaster. The ethanol industry has long been a big financial backer of Obama and is now in crisis because of overproduction of corn, from which the ethanol is distilled. At the moment, the federal government limits the amount of ethanol that can be sold at the pump to 10% of every gallon. Obama may raise the proportion to 15%.

## THE LAWNMOWER VOTE

But the U.S. now has about 250 million motor vehicles and, as energy expert Robert Bryce points out, of that number, "only about 7.5 million



are designed to burn gasoline containing more than 10% ethanol. And there is evidence that even that much ethanol may be too much. Last year, Toyota recalled more than 200,000 Lexus vehicles due to internal component corrosion that was caused by ethanol-blended fuel."

Obama could not only lose the important Lexus-owner vote, but also earn the undying hatred of every American with a mowing machine, snowblower or leaf blower. Fifteen percent ethanol in the gas means they won't be able to fire up these devices. That's a hefty chunk of the electorate. You lose the lawn-mower vote, you lose the suburbs.

In short, America has no energy

plan beyond what is already in the tank, an energy economy over 90% based on fossil fuels, with this situation remaining in place for the foreseeable future.

## AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER

Excluding FDR's legendary fireside chats of the 1930s, there's scant evidence across the past 40 years that as a venue for rallying the nation, the presidential sanctum did Obama's predecessors as president much good. Obama's maiden speech from the Oval Office was an unmitigated disaster. Many of his stoutest supporters in the press could say nothing in its favor. Obama would have been best advised to say nothing and leave the nation to the evening's

main business, the NBA playoffs.

It was certainly the worst rally-the-nation speech by a U.S. president I've ever watched, and that includes Nixon's cornered-rat addresses of the early 1970s and – an ominous parallel – Jimmy Carter's fireside chat in April 1977, four months into his presidency, to publicize his Plan for Energy Independence. To dramatize the need for conservation, Carter wore a cardigan. He said the crusade for energy reduction was "the moral equivalent of war." As he said these words, he clenched his fist. America was unimpressed, but not as unimpressed as it was this night.

Asked a couple of weeks ago about the president's apparent inability to project anger, his PR man, Robert Gibbs, said the president had been clenching his jaw. Better that he had continued clenching, and thus been unable to open it to unleash this windy little homily, ripe with cliché, bare of specifics and without even the pummeling of BP that everyone had been looking forward to.

## TIMID PUFFBALL PUNCHES

Of course, Obama said that there will be a set-aside cleanup and compensation fund, financed by BP. He tossed the word "recklessness" in BP's direction. But these were timid little puffball punches.

Unlike wars and slumps, where a president can invoke inside knowledge proving victory or recovery is imminent, the singularity of this crisis is that there's no inside story, no disputing the central disastrous facts except to suggest they are even worse than BP or the U.S. government admits.

See ENERGY Page 17

# Political Stench Is Making Us All Sick

By Edwin E. Vineyard

The stench surrounding the oil slick is making us sick. But we are not speaking of the oily muck itself. We are speaking of all the politics being played out around Washington and in media circles around the country. Not only is it dirty and silly politics on display, but we are seeing some of the sorriest displays of personal arrogance and gamesmanship in recent history.

Nobody really knows much more to do about containing the damage from the oil slick than is already being done, prepared, or planned. But everybody in politics, and all of those in the media, have better ideas than any of the experts. And, of course, all of them know how to handle it better than the president.

It seems that everyone actually doing anything in this disaster is clumsy, dumb, and inept while everyone observing from the cynics' chairs could have been doing so much better. It appears that our president, who is stubbornly and deliberately trying to do something, never does the right thing. Why is this?

Some people are criticizing our president for not doing enough, while others are criticizing him for doing too much. Those political ideologues who think that government is too big now think that the president should have taken charge and wrested control from the private company. Others among them are afraid that he might do that, thus expanding government's role too much.

## 'HORRIBLE DISPLAY OF ARROGANCE'

There is a horrible display of arrogance on the part of congressional committee members interviewing officials from British Petroleum. Some hard questioning may be in order, but never hostile, arrogant ranting at an invited guest, now turned captive, who must silently endure berating and browbeating some ignoramus who knows little.

Of course, President Obama consistently catches the harshest criticism from the least knowledgeable and thoughtful of our citizens. He also catches similar criticism from the congresspersons those same voters send to the halls of Congress to represent them.

Who elected the talking heads of the media, and just how did they get so omniscient that they continually criticize the president whatever he does? After his recent prime time speech to the nation, there seemed to be no one in the media

who was not critical. He wasn't emotional enough. He was too nice. He gave an informative, educational lecture on the details of the problem, they said. He talked about the energy policy agenda. He met nobody's expectations except for a large segment of the American people, who didn't listen to the pundits telling them what to think. As one sympathetic writer said, "The President has experienced a gusher of criticism."

