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Don't Ask, Don't Tell Stalled Republican Bigotry

By Frosty Troy

When I served in Korea in 1951-52 we had a sergeant major in my outfit who was a superb leader, a gung-ho career topkick who kept the morale up – especially after one soldier shot himself in the foot in order to go home, even at the price of a dishonorable discharge.

When the peace talks began we were finally at ease until a pair of military police showed up. They were directed to the sergeant major and, without a word, put him under arrest. We were dumbfounded!

It turns out that someone had dredged up the fact that he was a homosexual [the word “gay” wasn’t current at the time].

Say what? The word spread through the company and it was a 100% certainty that he hadn’t hit on a single soldier. Not one of us knew he was a homosexual.

I’ve thought of him many times. My first lieutenant said he was given a “blue” discharge – unfit for active military duty. Anything but an honorable discharge follows you your entire life.

Then along came the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell law [DADT]. Candidate Barack Obama campaigned on the promise to get rid of it.

It appears the 17-year old DADT will eventually be wiped off the books, too late for more than 14,000 summarily discharged, including a number of linguists and officers sorely needed in the military. Republican Defense Secretary Robert Gates favors its elimination.

California U.S. District Judge Virginia A. Phillips ruled last month that “don’t ask, don’t tell” is unconstitutional and has a “direct and deleteri-



ous effect” on the armed services.

The ruling came after a trial in which the Justice Department defended the law, even though President Obama supports repeal. The policy forbids the military from asking about a service member’s sexual orientation but retains a ban on gays serving openly.

The case was brought by the Log Cabin Republicans, a 19,000-member group that includes current and for-

mer military members. Phillips asked the group to suggest language for an injunction, and it urged the judge to ban enforcement throughout the military of “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

The Wall Street Journal reports that “there are an estimated 48,000 homosexuals on active duty or the reserves.”

Poll after poll in the military and among other Americans show it is a non-issue for the majority. Of course religious fanatics are opposed to its repeal. These are some of the same folk who would bring back a time when birth control devices and condoms were illegal and where in some states homosexuality was a crime.

Why do some people obsess over other people’s sexuality? Why would any sane person choose to be a homosexual, shunned by many on the religious right – often by their own families?

Lady Gaga has taken up the cause because among young adults it’s a non-issue. At a time when the Army, hurting for recruits, was enlisting non-violent felons, law-abiding gays were being kicked out.

I have friends who are gay. I’m personally supporting a transgender person for the Oklahoma House of Representatives, Democrat Brittany Novotny – easily the most qualified candidate.

Republican senators took a huge step backward, blocking the vote to lift the ban on gays serving openly in the military. They vehemently oppose gay marriage, pandering to the religious right.

The Senate action sends a message of intolerance and intransigence on the civil rights issue of our time. It is the same message preached by the likes of state Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC, who said gays are worse than terrorists.

Republicans constantly claim to be the party that defends the Constitution. They have no legitimate right to that claim until they get rid of their homophobic stance.

Professor Aaron Belkin of San Francisco State University did research on DADT and he came up with five myths:

Myth One: DADT was created to promote unit cohesion and military readiness. False! The law intended no such purposes.

Myth Two: Repealing the law will be difficult. The Center for Military Preparedness put out that malarkey. It has been repeated time and again by former Democratic U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn, a homophobe.

Myth Three: Integration of women and minorities in the military are useful comparisons – they cause huge distractions. In fact, accepting women and minorities had little repercussions except among racists.

Myth Four: Most troops oppose repealing DADT. In fact, in the most comprehensive polls the margin was so small as to be negligible.

Myth Five: It’s a losing issue politically. More than a dozen polls in

See DON’T ASK Page 19

Observations

Finally!

The Oklahoma City black community has stepped up to the plate, no longer willing to accept the fact that black students fall way behind their white counterparts in most public schools.

Example: In 2009, average black Oklahoma fourth graders were 26 points lower on reading exams. If they don't get it when they're young, they eventually end up dropping out of school because they find learning is too hard.

Black parents said at a community meeting they will have a parents committee at every building site, a move strongly supported by School Board Chair Angela Monson and the administration.

How many times have we preached the same sermon. It's not Superman or all that other claptrap that will save children's future, it's parents.

Yes, public education has a funding problem in Oklahoma and the nation, but all the money in the world will not replace a caring parent[s]. The No. 1 motivator in study after student is a caring parent.

We have just witnessed caring parents and public officials stepping up to the plate in Oklahoma City. It ought to be a movement statewide and nationwide. Public schools are home to 90% of our children.

Suicide

The tragic end to the life of Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers student who killed himself after being tormented by fellow students, has renewed attention on the prevalence of suicide.

The 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., suicide accounts for nearly 35,000 deaths annually. According to the most recent report of national death statistics, released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in May, the national rate of suicide in 2007 was 11.5 per 100,000 people.

Oklahoma ranks 13th in suicides, with 531 last year. That's 14.7 per

100,000 population.

Suicide has become a major topic on college campuses across the country. Although the suicide rate of college students - 7.5 per 100,000 - is less than the national rate, suicide remains the second leading cause of death among college students, after car accidents. Nearly 1,100 students every year take their own lives.

According to the Jed Foundation, a college suicide prevention program, one in 10 college students has considered suicide. As well, a 2002 study released by the American College Health Association estimated that 1.5 of every 100 students has attempted suicide.

Suicide can't be traced back to a single cause, but it occurs in certain areas more than others.

Kudos to state Rep. Anastasia Pittman, D-OKC, for leading the campaign in Oklahoma to toughen school policies against bullying - all too often cited as the trigger for suicide among America's youth.

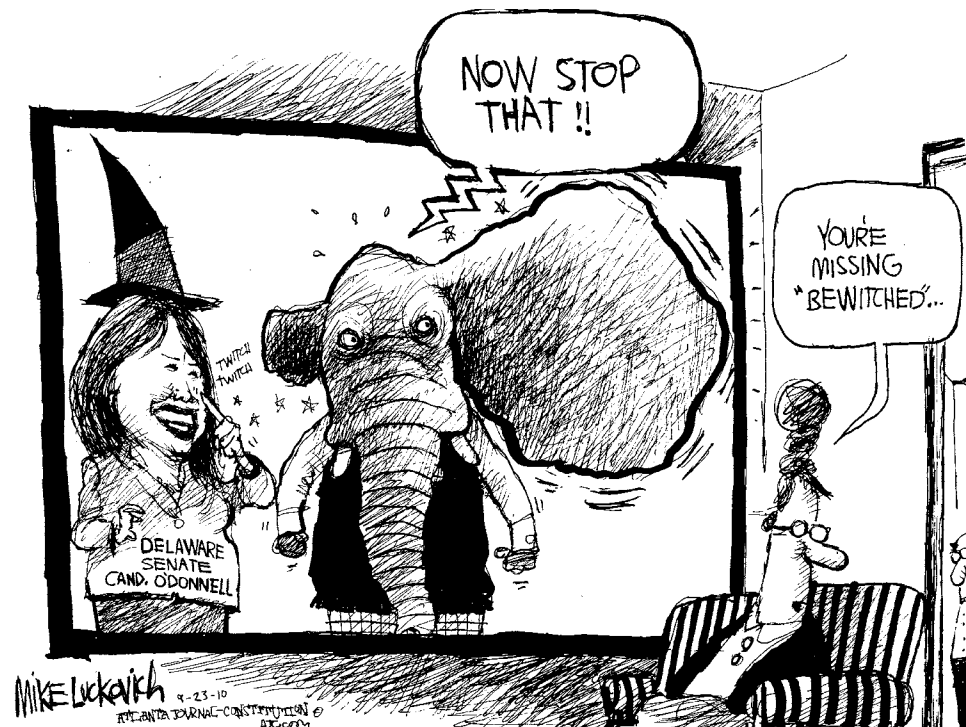
Grim Data

A new study from the Southern Poverty Law Center finds that in many of the nation's middle schools, black boys are nearly three times as likely to be suspended as white boys, and black girls are suspended at four times the rate of white girls.

School authorities also suspend Hispanic and Native American middle school students at higher rates than white students, though not so disproportionately, and Asian students are less likely to be suspended than whites.