## A LANDMARK DEAL

The \$20 billion escrow deal with the BP, set aside to be administered by a third party, to meet all claims without court adjudication was indeed a remarkable accomplishment. It demonstrated the results brought forth by a competent and forceful president working behind the scenes. It showed the company and the government were now on the same page – trying to do something to provide security for alleviating problems of all those impacted by the catastrophe. This was a landmark deal, securing the welfare of those along the gulf coast.

My word! One would think from all the media chitchat and political uproar that some satanic bargain had been made. Again one could query: "What more can you ask or expect in the way of due diligence from either the president or the company?"

Republican Joe Barton of Texas, ranking committee Republican and the recipient of \$1.4 million in campaign money from oil companies, apologized profusely to the executives of BP for the unpardonable "shakedown" perpetrated by the president. He said he does not want to live in a country where the government can deal with a corporation that way.

Who does that guy represent? Certainly not any of the American people or businesses impacted along the Gulf Coast or elsewhere affected by this disastrous event. Obviously he represents his big oil donors.

Nevertheless, Texas Sen. John Cornyn joined with Barton's condemnation. Michele Bachmann, Republican from Minnesota, called the deal "a fleecing." And 114 House Republicans signed on a policy document rejecting the agreement as a "shakedown" of BP by President Obama. Other prominent Republicans are said

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# Corporations Profiting Off Permanent War

By Bill Quigley

The U.S. is much closer to permanent war than permanent peace. Corporations are profiting from wars and lobbying politicians for more. The U.S. and the rest of the world cannot afford the rising personal and financial costs of permanent war.

No doubt, the USA is No. 1 in war. This coming year, the U.S. will spend \$708 billion on war, and another \$125 billion for Veterans Affairs – over \$830 billion. In a distant second place is China, which spent about \$84 billion on its military in 2008.

The U.S. also leads the world in the sale of lethal weapons to others, selling about one of every three weapons worldwide. The USA's major clients? South Korea, Israel and United Arab Emirates.

Our country has 5% of the world's population, but accounts for more than 40% of the military spending for the whole world.

Our nation does not respect our soldiers by engaging in permanent war. War is grinding up our children. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have cost over 5,000 U.S. lives and tens of thousands more lives of people in those countries.

## SUICIDES SKYROCKETING

Over 20% of those in our military who served in these two wars – 320,000 people – have war-related traumatic brain injuries. Suicide rates are up by 26% among 18- to 29-year-old male veterans in the latest Veterans Administration study.

Mental health hospitalizations are now the leading cause of hospital admissions for the military, higher than injuries. On any given night, over 100,000 veterans are homeless and living on our nation's streets.

Since 2001, the U.S. has spent over \$6 trillion [a trillion is a million millions] on war and preparations for war. That is about \$20,000 for every woman, man and child in the U.S. Iraq and Afghanistan alone have cost the U.S. taxpayer over \$1 trillion dollars since 2001.

Last month Marine Gen. James Cartwright, the vice chair of the military Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Army Times that the U.S. can expect continuing war “for as far as the eye can see.”

In the name of this perpetual war against terrorism, the U.S. still jails hundreds without trial in Guantanamo, holds hundreds more in prisons on bases and in secret detention worldwide, tries to avoid constitutional trials for anyone accused of terrorism, admits it is trying to assassinate an American citizen Muslim cleric in Yemen and launches deadly drone strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, killing civilians and suspects whenever they decide.

## CORPORATIONS PROFIT GREATLY

One support for permanent war is that there are corporations in the U.S. which openly lobby for more and more money to be invested in war. Why? Because they profit enormously from government contracts.

President Dwight Eisenhower, who believed in a strong military, warned the U.S. about just this in his farewell address to the nation in 1961. “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.

“The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.”

War is very big business. People know that private companies are doing much more in war. In January 2010, the Congressional Research Service reported that there are at least 55,000 private armed security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan and maybe many more – as many as 70,000 in Afghanistan alone.

## DEFENSE CONTRACTORS

But much bigger money is available to defense contractors. In 2008 alone, the Top 10 defense contractors received nearly \$150 billion in federal contracts. These corporations spent millions to lobby for billions more in federal funds and hired ex-military leaders and ex-officials to help them profit off war.

For example, look at the top three defense contractors, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Northrop Grumman. They demonstrate why perpetual war is profitable and part of the reason it continues.

Lockheed Martin is the largest military contractor in the world with 140,000 employees, taking in over \$40 billion annually, over \$35 billion of which comes from the U.S. government.

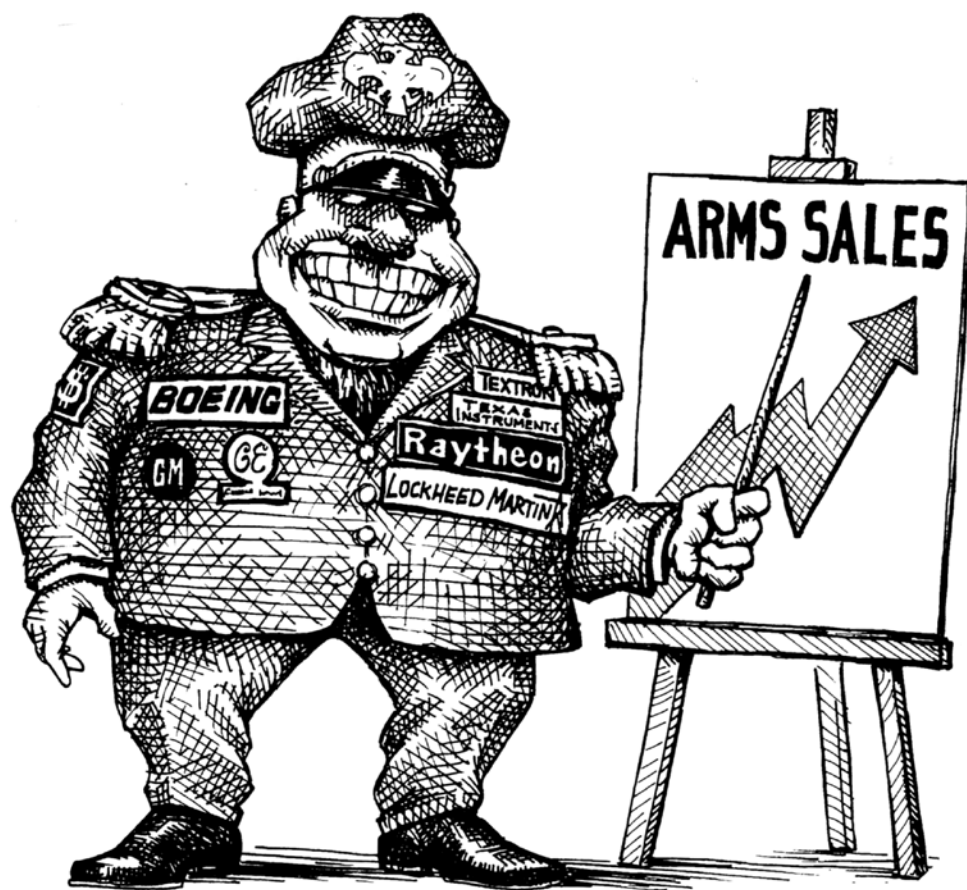
Lockheed Martin boasts that they have increased their dividend payments by more than 10% for the seventh consecutive year – perfectly in line with the increase in war spending by the U.S. Its chairman, Robert Stevens, received over \$72 million in compensation over the past three years.

Lockheed's board of directors includes a former under secretary of defense, a former U.S. Air Force commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, a former deputy director of Homeland Security and a former supreme allied commander of Europe. These board members receive over \$200,000 a year in compensation.

## PAC SPENDING

Its political action committee gave over \$1 million to federal candidates in 2009, and is consistently one of the top spending PACs in the U.S. They appeal to all members of Congress because they strategically have operations in all 50 states. And since 1998, Lockheed has spent over \$125 million to lobby Congress.

Northrop Grumman is a \$33 billion company with 120,000 employees. In 2008,



it received nearly \$25 billion in federal contracts. Its chairman, Ronald Sugar, received over \$54 million in compensation over the past three years.

Northrop's board includes a former admiral of the Navy, a former 20-year member of Congress, a former chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a former commissioner of the Security and Exchange Commission and a former U.S. naval officer.

The members of its board of directors received over \$200,000 each in 2009. Its PAC is listed as making over \$700,000 in federal campaign donations in 2009. Since 1998, it has spent over \$147 million lobbying Congress.

## BOEING BIG WINNER

Boeing has 150,000 employees and took in over \$23 billion in federal contracts in 2008. With revenues of \$68 billion in 2009, its chair, James McNerney, was paid over \$51 million over the past three years. Its board members are paid well over \$200,000 a year.

Boeing's directors include a former U.S. Secretary of Commerce, a former White House chief of staff, a former vice chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and a former U.S. ambassador and U.S. trade representative.

It hosts the tenth largest political action committee, giving away more than \$1 million to federal candidates in 2009. Since 1998, it has spent \$125 million lobbying Congress.