The study analyzed four decades of federal Department of Education data on suspensions, with special focus on figures from 2002 and 2006, drawn from 9,220 of the nation's 16,000 public middle schools.

The authors focused on middle schools because research has shown that students' middle school experience is crucial for determining future



academic success.

One recent study of 400 incarcerated high school freshmen in Baltimore found that two-thirds had been suspended at least once in middle school.

Federal law requires schools to expel students for weapons possession and incidents involving the most serious safety issues.

This is not only a national tragedy, it's a looming economic disaster for all of America.

Yes, We Can

Watching Glenn Beck's rant at his "Restoring Honor" rally in Washington, DC, it was hard not to throw up. One columnist compared him to Elmer Gantry.

The country is driven to despair and confusion, with a large segment of the people prepared to believe anything they are told, in part because we are a country less and less educated, increasingly unable to tell fact from fiction because we are so unschooled in basic essential knowledge about America and the world.

A 2006 National Geographic-Roper Survey puts it in perspective: Only 23% of college-educated young people could find Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Israel on a map, four countries of ultimate importance to American policy.

Check the Pew Research Center survey reporting "nearly one-in-five Americans [18%] now say Obama is a Muslim, up from 11% in March 2009. Only about one-third of adults [34%] say Obama is a Christian, down sharply from 48% in 2009."

Of course the jump in the "Obama is a Muslim" numbers is sharpest among hate-filled Republicans. A Newsweek poll finds a majority of Republicans also believe that it's "definitely" or "probably" true that "Obama sympathizes with Islamic fundamentalists who want to impose Islamic law around the world."

It's not just that 46% of Republicans in one poll believe the lie that Obama is a Muslim, or that 27% in the party doubt that the president of the United States is a citizen. But fully half of them believe falsely that the big bailout of banks and insurance companies under TARP was enacted by Obama, and not by President Bush.

We think we can't lose America but we can. The tombstone will read: Ignorance Is Its Own Reward.

Foster Kids

Why would the White House and Republican Congress cut funds for foster care? Why would they seek to gut the Perkins Act, one of the few methods older foster kids have of getting a marketable skill?

More than 16% of the roughly 550,000 youth in publicly supported foster care are between 16 and 18. About one-third have been in care for at least two years, and one-fourth have been in care for five years or more.

It is estimated that each year about 20,000 young people leave the foster care system at age 18 without being adopted or returning to families.

In Oklahoma, more than 6,600 youth are in foster care, averaging 24 months.

African-Americans are disproportionately represented in foster care. They make up more than 40% of the foster care population, even though they represent less than 20% of the nation's child population.

By contrast, white children comprise only 31% of the foster care population, but 64% of the country's children.

As children move along in age within the foster care system, African-American youngsters are more likely to be in residential or group care instead of family foster care. African-American children also stay in care longer, and they are least likely to be reunited with their families.

The problems of adolescents in foster care are compounded by their considerable and overlapping health and mental health problems. An estimated 30% to 40% of foster children have physical or emotional difficulties.

Those leaving care are at especially high medical risk, likely to have acute, chronic, and complex health needs resulting from past neglect or abuse.

Yet a major problem for this population is their lack of even minimal medical coverage. Adding to that dismal fact is that 55% drop out of school, under-educated and ready for the streets.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why America's prisons are brimming with more than two million prisoners - highest incarceration rate in the western world.

The lesson is simple except for the simple-minded in Washington: Help the kids when they are kids, or pay a far greater price when they're grown.

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

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

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U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, hit an all-time low by putting a hold on aid to Haiti where nearly two million are homeless and hundreds are dying in the wake of devastating flooding. Is there a Christian bone in his body?

Dart: To the federal government, playing policeman to the world – \$1,039,531,000,000 spent on the military in a single year. That figures out at \$1.98 million for every single minute for war and so-called defense.

Despite surging enrollment, State Superintendent Sandy Garrett broke the bad news to school districts that they will have \$200 million less than the previous year. The Education Jobs Act [which Mary Fallin voted against] may save as many as 1,900 school jobs.

Laurel: To Sen. Don Barrington, R-Lawton, winner of the national Shawn Beaty Award for helping solve cold cases. He authored legislation to let Oklahoma law enforcement use outside resources in solving crimes.

Talk about delayed reaction. Gadfly lawyer Jerry Fent has asked the State Supreme Court to rule on the legality of Oklahoma's superb School of Math & Science. He says it was created as "special legislation" which violates the State Constitution.

Dart: To the Oklahoma House Republican leadership for holding a secret meeting to get funding briefing on the budget hole in the coming Legislature. The minimum hole is \$565 million – and it could be a lot more. Hey guys, it's the taxpayers' money.

Speaker Designate Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, says pension stabilization will be a priority in 2011. Ten years ago Oklahoma state pensions were underfunded by \$6 billion, now it's \$15 billion – worst in the nation. Teachers Retirement shortage is \$9.5 billion.

Laurel: To the Obama Administration's beefed up anti-illegal immigrant push, dropping the number from 850,000 to 300,000 in the past 12 months. – The Wall Street Journal

Republican gubernatorial candidate Mary Fallin says in a commercial about serving in Congress, "During my short time there I learned one thing ..." Yes, it was the shape of George W. Bush's rear.

Dart: To State Rep. Leslie Osborn, R-Tuttle, who told a public forum that Oklahoma is "already funding public education at a great rate." Where do Republicans find these people? We're 47th per child and 49th in teacher pay.

We would remind the sloping skulls attacking the Muslim religion that 60 Muslims died in the World Trade Center disaster. They ranged from financial analysts to secretaries – ordinary Americans.

Laurel: To the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Poteau, winner of the first Henry Bellmon Award for exemplary sustainability leadership.

The Daily Disappointment editorial page would be funny if it wasn't taken seriously by so many people. They led the cheers for \$771 million in GOP tax cuts, dipping Oklahoma to 47th in what we spend on a kid's education, 49th in teacher salaries, dead last in the seven state region.

Dart: To a lying campaign ad that claims SQ 744 would cost \$1.7 billion a year when it's phased in by \$850 million a year over three years. It would be fully paid for with money left over if the Legislature eliminated tax credits for the rich and super rich.

Newsweek singled Oklahoma out for its unique way of attracting industry. They failed to note that \$5.4 billion in tax credits are on the books and at least \$2 billion has yet to create a job.

Laurel: To U.S. News & World report magazine, naming Oklahoma City as one of the 10 best places to live in America. [Sept. 10 issue]

The latest Gallup Poll shows 61% of parents think a teacher's salary should be tied to his or her students' academic achievement.



Dart: To Oklahoma's Legislature for this state being one of the third that teaches abstinence only, placing us fifth for teen pregnancies. We require driver's ed but don't tell kids the truth about something even more dangerous to their future.

We're proud of the dozens of students who protested the suspension of Skiatook High School Principal Donna Brogan, a whistle blower who was punished for telling the truth about administration misdeeds.

Laurel: To more than 700 volunteers who, in the past year, helped 23,900 Oklahomans learn to read and write. More than 6,700 earned their GED.

What does sexual preference have to do with military service? Nothing. Congressional elimination of Don't Ask, Don't Tell is a foregone conclusion. Exception is Oklahoma U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, the moral equivalent of Attila the Hun.

Dart: To the Republican Legislature, for so underfunding the Department of Public Safety, it now has a backlog of more than 5,000 persons seeking handicapped parking permits. Average wait is a month.

The new documentary, Waiting For Superman, has touched off another round of public education bashing. It was by a guy who has three kids in upscale private schools.

Laurel: To the Journal Record, for their forthright opposition to SQ 751 that would make English as the official state language. It's another anti-immigrant measure dreamed up by the Republican Legislature

When the National Public Radio's fabulously funny Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me was brought to Oklahoma City on the 55th anniversary of KOSU, a panelist brought the house down when he commented about our two pathetic U.S. senators, Inhofe and Coburn.

Dart: To GOP gubernatorial candidate Mary Fallin, who refused to speak at a higher education open forum until a Jari Askins proponent, ex-State Senate Leader Mike Morgan, left the room. Is she running for governor or queen?