## TERMINATE WAR

These corporations take billions from the government and profit from our perpetual state of war. They recycle some of that money back into lobbying the same people who gave it to them, and hire ex-military and government officials to help smooth the process. Their leaders make tens of millions off this work.

The trillions of dollars that it costs to wage permanent war are taxing the U.S. economy. Yet, where are the voices in Congress, Democrat or Republican, that talk seriously of dramatically reducing our military spending? President Obama and the Democrats are effectively continuing the permanent war policies of the Bush years. It is past time for change.

While thousands have been laid in their graves and hundreds of thousands wounded, private military contractors are prospering and profiting as the business of war booms.

The U.S. should not only remember its dead, but work to reverse the profitable permanent war that promises to add more names to the dead and disabled in this country and around the world.

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# STENCH

From Page 15

to be philosophically concerned that this agreement may “empower the government.”

But after the public backlash, Barton was called in by Republican Party leadership in the House and chastised. Then he apologized for his remarks.

Yes, indeed, without even touching on some of the state and local politics involved in the gulf region, the stench of the politics surrounding all of this nationally rivals the smell of the oily muck itself contaminating our shores.

For what it is worth, this writer does not share the joys of others in seeing some congresspersons arrogantly attacking their witnesses from their lofty perches in catbirds' chairs. This often seems an abuse of power. Witnesses deserve professional courtesy, especially those in positions of responsibility in the private or public sector. Watching some of our congresspersons berate and belittle BP executives was not a pleasant experience, in spite of some of that company's failures.

It is a short step from plain discourtesy to demagoguery.

– The author, AKA The Militant Moderate, lives in Enid. More of his essays appear at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net)

## \$900,000 AN HOUR

# Ten Richest Americans Not Worth It

By Les Leopold

Dear Messrs. Tepper, Soros, Simons, Paulson, Cohen, Icahn, Lampert, Griffin, Arnold and Falcone:

It's estimated that about 150,000 teachers will lose their jobs next year because of the financial crisis touched off by your industry.

On behalf of the three million young people who would have been their students, I have a proposition for you: Donate 50% of your 2009 earnings to keep those 150,000 teachers in their classrooms.

Each of you, on average, still would net over \$935 million for the year [you should be able to scrape by on that] – and the money you'd forgo would ensure that three million kids would get an education.

That the 10 of you personally received \$18.7 billion [not million] from your hedge fund proceeds in 2009 is quite a feat, given that it was the worst economic year since the Great Depression.

### 15 MILLION ARE JOBLESS

You each got roughly \$36 million a week – over \$900,000 an hour! Meanwhile, as result of the Wall Street shenanigans you helped engineer, 15 million Americans are now without work.

While you may not feel personally responsible for the crash, you do bear some responsibility since you are major players in the financial industry. [Funny how no one is accepting responsibility for the financial crisis.]

As Leo Hindery Jr. put it, your industry is a "profit-driven, greedy, selfish institution that, with its unbridled compensation practices and current light-touch

regulatory regime is, I truly believe, behind almost every major societal and economic ill that has befallen the United States since 1980."

As you know, you probably would have earned little or nothing in 2009 if the American taxpayer hadn't bailed out the entire financial system. That \$18.7 billion you collected didn't fall from the sky.

### \$10 TRILLION RESCUE PACKAGE

Fearing another great depression, we poured nearly \$10 trillion into the financial sector in the form of loans, liquidity programs, asset guarantees and the like.

Those taxpayer subsidies should have gone to enhancing the public good, not pumping up obscene levels of private gain. Instead the net result of our mammoth rescue effort is that 150,000 teachers are laid off while you collect more than \$36 million a week.

It's a troubling saga of public decay: Your high-flying financial manipulations helped bring down our economy. Millions of people lost their jobs and were no longer able to pay taxes; businesses everywhere went under.

Now state and local governments are going broke and slicing their budgets. Tens of thousands of teachers are losing their jobs. [Those of you who live in Oklahoma are watching this play out with a vengeance, a 9% cut in public education]. Meanwhile, you walk away with billions, courtesy of U.S. taxpayers.

I challenge you to explain this story to your children or to anyone else who

See RICHEST Page 18

# The Case For America's Political Parties

By Danny M. Adkison

What would cause a liberal Democrat to vote for a conservative candidate and a very conservative Tea Party Republican to vote for a gay, pro-gun control, pro-choice, health-care reformer? Would you believe voters acting like pirates? All will be explained.

The answer has to do with primary rules. The rules vary by state. That is because our Constitution doesn't say anything about how political parties will select their candidates. The Constitution doesn't even mention political parties. Once the Constitution was ratified political parties developed, as did methods for selecting candidates.