OU President David Boren and OSU President Burns Hargis hammered SQ 744, saying it would mean double-digit tuition increases. The law plainly states college presidents are to stay out of politics.

Laurel: To the wonderful 72,000 Oklahoma students from 171 schools who raised \$183,000 to benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. It was through Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies program.

You know Oklahoma Democrats are in the doldrums when a mere 7% of 15,000 registered Dems turned out in Cherokee County, most Democratic county in the state.

Dart: To Oklahoma's miserable congressional delegation, unanimously opposed to repealing the Bush trillion-dollar tax cut for the super rich. President Obama shows some backbone by saying he will fight to end the Bush tax cuts, except for the true middle class.

GOP gubernatorial candidate Mary Fallin is running a bogus ad against Democrat Jari Askins. There is no "cap and trade" law but it's a fact that Fallin voted for the Wall Street bailout with no provision for payback.

Laurel: To Elizabeth Smith, a reading teacher at Byng Junior High, named the 2011 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year at the annual event coordinated by State Superintendent Sandy Garrett and her staff, and held at the Oklahoma State Fair.

Sad to report that new Census Bureau figures show 43.6 million Americans work below the poverty line. In Oklahoma it's one out of five in a family of four living on \$22,000 or less.

Dart: Yes, another dart for U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn for holding up since June the appointment of Charles Weeks as U.S. Marshal for Oklahoma. Both Gov. Brad Henry and ex-Gov. Frank Keating endorsed him.

Who would have dreamed that the U.S. Supreme Court would one day have no Protestant member? It's true, six Catholics and three Jews – most conservative court in decades. [Judicature magazine]

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Oklahoma politics in the year 2010 is very difficult to understand. Candidates running for office are using President Obama as a whipping boy while advocating states rights and less federal involvement. The Obama stimulus funds have saved Oklahoma's public school system and provided major funding for Medicaid that provides medical care for the poor and the working poor.

If Oklahoma is to become a shining beacon for states rights, the governor and the state Legislature must fulfill their responsibilities through reform and sufficient taxes to adequately fund the operation of state government. That is not the case in the year 2010. In this age of high technology, all the pressure and demands focus the light of hope on our public school system that is staying alive the past three years through federal funding.

The expenditure per child in Oklahoma is less than the expenditure in Arkansas and Oklahoma now ranks 49th out of the 50 states in finance of education.

We, the people of Oklahoma, must demand that the governor and Legislature fulfill their responsibilities by making educational funding their No. 1 responsibility, enabling our children and grandchildren the ability to compete and assure Oklahoma's future.

The answer is State Question 744 - VOTE YES!

James B. Townsend
Shawnee

Editor, The Observer:

If you vote down SQ 744 then it will be used to say that Oklahomans do not want public education. How many companies will want to move to Oklahoma with funding for schools on the bottom?

It will hurt if they cut services, but speaking from a purely political point of view, forcing the GOP to cut services will not get them any votes in 2012.

As far as I can see Oklahoma is on the bottom on education and everything else and if they keep cutting taxes it will get worse. The only way the GOP will fund education is if they are forced or if we give in and let them teach whatever the hell they want to teach. Get some backbone.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Congratulations to the voters of Duncan and Guthrie on voting down recent lease revenue school bonds

in a spectacular manner. Such voter judgment reveals why these communities are what they are. My town, Chickasha, voted for a \$20 million Obama stimulus "Build America" bond which carries an interest rate of 6.243% of which the U.S. Treasury will reimburse the authority that issued those bonds to the tune of 35% of the interest. Taxpayers will pay that 35%.

Almost hilarious is the fact that many of those voters who voted for this stimulus package are as anti-Obama as can be found.

P.S. The Pioneer School in Grady County recently sold a bond issue bearing an interest rate of 1.93% because it was a prudent general obligation bond issue.

Homer H. Hulme
Chickasha

Editor, The Observer:

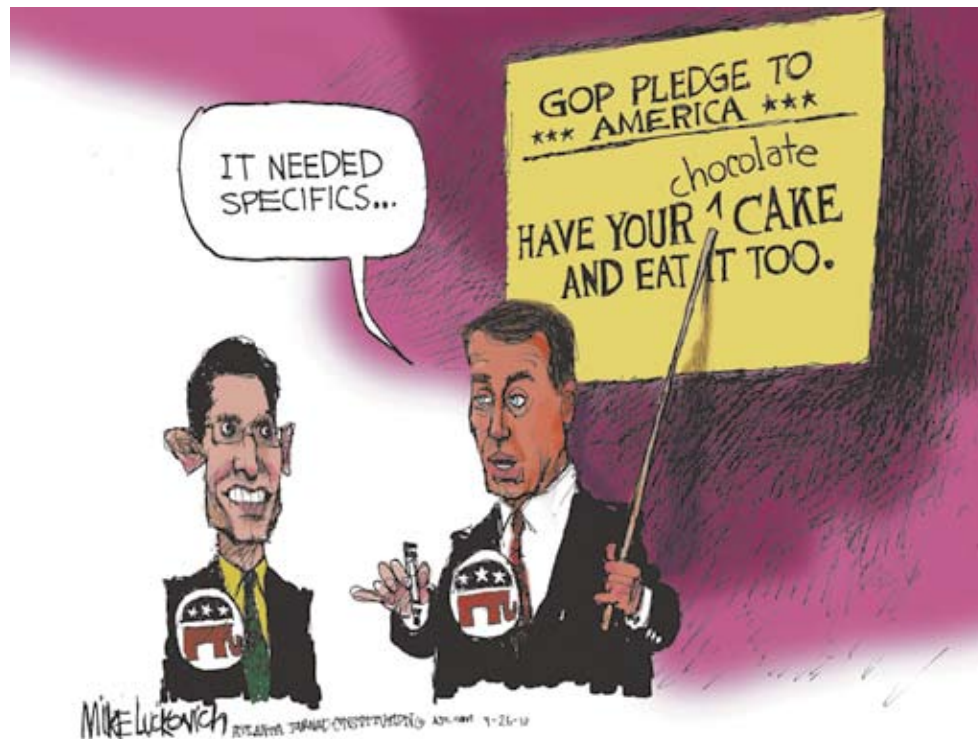
My husband and I have been reading The Observer for many years now. We depend on The Observer for much information that we would not otherwise have access to. What troubles me the most is the fear and hate-mongering going on in politics these days. You know, I hardly ever agreed with anything George W. Bush did during his eight years, but it would never have occurred to me to publicly show disrespect toward him, because he WAS my President. I griped about it at home! Somebody asked me the other day if I liked Obama and I told them that I think basically he's swimming around in the cesspool of what has become Washington, DC just trying to keep his head above water.

I would really have liked to have seen what Obama could have accomplished had he followed Bill Clinton instead of Bush. Imagine the possibilities.

I decided a while back to stop watching so much TV and start reading more. We have subscriptions to Harpers, Time, The Economist and, of course, The Observer. I'm not going to let MSNBC or FOX tell me how I should vote or how I should stand on a particular issue. I read. I also don't read blogs on the Internet, because stupidity seems to abound in them.

Michael Jackson had a song entitled "they don't really care about us." I feel that way, especially with regards to our Oklahoma contribution to the U.S. Senate and Congress. Yet again, my favorite quote, "Stupidity abounds." I love my state but sometimes I think it would be better for me emotionally and politically to head east for a blue state!

P.S. I appreciate the person who in



the Sept. 10 issue [and obviously a Republican] stated that he read The Observer to get a different perspective and to come to a better educated decision. We surely need more folks like that.

Sherri Goodwin
Cheyenne

Editor, The Observer:

Recently, Republicans unveiled their plan for governing - their Pledge to America.

They're pledging to cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires.

They're pledging to roll back regulations on big oil and Wall Street.

They're pledging to strike down rules reining in the credit card lenders and the insurance companies.

They're pledging to increase the deficit by trillions of dollars.

Their agenda is a windfall for the folks spending millions to put them back in power - the lobbyists, the big corporations, and the special interests.

So what else is new?

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

In my opinion the Republicans have a chance of repealing health care, returning us to the good old days. As a father who lost his youngest son to cancer, I would like to review the good old days.