## ENERGY

From Page 15

The minimum quantity of crude oil spurting out of the broken riser pipe is around 35,000 to 60,000 barrels a day, the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez spill every eight days or so, with the figures revised upward every couple of days. There is absolutely no imminent prospect of this situation improving over the immediate future and a distinct possibility it could last the rest of the year and, conceivably, the rest of Obama's first term – which in this eventuality will also be his last.

Since there are no immediate solutions to what Obama is now calling the worst environmental crisis in America's history, and 71% of Americans polled recently by Gallup think Obama has not shown enough toughness toward BP, task No. 1 for Obama was to persuade all that he's on the job, in charge and ready to kick ass, starting with Tony Hayward's.

### PROMISES, PREDICTION

Obama barely waggled a toe in this all-important direction. He talked about a blue ribbon commission to investigate why the April 20 disaster took place. He pledged a shake-up in federal agencies that had previously been gofers for the oil industry. He said the crisis was manageable, that there are solutions, that containment of the spill will soon yield significant successes and that cleanup efforts will restore the Gulf of Mexico not just to where it was before this accident happened, but to where it was years ago.

Amid this blather, he included one entirely absurd precise prediction that soon BP will be recapturing 90% of the oil coming out of the pipe, a claim for which there is zero available evidence.

Task No. 2 was to repair the political damage Obama has been sustaining in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, all of which face huge losses in jobs, along with revenues from deep-sea drilling. Nothing Obama offered helped the White House here and for the reasons stated above will almost certainly compound the damage. Task No. 3 was to flaunt his overall energy plan.

Obama's terrible speech showed that even now, the White House hasn't managed to get any productive hold on the disaster turning the Gulf of Mexico into a sludge pond. Obama doesn't get it. Rahm Emanuel doesn't get it. The speechwriters don't get it. At the end of his speech, Obama turned to God and told Americans to pray. Here's a meeting of minds with BP, since the oil company says the blowout was an act of God.

Even God won't be able to bail out Obama if he goes on like this.

– Alexander Cockburn is co-editor with Jeffrey St. Clair of the muckraking newsletter *CounterPunch*. He is also co-author of the new book *Dime's Worth of Difference: Beyond the Lesser of Two Evils*, available through [www.counterpunch.com](http://www.counterpunch.com).

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Early parties used congressional caucuses to "nominate" candidates for office. The system came under severe criticism during the late 1820s. This was the "Era of the Common Man" and Andrew Jackson's followers sought to replace [at least in the case of the presidency] "King Caucus" with a more democratic method. Thus was born the convention.

The convention method itself was severely criticized during the Progressive Era for being too far removed from the voters. The convention was replaced with the direct primary [with the exception of the presidency, but that process has, itself, been democratized].

### OKLAHOMA'S CLOSED PRIMARY

This still leaves unanswered the question of how primaries will be conducted. Most states, including Oklahoma, opt for a closed primary system. Under this system, those voters who are registered as Democrats must vote for Democratic candidates and Republicans must vote for Republican candidates.

Other states use the open primary system. Here, a voter may request the ballot of either Democratic or Republican candidates regardless of their legal party affiliation. A voter can request which ballot he uses, but he cannot ask for a ballot containing both major parties' candidates and slap around voting for Democrats for some offices and Republicans for others.

Some states used to allow that. It is called a blanket primary system. In a California case decided in 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court declared this system unconstitutional. Justice Scalia, the conservative justice who criticizes liberal justices for "creating" rights, used the "right of association" to strike California's law down [in spite of the fact that there is no mention of the "right of association" in the Constitution].

Political parties like closed primaries. For one thing, they like to form a habit in the voter. If the rules only allow Democrats to vote for Democrats and likewise with Republicans, they assume the voter will be less inclined to vote for candidates from the other party in general elections.

### BEWARE OF 'PIRATES'

The other reason has to do with why primary rules were recently in the national news concerning Utah. It pertains to what is called "raiding" [like pirates] and it can occur in open primary situations. Here is how it works.

In Utah Democrats allow any voter to participate in their primary. There is a Democratic incumbent running, but he is being challenged by a former schoolteacher who is gay and very liberal. Republicans in Utah don't allow anyone to vote in their primary but Republicans. So, a strategy has developed.

Republicans intend to vote in the Democratic primary and vote for the liberal Democrat. Why? If an extreme liberal is the Democratic nominee it should be easy for the Republicans to win in November. Political scientists call this strategy "raiding."

Oddly enough, the liberal Democratic candidate is encouraging the Republicans to follow this strategy. In this environment the viability of political parties is hardly a priority. Personal ambition is taking precedence over a system in which the parties actually stand for something.

Voting behavior studies indicate that most Americans don't have the level of interest or political knowledge to vote the way they were taught in eighth grade civics class. Only about 25% manage to vote in primary elections and less than half can give the name of their congressman [let alone how they are voting in Congress].

### IMPORTANT FUNCTION

All of this means that it is important to keep political parties strong. They serve an important function in assisting the American voter who tends to be pre-

See PARTIES Page 18

# Germans Cheer U.S. Liberators, 65 Years Later

By Ted Metscher

Eldon Gracy, formerly of Garber, OK, was honored recently in Plauen, Germany for his part in the liberation of Vogtland County, Germany.

His unit, the 87th Infantry Division, moved through this area of Saxony, Germany, able to liberate many villages and small cities from Nazi forces with almost no casualties.

To show its appreciation, the county hosted the Liberty Convoy and honored five veterans of the 87th who were able to attend a four-day event in mid-April, celebrating the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Vogtland County.

These five World War II Veterans became part of the convoy which was produced by an area U.S. Army Reenactment Group. Big crowds formed in the village squares of former East German towns as the convoy of 40 restored U.S. Army vehicles carrying nearly 100 men and women wearing authentic clothing settled into the square.

The town mayors welcomed the convoy and the 87th's veterans. Speakers told of the historical significance of the actions of the 87th Division in April 1945. These histories had been suppressed during the communist government's control and many younger folks were shocked with these facts.

Older village citizens would rush with their cameras to photograph the veterans and relate stories of the day the U.S. soldiers entered their villages.

Most common was the comment, "I was six years old and was in the win-



Former Battle of the Bulge foes Eldon Gracy, left, and Lothar Muller shake hands in Morgenrothe-Rautenkranz, as Tom Burgess looks on. Photo provided.

dow with my mother and you threw some chocolate to me. I have never forgotten. Thank you so much."

"With all the horrible things that happen in war," Gracy said, "I was struck that the giving of our C Ration hard chocolate bars would remain the prominent memory."

During the veteran's visit, the American Ambassador to Germany, Phillip Murphy, came down from Berlin to welcome them and thank them for their service. Katherine Brucker, the USA Council General, spent several days with the Liberty Convoy and addressed citizens in Plauen and

villages in the countryside.

On the last day of the event, in the village of Rautenkranz, a man came up to the five veterans, introduced himself as Lothar Muller, and asked if any of them had been at the Battle of the Bulge. Gracy and his fellow platoon member, Tom Burgess, said that they had been there. Gracy and Muller hugged each other, and even though old warriors don't cry, there were tears in their eyes. Gracy had been wounded in this battle and to this day carries shrapnel in his body. Through an interpreter they spoke of the terrible battle and the

cold weather. Both Gracy and Muller were teenagers at the time. Now, as old men, they stood honoring each other's service.

Also on the final day the Convoy ventured into the Czech city of Kraslice and the veterans of the 87th Division placed a wreath on the door of the former forced labor fabric factory. The SS had operated this factory by taking Jewish women from concentration camps, forcing them to work under horrible conditions with nearly no pay. It was particularly sad that some women were shot by the SS before the women could be liberated.

Gracy graduated from Garber High School and enlisted in the Army in 1944. Many Oklahoma men were recruited to join this division. Known as the Acorn Division, it was placed under General George Patton's 3rd Army. In addition to seeing action in the Battle of the Bulge and crossing of the Rhine, they worked their way through Germany ending the war at Prague. In the Vogtland county, Saxony, Germany, the division oversaw the capitulation of many German units, saving them from the soon-to-come Russian Red Army.

"I was overtaken by the outpouring of good will by the people of Vogtland County," Gracy said. "Folks that were once our enemy now cheer us. I never expected this wonderful reception."

Gracy currently resides in Caldwell, KS, and serves as a Sumner County commissioner.

- The author lives in Norman

## RICHEST

From Page 17

isn't on your payroll. How can you justify making more than \$900,000 an hour in an industry that is essentially responsible for the loss of 150,000 teachers?

Not to pick on you, Mr. Tepper, but you led the list by earning \$4 billion in 2009. That's more than \$1.9 million an hour, or \$32,000 per minute. You earn more in one minute than the average entry-level teacher earns in one year! Please explain.

You personally can do something about this insanity. You can prevent the further deterioration of our public educational system. You can let America know that you are willing to right a wrong.

You know better than anyone else in the country how truly fortunate you are. And you know that you can easily afford to put thousands of teachers back to work, shoring up the public educational system that is at the core of our democracy.

### YOU WOULD STILL BE RICH

Let's be honest, you can cough up \$9 billion and still be wealthier than the pharaohs.