One drug, CGFC, cost a little over \$10,000 a month. A clerk in my health care company rejected the use of this drug on the basis it was experimental. I told the doctor that I needed this drug for the weekend so he lent me this drug. When my son died I gave the doctor about \$13,000 of this drug for other children. I did this by completing the insurance forms a little ahead of time.

When I gave the doctor back the medicine, I suddenly realized that I could have given the doctor an even larger quantity of this drug. I could have taken \$50,000 or \$100,000. I had taken this drug and I failed to help more children.

My minister created a sermon about this subject. He pointed out that there is a difference between speeding for one's benefit and speeding to the hospital. However, there is a law about stealing and I would have done anything to keep my son alive.

Never forget that this is only one drug and does not include treatment,

hospitalization, other drugs, home care and a multitude of other decisions that a father must make. So let us return to the good old days where a father must include the financial cost and insurance profits as part of his thinking.

Stephen E. Covert
Midwest City

Editor's Note: Stephen E. Covert, CPA, is the Democratic nominee for state treasurer.

Editor, The Observer:

Bonzo and Bonzora Bonkers were in mild financial straits. Both parents worked outside the home; they preferred steak over poultry. But when the fourth Bonker arrived, the Bonkers decided that Bonzora stay home to benefit the Bonker bitty bodies - in order to continue their steak-eating - a bit of sophistic thinking, yes?

By the time all the bitty Bonkers left their abode, Bonzo and Bonzora were going Bonkers. Their finances were upside-down. Their rears were in arrears.

The Associated Press reports that U.S. Rep. Dan Boren was one of 30-plus Democrats to break with their leadership over extending all of the so-called Bush II tax cuts. U.S. Rep. John Sullivan viewed the tax cuts for all as critical. Describing the economy as stagnant, Sullivan said families and businesses cannot plan for a stable future without assurance that they will not be hit by higher taxes - i.e., they want steak.

The Bonker and Boren types say no never mind - our families and constituents deserve to eat high-on-the-hog. The Devil take the hindmost. Eat, drink, and be merry, think not what you can do for families and fortunes. America is Blessed!

Cecil Acuff
Perkins

Editor, The Observer:

State Question 755 on the Nov. 2 ballot would prohibit judges from considering Sharia [Muslim] law when deciding cases. The sheer absurdity of it brings to mind a friend who is of obvious Eastern or Middle Eastern descent. In other words, she doesn't look like "one of us." And she works in a very public position.

Sometimes a customer asks her rather bluntly about her religion. It is hard to judge their intentions, but you have to agree they would not like-

See LETTERS Page 17

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.

Frosty Troy's Notebook

Myths Debunked



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

More than 300 experts came forward to debunk the chronic attacks on President Barack Obama, blaming him for the poor economy.

Go anywhere in Oklahoma and the litany is the same – Obama has plunged us into debt. Obama bailed out the banks. Obama is a Muslim. Obama is a socialist.

“Why are you a Christian?” a woman asked him at one of the backyard meetings. The tone was clear – she didn’t believe he was.

He had to once again address his belief that Jesus Christ is his personal savior. He wasn’t raised in the church, he said, but he came to believe in Jesus Christ.

How sad that a President – mainly because he’s black – has to face such ignorant questions. His birth certificate is a matter of record – he’s an authentic American, but thousands of Oklahomans don’t believe it. Ignorance and/or racism – what an obnoxious combination.

As we pointed out in a previous Observer, Jack Kennedy had to make his case for being a Catholic running for president. He said, in effect, if he were elected, the Pope would not be on the next boat to America.

The President has finally hit the campaign trail, realizing that there is no such thing as bipartisanship – Republicans want him to fail at everything – when in fact he’s been a success against formidable odds in rescuing the auto industry, backbone of the economy.

Three hundred-plus economists and analysts issued a statement warning that the “deficit hawks” who appear to be gaining the upper hand in our economic debates are threatening to turn an already deeply painful recession into a full-blown depression.

In other words, the attacks on Obama can backfire and slide the economy into another Depression.

In a conference call with reporters organized by the Campaign for America’s Future, the experts warned that the American economy now stands at a crucial juncture.

The economists acknowledged that public debt is mounting, and presented a choice of two different paths to right the ship: imposing fiscal “austerity” today, in the midst of the most serious downturn since the Great Depression, or investing in the American economy – with public spending over the short term – in order to grow our way out of the red ink.

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich said that the economists’ statement “is both a warning about the danger of deflation and continued stagnation, and it’s also a plan for growth – the right way to approach and address long-term deficits.”

Are the Okie critics listening? Reich warned that if the policies being pursued by Washington’s deficit hawks continue, we risk not only a “double-dip” recession but possibly a “lost decade, similar to that experienced by Japan during the 1990s.

Think it can’t happen here? Think again.

The policy wonks advocate increased aid to cash-strapped states and municipalities, direct support for public service jobs and comprehensive investments in America’s aging infrastructure.

“This is about a high road to recovery versus a low road to fiscal balance,” said Robert Kuttner, a senior fellow with Demos. “All of us want reduced deficits at some point. The question is: what is the proper sequencing, and what is the proper analysis of cause and effect?”

Kuttner said the economists’ view was “simple.”

“You get the recovery first, and that requires increased public investment, and then the road to fiscal balance is much less arduous because people are working, businesses are investing and tax revenues go up because you’re in recovery.”

“We live with falling bridges, collapsing sewers, decrepit schools, aged gas lines and much more,” said Robert Borosage, co-Director of the Campaign for America’s Future. “Everyone agrees we have to rebuild an aging and outmoded infrastructure, and there’s no better opportunity to do so than now – interest rates are low, construction workers are idled, and anyone with a whit of business



sense would grab this moment to launch a major project to rebuild America.”

Borosage contrasted that view with a proposal put forward by House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-OH, to cut \$100 billion in discretionary spending next year, at a time when consumers are too maxed out to create the demand needed to get the economy back on track.

There can be no clearer statement of the divorce between ideology and basic good business sense.

I listened to the conference call, and all of the speakers agreed that the public discourse around these issues has been skewed by conservative ideologues.

There’s been a huge investment in influencing public opinion on the part of fiscal conservatives who are also long-standing philosophical opponents of social insurance. This includes Rush Limbaugh, a fountain of ignorance, and his ilk on TV and radio.

Leading the parade is Fox “News” which is the Bible of the lame brains, unable or unwilling to study issues, weigh different opinions, and make up their own minds.

One compliment I abhor is when someone tells me they read and believe every word in The Observer. We rejoice in printing different viewpoints and we encourage those who disagree to sound off in our columns – a letter or an article.

Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, called it “striking” that “we’ve had a narrative around this downturn that is 180 degrees at odds with reality.”

The common storyline, he said, is that “we have an out-of-control government and out-of-control government spending.” But, according to Baker, “it’s very easy to show that this has almost no plausible relationship with the deficits we’re facing.”

He explained that the causes of the deficit are quite simple: Bush’s unfunded tax cuts, bloated defense budgets and an economic downturn that has the American economy operating at a level 10% beneath its potential capacity.

He added that over the long haul, the real challenge facing American families and businesses will continue to be health-care costs, which are around 2.5 times higher in the U.S. than in other wealthy nations.

The President is anything but a socialist. If he was he wouldn’t have insisted that the auto companies pay back the American taxpayers for the bailout, he would have nationalized them.

I take a back seat to no one when it comes to loving this crazy little state. It simply breaks my heart that the pulpit and the media are failing to live up to their real calling – telling Oklahomans the truth, putting down the lies.

RABID DOG MISTAKEN FOR TEA PARTY HOPEFUL

A rabid Doberman Pinscher jumped on stage at a Tea Party rally in Missouri on Labor Day and barked at the crowd for nearly 20 minutes before people realized he was not a candidate.

The dog, later identified by its owner as “Mister Buster,” held the crowd spellbound as he barked, growled, and frothed at the mouth, eventually receiving a standing ovation for his exertions.

Gwendolene Thomason, 42, a Tea Party supporter from Jefferson City, was one of the hundreds on hand who were convinced that the Doberman was a Tea Party candidate until he was outed as a dog.

“I liked what he had to say,” she said. “He reminded me of Glenn Beck, only fierrier.”