In a saner world, we would have placed a 50% windfall profits tax on all financial earnings in 2009. That would have helped compensate for the massive public subsidies we provided to your industry.

It would have replenished our local, state and federal coffers. But as a nation we are cowed by financial power. We simply do not have the will to challenge our distorted distribution of wealth - at least not yet. However, with the stroke of a pen, you can help rebalance the scales.

In truth, I don't expect you to rise to this challenge. I suspect that if you see this letter, you will come up with a thousand and one reasons to dismiss my request. Some of you might point out that you are already giving hundreds of millions to charities and educational institutions.

Or maybe you'll just be miffed that someone like me has the gall to make such an outrageous proposition. But it's not me that you need to think about.

You need to think about those 150,000 teachers and the three million kids who won't be learning from them next year. Your wealth will have little value if the society around you crumbles.

### GIFT TO WALL STREET

The time may come when the American people demand a modicum of finan-

cial justice and economic sanity. This would require something far beyond the current financial reform, which is basically a gift to Wall Street and your hedge funds.

After all, under this legislation, you'll still be able to pay only 15% tax on your earnings, which is virtually criminal given our revenue shortfalls.

The time may come when we stop allowing financiers to earn billions while we gut our public infrastructure. I don't know when that will be or how we'll get there.

If you keep piling up your billions with no concern for the American people, you might just hasten the day when an angry and determined public comes knocking on your door.

Better you should put our teachers back to work. No?

P.S. If you employ those 150,000 teachers, I'll donate the royalties from my latest book, *The Looting of America*. After all, you're part of the reason the book keeps selling.

- Les Leopold is the author of *The Looting of America: How Wall Street's Game of Fantasy Finance Destroyed Our Jobs, Pensions and Prosperity, and What We Can Do About It*, Chelsea Green Publishing, June 2009

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## PARTIES

From Page 17

occupied with other things. When state laws and rules serve to weaken parties, the democratic system suffers the consequences, and the American voter loses an important partner in making rational voting choices.

As mentioned above, in 2000 the Supreme Court struck down the use of blanket primaries as too threatening to the status of our political party system. The situation in Utah demonstrates that allowing anyone to vote for a party's nominees is just as threatening to viable political parties.

If states won't protect our party system, maybe the Supreme Court, if given the chance to make such a ruling, will.

- The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

# A Victim? BP Actually A Corporate Criminal

By Jim Hightower

Gosh, how quickly things turn. One day, you're a strutting peacock – the next day, you're just another gasping, oil-covered bird.

In early April, BP was strutting about in full corporate splendor, showing off the \$9 billion in profits that it had soaked up in just the first three months of this year. It was also basking in a corporate re-imaging campaign, depicting itself as a clean-energy pioneer and declaring that BP now stood for "Beyond Petroleum."

Since its Gulf of Mexico well blew out on April 20, however, BP has proven to be beyond belief. The wider and deeper that this catastrophe spreads, the more we discover just how oily this giant is.

## 'RECIDIVIST GLOBAL CRIMINAL'

From the time it was known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and set out to grab and control the rich petroleum reserves owned by what is now Iran, BP has been a recidivist global criminal.

In the past three decades, it grew huge by swallowing such competitors as Standard Oil of Ohio, Amoco and Arco. Along the way, it has been implicated in bribery, overthrowing governments, plunder and money laundering, plus having established one of the worst safety and environmental records in an industry that is notoriously reckless on both counts.

And now, its rap sheet grows almost daily. In fact, the Center for Public Integ-

## KEATING

From Page One

and endless badmouthing of Oklahoma needs to come to an end."

He was once asked at a press conference if he had ever read *The Grapes Of Wrath* since he repeatedly criticized Oklahoma, citing the novel. The Joads were a good Christian family; the bad actors in the book were the California cops and the landowners.

Democrats weren't the only ones giving Keating hell. He was blasted by both sides for a political pardon that critics claimed was a favor to a political contributor.

The Pottawatomie County Republican Party issued an unprecedented resolution blasting Keating for his appointment of an out-of-county influential lawyer as Pott County DA. Within minutes, his appointee fired 15 DA staffers. It was the day before Christmas. Keating said it was "unfortunate."

He had no compassion for the poor, killing a measure that would have helped the poor find housing.

A slew of Republican candidates had to pay the state for use of the state airplane at Keating's behest. So much for honoring the taxpayer dollar.

His bitterest critic in the Legislature was Sen. Cal Hobson, D-Lexington, who publicly rebuked Keating for killing a measure to save \$3 million on a lease-purchase agreement for a new private prison. He said Keating chose to fill the pockets of lawyers and consultants.