The Doberman’s canine identity finally became clear when he lunged at a man in

the front row and wrested a hamburger from his right hand, taking two of the man’s fingers with it.

While the discovery that Mister Buster was not a Tea Party candidate disappointed many in attendance, Ms. Thomason held out hope that, dog or no, he might consider running for office at some point.

“I liked the way he bit off that guy’s hand, and the way he did his business in the middle of the stage,” she said. “We need more of that in Washington.”

Elsewhere, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer named Wednesday a state holiday “to give me more time to think of what to say.”

– The author, Andy Borowitz, is a comedian and writer whose work appears in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, and at his award-winning humor site, *BorowitzReport.com*

'Christian Nation' Gospel As Political Strategy



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

I received a bumper sticker in the mail recently that captured my thoughts perfectly: Worship your faith, not your politics.

From the specter of President Obama feeling the need to emphasize – over and over – that he is a Christian to loopy Edmond minister Paul Blair risking his church's tax-exempt status by endorsing Republican Mary Fallin from the pulpit, the all-too-casual marriage of religion and politics in America should be disconcerting to all.

It not only threatens one of our guiding principles – the separation of church and state – it also cheapens faith. Am I the only one who is immediately suspicious – dare I say, cynical – when politicians start spouting the latest religious buzzwords?

In Oklahoma, it's easy to see why they do – it works.

For a people whipped into a lather over the possibility that some judge, somewhere, someday might attempt to invoke Sharia law, it's amazing how sanguine so many of our neighbors are over the marriage of Christianity and politics.

Theocracies aren't the exclusive province of Islamic radicals, despite what so many American xenophobes seem to think.

Blair's hijinks are chronicled in more detail on page 8, but he is not alone in adhering to – and attempting to advance – the notion that America was founded as a Christian nation.

A Democratic loyalist, going door-to-door in Tulsa, recently had this exchange with a resident about the neighborhood's state representative:

"What party is she," the resident asked.

"A Democrat," replied the campaign worker.

"Oh," the resident said, "we only vote for Christians in our house."

That's the power of the pulpit in Oklahoma – it's not uncommon for evangelical ministers to preach that you can't be a Democrat and a Christian.

It's one thing for Jane Q. Citizen to be misinformed, but it's an entirely different matter for our elected officials to be ignorant – and to celebrate it. Yet, state Senate Republicans are leading this charade, hosting a fund-raiser Oct. 12 at

Preachin' To The Choir

By Sharon Martin

I am happy to live in a country where it is legal, and even expected, for one to complain about the government. It may not be polite to boo the president, but we can do so without fear. We won't go to jail or be shot for holding rallies or peaceful demonstrations. It's our right to speak out against our party when they don't give us everything we want, but it isn't smart to be doing it right now.

So you wanted the public option. So did I. What I really want is a single-payer system, but is it sane to pout about not getting everything we want when we got something? Does it make sense to hand our Congress over to the Party of No and let them dismantle what we did get?

So you wanted tougher regulations on the banks that brought us the bubble. So did I. But remember it was the Republican Congress that got rid of those pesky regulations in the first place.

Did President Obama and the Democrats fulfill every promise they made? There's room for improvement, but we're not going to get it from the party that wanted the president to fail.

We can't dwell on what we didn't get. Instead, we need to open the eyes of working class people who have been gulled by smooth-talking shucksters with a lot of corporate money to spend.

Spread the news about how health care reform is expected to save money. Medicare will remain solid for 12 additional years with the new law. That's not what the Republicans want. They'd like to hand Medicare, and everything else, over to their buddies, the same guys who took our TARP money and put it in their pockets.

When someone says they just don't like any elected officials and they don't think they'll vote, ask them how they feel about unemployment benefits for laid-off workers. Ask them if returning veterans deserve medical treatment for their sacrifice. Tell them their vote does count if they care about these issues.

When someone tells you they are voting moral values, ask them if those values include caring for the sick and the needy. Tell them that tolerance and justice are moral values.

Statesmanship includes compromise and deal-making. Those of us who are proud to be called social liberals may never get everything we want, but we have to hold on to what we have.

If we're too eager to criticize, we may really have something to complain about when the new members of Congress are sworn in.

– The author lives in Oilton. More of her essays are available at www.okobserver.net.

Oklahoma Christian University featuring David Barton, the self-styled historian and Glenn Beck sidekick who's built a career repeating the Christian nation canard.

What does it say about Oklahoma, its politics and its people that the majority party in the state Senate is using as its drawing card for a fund-raising event a revisionist historian whose group, Wall Builders, contends that the First Amendment protects only monotheists' religious beliefs and offers no protections to those who reject religion and espouse atheism.

I was raised a Southern Baptist. From my earliest days, I was taught that Southern Baptists were among the nation's fiercest proponents of the separation of church and state. The reason was simple: In the early days of the Republic, Baptists were targets of withering religious bigotry.

Today's Southern Baptist leadership has forgotten those lessons. Actually, they haven't forgotten – as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Republican Party, they're purposely re-writing history in a decades-long campaign to expand their political power.

And they're joined in their efforts by other fundamentalists, evangelicals and ultra-right wingnuts who are bent on seizing control of government from the school board to the statehouse.

You need look no further than the Religious Right's takeover of the Texas Board of Education for a scary example of the havoc their zealotry can wreak. But consider, also, where Oklahoma is today:

Both our U.S. senators, Republicans Jim Inhofe and Tom Coburn, are heavily involved in The Fellowship, a Washington-based cult that is working to spread radical Christianity into the upper reaches of governments worldwide.



And as many as two dozen lawmakers in the Oklahoma Legislature regularly coalesce around a theocratic agenda that ranges from erecting a Ten Commandments monument on the Capitol grounds to teaching the Bible in public schools.

Will Oklahoma voters ever figure out they're being played?

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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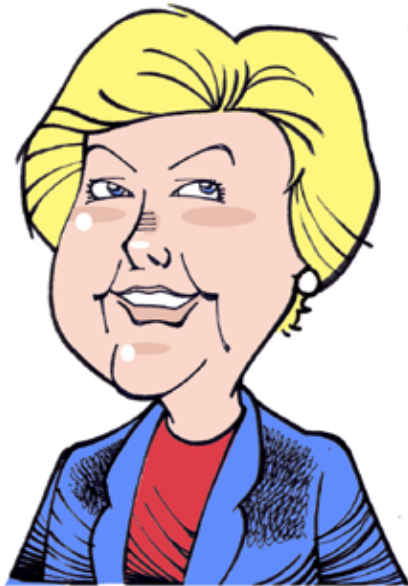
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In Her Words: Jari Askins Unfiltered

Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jari Askins, the current lieutenant governor, sat down recently for a one-on-one interview with Observer Editor Arnold Hamilton after delivering an address to an agriculture conference in Muskogee. Following are excerpts:



Why you, why now?

Times are tough. We knew when we got in this race that the economy was going to be weak, would not have recovered. My background, my experience in appropriations, my willingness to work with anybody who's got a good idea to get things done means that I have the skill set that I think the state needs now.

I'm a decision-maker – that's what I've been all my life. I've been a problem-solver. And especially the next 18 months to two years it's really going to require us to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Are you talking primarily about budget issues or are you talking about the economy as a whole?

Everything ... Even if we create new jobs we don't see an impact in the economy for several years so the budget decisions that are going to have to be made are going to be extremely difficult.

We know that this budget – fiscal year 2011 – has \$1.2 billion to \$1.4 billion of one-time revenue. Even though Oklahoma's economy is improving, it's not going to make up a billion dollars, so difficult decisions are going to have to be made again.

It's going to require someone who has a really good feel for the state, for the government process. And that's me.

Compare and contrast yourself with Mary Fallin: What do you bring to the job that she doesn't that you think people ought to know?

I think a lot of people don't understand that I served as a judge for eight years, that my 12 years in the House of Representatives puts me in a great position to already have working relationships with the next leaders of the Oklahoma House and Senate. But I also worked as deputy counsel in the governor's office. I have been a director of a state agency. I understand what state departments and agencies are going through with these types of budgets. So that familiarity with the mechanics of government, how to make things work, is very different from my opponent.

Typically candidates like to be hopeful and paint as optimistic picture of the future as they can, but these are some pretty austere, difficult times. How do you convince people that you can get us to that happier place again?

I'm a realist. I think people who know me, first and foremost, know that I'm going to tell it like it is and that's why you cannot sugarcoat what the current economic situation is in Oklahoma. But I'm an Oklahoman and by nature that makes me an optimist. I believe it makes me an optimist.

What worries you most about the economy and the budget process?

What worries me the most is that real people are going to suffer as services are cut – services that are not provided in local communities, services that some families cannot afford to do for themselves.

Anything in particular that jumps out at you?

No, because I don't know where the cuts will be deepest. But when we're talking about children, when we're talking about our aging, our senior citizens, when we're talking about those with health and mental health issues that are incapable of taking care of themselves – to me, those are the ones who are most at risk when budget decisions are made.

How'd you like to add passage of SQ 744 [mandating the Legislature fund education at the per-pupil regional average] – that would add quite a little spice to it, wouldn't it?

It really would and if that happens I need to be governor because my experience in government is broader and deeper.

It looks like you've got something of a secret weap-

on out there – your former Democratic colleagues in the Legislature seem to be working awfully hard on your behalf.

My ability to win statewide office four years ago and my ability to make it thus far in the governor's race has been two-fold:

First, there are so many people from Duncan, Oklahoma or who went to college with me that still live in Oklahoma, they live around the state, and these are people who knew me before I ever was interested in politics or elective office. And these are people who support me and I've heard them tell their friends that I'm the same now as I was when they knew me in high school or when they knew me in college. And I find that very gratifying because I want to be the same person.

So those folks who knew me before politics have been a key asset in my election.

And secondly, having served 12 years in the Legislature, I developed working relationships with men and women across this state, some of whom are still in the Legislature, others have term-limited out and they saw how hard I worked in the Legislature, they saw how I was given the responsibility to negotiate difficult issues and they know that I will always work to find a solution.

So I appreciate people who have worked with me in government that are very supportive.

It's interesting how things work out in life because you very likely would have been House speaker [had Republicans not won control in 2004] and now instead you have a chance to become the first woman governor. Is that something you think a lot about in terms of the history of it all?

You know, not in terms of why I'm running or not in terms of how I'm campaigning but clearly the historical significance is there and I think that carries a great deal of responsibility – responsibility in how we act, in what kind of role model we are to young women of all ages in Oklahoma.

Right after the primary when Mary and I were both asked about the historical significance, my reply the next day was: You've heard me say it, I'm not running because I want to be the first woman governor – that's not it. However, I recognize that our race is historical. Only two times in U.S. history have two women been the [major] party candidates for governors' races ... This year two states have the same situation: New Mexico and Oklahoma.

To me, what I hope that means to the young girls in our state is that whether you want to be a ballerina, whether you want to be a medical doctor or a classroom teacher or an elected official, if you work hard, you have a chance to reach your dream. That's how I think of the historical significance.

You mentioned you're concerned about apathy – in what respect?

Apathy of the voters. People that are so frustrated with what they see happening in Washington, DC that they just stay home. There's no question that we knew before the RGA [Republican Governors Association] ad – it was no secret what kind of campaign they would run against me and that was to try to take

See ASKINS Page 8

Oklahoma County Democrats

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Edmond Church Hit With Complaint To IRS

The Internal Revenue Service should investigate an Edmond church whose pastor endorsed a gubernatorial candidate from the pulpit, says Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Pastor Paul Blair of Fairview Baptist Church endorsed Republican hopeful Mary Fallin from the pulpit during services Sept. 26.

Federal law prohibits all 501(c)(3) non-profit groups, which includes houses of worship, from intervening in elections by endorsing or opposing candidates for public office.

"When churches become cogs in any candidate's political machine, they ought to lose their tax exemption," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "I urge the IRS to investigate this matter and apply the law."

FACTS ARE CLEAR

In a complaint filed with the IRS, Lynn said the facts are clear.

"Blair is a top official and paid staff member of Fairview Baptist Church," wrote Lynn in the letter. "He was speaking to the congregation in his official capacity and during a church meeting. As such, his candidate endorsement from the pulpit constitutes an official endorsement by the nonprofit religious organization itself."

Lynn noted that this is the second time Blair has flouted federal law in this way. In 2008, Blair endorsed Sen. John McCain for president from the pulpit.

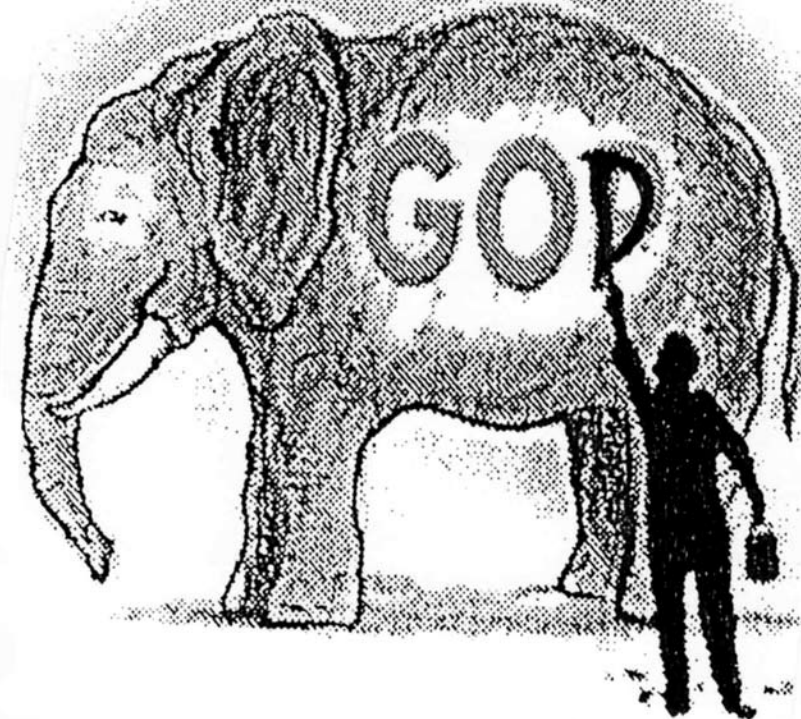
Blair issued the endorsements as part of Pulpit Freedom Sunday, an annual event sponsored by the Alliance Defense Fund [ADF].

The ADF, a Religious Right legal group founded by TV preachers, prods pastors to openly defy the law by endorsing or opposing candidates from the pulpit.

To counter the ADF's church electioneering scheme, Americans United maintains a Web site called Project Fair Play [www.projectfairplay.org] that educates religious leaders and the American public about what houses of worship may and may not do in the political arena. As part of the project, Americans United reports pastors who violate the law to the IRS.

SECOND IRS COMPLAINT THIS YEAR

The Americans United complaint to the IRS is its second this year involving



Blair, his church and his tax-exempt group known as Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ, which uses the same contact information [address, phone number, etc.] as Fairview Baptist.

In June, Blair's group sent an e-mail urging supporters to attend a late June rally for Republican state Rep. Sally Kern, the wife of another Southern Baptist minister. Rep. Kern is perhaps best known nationally for asserting that homosexuals are a greater threat to America than terrorists.

The event was to support Kern in her re-election bid against a Democrat, Brittany Novotny, who happens to be transgendered.

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.

Boren And 43 Other Dems Favor Wealthy

Some 44 House Democrats, including Oklahoma's Dan Boren, have asked Speaker Nancy Pelosi for an extension of the Bush tax cuts on investment income for the richest 2% of Americans.

These Democrats would preserve the historically low income tax rate of 15% for capital gains and stock dividends for the wealthiest taxpayers. This stance places them to the right of Ronald Reagan and illustrates a surprising lack of familiarity with history and economics.

Very generally, a "capital gain" is the profit you have if you sell an asset for more than you paid to purchase it. Capital gains are a type of income and are therefore subject to the federal income tax.

IT MAKES SENSE

For people who spend most of their time buying and selling assets, capital gains are most of their income. It would make sense to tax this income just like any other income.