Keating issued executive orders closing Eastern State Hospital at Vinita and Western State Hospital at Fort Supply. He said patients would be helped by community-based services.

They were totally inadequate.

He sought to close Griffin Memorial Hospital at Norman but Sen. Hobson blocked his order.

In 1997 he skipped the State of the State Address, opting for a Keating family European tour of castles. That one made the national news, including USA Today.

He was chastised by then Democratic Party chief Pat Hall for paying for it with taxpayer funds. He refused to apologize.

Is he sexist? KTOK Radio in Oklahoma City tallied his first 842 appointments and they were 62% white male Republicans. Blacks, Indians and Hispanics combined for 4%.

He took campaign supporter Robert Funk of Express Personnel Services to the Miss America Pageant on a state airplane. Funk did millions in no bid state work.

Keating referred to public schools as a choice of last resort by parents who could not afford private schools. He was educated in upscale private Catholics schools.

He saw no conflict of interest when an aide, Tom Cole [yes, Tom Cole] handled the PR on a state question. He was so disengaged as governor, he signed a law that he had previously signed. So much for his staff work.

The list of his gaffes would fill a volume. Has history taught him anything? He's preaching elimination of the income tax at a time when Republican legislative leadership has shredded the state budget.

Frank Keating stands alone when it comes to political larceny on a grand scale.

ity has revealed that the oil giant's current catastrophic mess should come as no surprise, for it has a long and sorry record of causing calamities. In the last three years, the center says, an astonishing "97% of all flagrant violations found in the refining industry by government safety inspectors" came at BP facilities. These included 760 violations rated as "egregious" and "willful." In contrast, the oil company with the second-worst record had only eight such citations.

## BP KNEW OF PROBLEMS

While its CEO, Tony Hayward, claims that its gulf blowout was simply a tragic accident that no one could've foreseen, internal corporate documents reveal that BP itself had been struggling for nearly a year with its inability to get this well under control. Also, it had been willfully violating its own safety policies and had flat out lied to regulators about its ability to cope with what's delicately called a major "petroleum release" in the Gulf of Mexico.

"What the hell did we do to deserve this?" Hayward asked shortly after his faulty well exploded.

Excuse us, Tony, but you're not the victim here – and this disaster is not the work of fate. Rather, the deadly gusher in the gulf is a direct product of BP's reckless pursuit of profits. You waltzed around environmental protections, deliberately avoided installing relatively cheap safety equipment, and cavalierly lied about the likelihood of disaster and your ability to cope with it.

## 'IT WASN'T OUR ACCIDENT'

"It wasn't our accident," the CEO later declared, as oil was spreading. Wow, Tony, in one four-word sentence, you told two lies. First, BP owns the well, and it is your mess. Second, the mess was not an "accident," but the inevitable result of hubris and greed flowing straight from BP's executive suite.

"The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean," Hayward told the media, trying to sidestep the fact that BP's mess was fast becoming America's worst oil calamity. Indeed, Tony coolly explained that the amount of oil spewing from the well "is tiny in relation to the total water volume." This flabbergasting comment came only two weeks before it was revealed that the amount of gushing oil was 19 times more than BP had been claiming.

Eleven oil workers are dead, thousands of Gulf Coast people have had their livelihoods devastated and unfathomable damage is being done to the gulf ecology. Imagine how the authorities would be treating the offender if BP were a person. It would've been put behind bars long ago – if not on death row.

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## NOTEBOOK

From Page 5

Historic 1017 has been gutted, thousands of mentally ill Oklahomans go untreated, and there is a Republican drive to curb public education by creating vouchers.

These are not Henry Bellmon Republicans. The late Gov. Dewey Bartlett would be stunned by the lack of support for his legacy, Oklahoma's superb Career-Tech system.

The new Republican majority has not only handed fat cats more than \$700 million in tax cuts, they are dedicated to reducing state government. Next year another \$145 million tax cut kicks in – unless it is blocked by a GOP Legislature.

Howard Edmondson and Henry Bellmon took their issues directly to the people. It needs to happen in this year's elections.

The best way to make politicians see the light is to make them feel the heat.

## TOM GUILD

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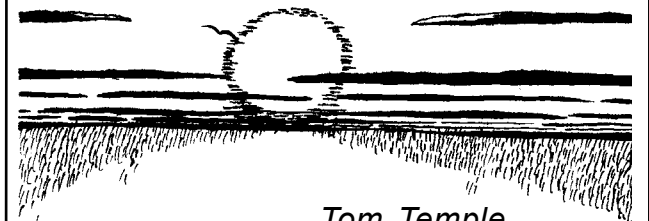
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