Unfortunately, lawmakers have, at various points in history, decided to tax capital gains at lower rates than apply to other types of income. The explanation for

ASKINS

From Page 7

everything bad that they perceive happening in Washington and blame it on candidates in Oklahoma.

That is designed to frustrate and depress the electorate so that they stay home.

... I was surprised at the number of newspapers that commented against it - Norman Transcript, Daily Oklahoman, Journal-Record.

We put up a response 36 hours later that tried to point out this is what Washington does - the same cookie cutter attacks they use in other states. Almost like the one the RGA used against Brad Henry four years ago on behalf of [GOP gubernatorial nominee] Ernest Istook.

So I felt good at least that our response ads seems to be catching hold. I mean, we're not spending as much money on it. The RGA doubled its buy. I think it's an attempt to try to flush us out.

... We're trying to run a campaign to let Oklahoma voters know this is where my heart is. This is where I've always wanted to work. These are the people that I care about. This is always going to be my home. And I care about it not just now but I care about what it's going to be like 25 years from now.

That's the unfortunate part of term limits in the Legislature. All too often legislators make decisions to get them through their term limits. And all too often legislators don't worry about the consequences down the road. From both parties I've heard people say: I'll be term-limited, that'll be someone else's problem. But it's still my state. And as long as I have an opportunity to try to help the people of our state do great things, live up to their potential, realize their dreams, I want to be part of giving them that opportunity.

this is not so much in any sound view of economics as in the disproportionate influence that wealthy investors have always had on the political process.

But the wealthy investor class is not politically invincible. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Tax Reform Act that ended the tax preference for capital gains and taxed all types of income at the same rates.

CONSERVATIVES COMPLAIN

Conservatives have long complained about this Reagan tax reform, and have even incorrectly claimed that capital gains tax revenue actually fell as a result of it.

Actually, right before the Reagan reform took effect, capital gains tax revenue rose temporarily as many people sold their assets to recognize gains before the new rates went into effect. Not surprisingly, reported capital gains fell from this artificial high point for a few years thereafter.

But by the 1990s, taxable capital gains began to rise rapidly along with the Clinton-era stock market, and eventually reached record highs. They have since fluctuated along with prices of stock and real estate.

Today, conservative critics of President Reagan have been joined by a group of House Democrats who also seem to feel that Reagan was not sufficiently devoted to tax preferences for the wealthy investor class.

This is not to be confused with another letter, signed by 31 House Democrats, supporting an extension of all the tax cuts for the richest taxpayers.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S PLAN

President Obama's plan would extend the reduced rates for capital gains and dividends that were enacted under President George W. Bush for all but the richest 2.1% of taxpayers.

These richest taxpayers would have to pay taxes at a rate five percentage points higher on most of their capital gains and dividend income than they do today. [This would still be roughly half the top rate paid by the rich on other types of income.]

But a letter has been reportedly signed by 44 House Democrats asking that the current, extremely low rates for capital gains and dividends be extended for the richest 2% as well.

By the time President George W. Bush took office, the capital gains rate had been lowered to 20%. Meanwhile, stock dividends were still taxed just like any other income. In 2003, Bush and his allies in Congress lowered the top rate for capital gains to 15% and created a brand new tax preference for stock dividends by also taxing them at a top rate of 15% - 20 percentage points below the top rate on regular income, which was set at 35%.

One problem with the rate reductions for capital gains and stock dividends is that most of this income goes to the very rich.

Citizens for Tax Justice estimated that in 2009 over 70% of the benefits of these tax cuts went to the richest 1% of taxpayers.

A second problem with these rate reductions is that it is fundamentally unfair that a person who lives off of his or her investment income can pay taxes at a lower rate than someone with equal or less income who works for a living.

PUBLIC FORUM

So You Think The Poor Don't Provide Jobs?

By Jimmy O'Neill

"I don't know about you, but I've never been offered a job by a poor person." – Mary Fallin, Republican nominee for governor of Oklahoma.

"No one has ever been hired by a poor person." – Tom Coburn, Republican senator from Oklahoma.

Recent quotes from two politicians whose salaries have been paid by the poor Oklahoma taxpayers for most of the past two decades.

These insensitive, misguided and misleading statements were intended to justify the continual borrowing of \$800 billion every 10 years so that the wealthiest 2% in America will continue to receive their Bush tax cut. This huge unfunded tax cut was intended to create jobs which never materialized.

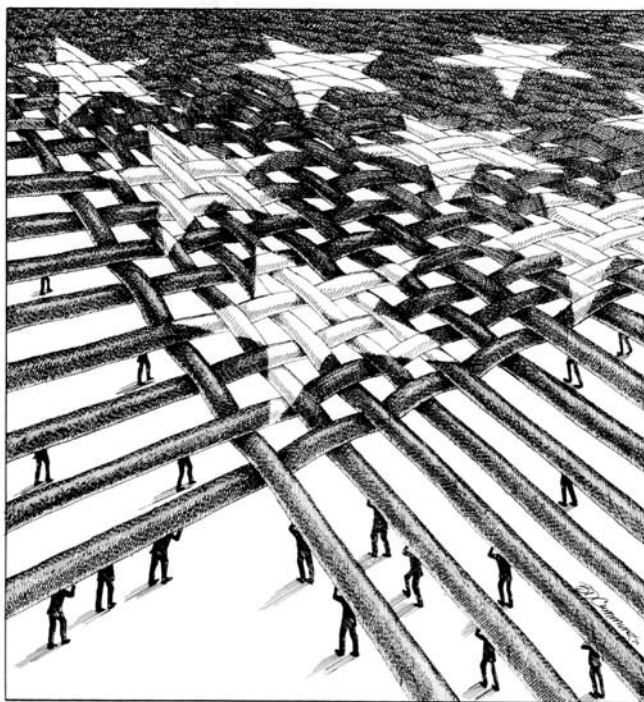
On Aug. 30, Ponca City received great news – the soon to be re-opening of the closed Tyson facility. Was this just the case of a rich person offering 350 jobs to unemployed persons in Ponca City?

Not quite.

It appears to be a cooperative effort. Local, state and federal agencies were all involved to help convince Dorada to come and invest in Ponca City.

Tyson has a great facility in Ponca City built with local sales tax money. The poor paid a much larger proportion of their wages than did the wealthy.

The Ponca City Development



Authority has agreed to provide \$1.6 million to upgrade Tyson's wastewater treatment facility. The Tulsa World also reports that \$200,000 will be spent on a geothermal heating and cooling system. The PCDA is

funded with a continual cent sales tax. This money is used wisely to help bring industry to Ponca City. Again the poor contribute a larger share of their income than the rich to help fund this program.

Federal "on the job" training funds will be provided. Is this part of the federal money that Mary Fallin promises to refuse if she is elected Oklahoma's governor? Will she also deny health insurance for the new workers and their families that will be available because of health care reform?

Dorado will also qualify for Oklahoma State Quality Jobs Act, a program that helps subsidize each newly hired's salary.

Ponca City officials should be commended for helping bring in 350 new jobs but it must be pointed out that not one of these positions will be created because of tax cuts for the wealthy. These new jobs will come because our leaders – local, state and federal – had the foresight to use tax dollars, collected from the poor and wealthy alike, to partner with a business for the betterment of our community.

– The author lives in Ponca City

The Truth Is The Truth, Rep. Christian

By Al Lindley

An Open Letter to Rep. Mike Christian, R-OKC:

Saturday evening [9.18.10] I received a frantic robo-call from you responding to a political advertisement, which was distributed throughout House District 93. The flyer does nothing more than point out to your employers that you missed 306 votes over a 50 day period during the 2010 session. The leaflet also disclosed the huge sums of political donations your campaign received from rich oil companies and Texas billionaires.

However, your hysterical response suggests that your opponent [Democrat Wanda Jo Peltier] is personally attacking you and your family by disclosing what you prefer to keep secret. Your opponent cites the House Journal, as her source for your missed votes. Your employers would be well served to note that the House Journal is the official record of the daily business occurring on the House Floor. I have a record of the dates, bill numbers, brief description and the final vote count if you would care to refresh your memory.

Your opponent didn't miss a single roll call in the 10 years she represented District 93 [1987-1996]. During my 12-year tenure, 1997-2008, I missed a roll on a Thursday in April 2004 while attending a conference in Washington, DC to present a report on legislation. In early May of 2008 I was absent on a Thursday

to attend my uncle's funeral in Kansas.

I find it inconceivable that someone could miss 306 votes during a 50-day period.

After reviewing the documentation you filed with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission during the election cycles of 2006 and 2008, your opponent disclosed the great sums of money you accepted from large oil and gas companies as well as super rich Texans. Why is a multi-billionaire from Texas interested in a House seat in South Oklahoma City? I guess that your employers can answer that question for themselves.

If you can prove that the House Journal and the reports you filed with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission are wrong, I will donate \$1,000 to the Oklahoma Republican Party. If you can't then I suggest that you cool the rhetoric, act like a man and accept the responsibility for your actions.

I know that the House Journal is created from computer records generated from how the member voted. I can't imagine someone filing an ethics report they know to be faulty. Perhaps you do.

– The author is a former state representative who currently serves as chair of the Oklahoma County Democratic Party

Isn't It Time To Study School Consolidation?

By Norm Rourke

I'm tired of hearing everyone whine about Oklahoma's education system and its schools while unwilling to think outside the box and beyond their own narrow ideas. Better and more teachers could be had if school patrons, the Legislature and the superintendent of schools would get their heads out of the sand and face some realities.

Consolidation – yes, that word raises the hackles of the school lobby that controls the Legislature and the school superintendent – is one way to reduce some of the overhead. Why do we have so many independent school districts? It's called empire building. Each school district must have a superintendent, staff and

other administrative services. Each must have school busses. Each must pay for supplies and its own letterhead stationery and other forms. The list goes on and on and on.

Mention consolidation and behold the wailing, gnashing of teeth and rending of garments from the education lobby, school district empire builders and the out-of-date thinking of the Legislature and state school superintendent. That should be a clue as to how little importance they place on education when they're unwilling to get into the 21st Century about this issue.

Where I live there are more than three small school districts within 10 miles of each other. Each requires

a superintendent and all the added overhead expenses that go with that office as well as transportation and other associated expenses.

But God forbid these empires – and that's what they are – be reduced in number thereby using taxpayer [these are the folks who foot the bill, in case you don't know this] money more wisely and providing more funds to improve the overall school system of the state. Meanwhile, the archaic ideas that have prevailed for eons continue to keep Oklahoma education in the dark ages.

We should also reduce the number and length of the so-called "breaks." Good Lord, kids have almost as much time out of school as they

do in class! Not only do they get a three- to four-month summer break, they have a Spring break, extended holiday breaks, and other ridiculous "breaks" throughout the school year.

Is it any wonder we're lagging behind other more progressive states not to mention other developed nations that don't have as much political crap and coddling to deal with in their education systems?

If Oklahoma is to be a player in the educating of our children, it's time it got away from its redneck mentality and started thinking about its future by making changes necessary to bring us out of the backwash of education.

– The author lives in Beggs

BOOKS

Dissecting Glenn Beck And The Tea Partiers

By Martin F. Nolan

THE WHITES OF THEIR EYES

The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History
By Jill Lepore
Princeton University Press
207 pages; \$19.95

TEARS OF A CLOWN

Glenn Beck and the Tea Bagging of America
By Dana Milbank
Doubleday
261 pages; \$24.95

BOILING MAD

Inside Tea Party America
By Kate Zernike
Times Books
244 pages; \$25

In the liturgy of liberalism, the rite is familiar. A pundit ascends to the pulpit to launch a scathing commentary on the journalistic failings of Fox News. After documenting how and why Glenn Beck and/or Sean Hannity do not evoke the finer moments of John Chancellor and/or Walter Cronkite, the parson returns to the vicarage for a satisfying spot of sherry.

For the majority of Americans innocent of cable news, this program note: The job of the Fox News Channel is to promote the Republican Party; the job of MSNBC is to promote Fox News. Glenn Beck, at his peak, preaches to a choir of three million, far more than liberal talk fests, but a few souls shy of the 106 million seduced by this year's Super Bowl. Liberals labor obsessively to deprogram Beck's disciples, erecting a large billboard for his bad-boy persona. It works for Glenn.

'DOOMSDAY MEANS PAYDAY'

He doesn't like President Obama. Five days a week, Beck sobs about conspiracies of concentration camps in the coming Obama crackdown on patriots like Glenn Beck. "Doomsday means payday," according to Dana Milbank. In the train-wreck fascinating *Tears of a Clown*, Milbank, a Washington Post writer, cites Forbes magazine's assessment of Beck's income. Through books, broadcasts, T-shirts, neckties, coffee mugs and lecture tours, he "is worth \$32 million a year."

He has a chauffeured limousine, bodyguards and a Connecticut mansion, but to his audience he confesses, "I'm basically a rodeo clown just trying to entertain you every night." Beck is a former disc jockey who flourished in the "morning zoo" format. "I am not a journalist," he says. "I'm just a guy who cares."

Now he is a distinguished lecturer, furiously adorning blackboards with a labyrinth of ideas and notions. There is a Glenn Beck University, which may not be accredited, but boasts a sizable student body.

RESENTMENT ABOUNDS

Members of the Tea Party are the teacher's pets. In *Boiling Mad*, Kate Zernike gives them respect by taking them seriously. A New York Times reporter, Zernike devotes 20 pages to poll results about Tea Party members; numbers are less revealing than her reporting on their resentment against both political parties and the Beltway mind-set.

"It was very motivated people, people a lot like me," said Jennifer Turner Stefano about a Tea Party rally in Pennsylvania. "They hadn't spent a lifetime being politicians; they didn't go to the Kennedy School of Government, they didn't work as staffers on Capitol Hill. That's very refreshing."

Tea Partiers share Beck's passion for 18th Century American history, but also have studied "Ross Perot and his Reform Party in the 1990s; like the Tea Partiers they were relatively well-off yet pessimistic about the country." The major difference: "The Tea Partiers had little interest in forming a third political party."

This decision delights Republicans, who cheerfully stepped aside for a non-hostile takeover. Better the Tea Party as the face of the GOP than the wrecking crew who almost destroyed the economy in 2008, in the twilight of George W. Bush.

THREE-CORNERED HATS

Some Tea Party nominees resemble a morning-after zoo, true. That's a chance House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky happily take.

Beck, the Tea Party, their friends and their foes cite history, often talking through their three-cornered hats. Jill Lepore's study, *The Whites of Their Eyes*, is the antidote, a lively, substantive tour of 18th Century and 21st Century America.

She teaches at Harvard, a subway ride from Revolutionary War sites. She recounts the Boston Massacre, Lexington, Bunker Hill and the original Tea Party elegantly and accurately. She outlines the history of voting in America to counter conspiracy theorists of left and right who ignore elections.

In Beck's odd arithmetic, three million will imprison 300 million. He dismisses a duly elected president, Congress and presumably those who elected them. Zernike quotes him thusly: "The truth is, they don't surround us. We surround them."

Lepore's prose is so crisp and illuminating that her rants seem surly. She attacks the HBO production of John Adams for who's not in it. "Thomas Paine didn't even have a part," she grouses. No, nor William McKinley. But Laura Lin-

ney as Abigail Adams? Sign me up.

BATHING IN BECK'S BILE

Lepore's graceful grasp of both history and reality is important. "The past haunts us all," Lepore writes. "But time moves forward, not backward. Chronology is like gravity. Nothing falls up. We cannot go back to the 18th Century, and the Founding Fathers are not, in fact, here with us today."

Milbank's obsessions about Beck's obsessions can be contagious. Bathing in Beck's bile conjures an America honeycombed with concentration camps policed by "full-fledged eugenic racists" and filled with liberals and dropouts from Glenn Beck University.

The punishment for Beck's opponents will include loudspeakers in the prison yard playing Glenn Beck. A vision arises from the chalk dust, a bonfire of inanities raging 24/7 until an unlikely champion rides to the rescue. Lyndon LaRouche? No, it is the former governor of Alaska. The GOP's queenmaker appeared on Beck's show in January, a tableau of Olympian soul mates of ideology, as cited by Lepore.

No need to learn all that silly history stuff, Sarah Palin proved, fearing no pop quizzes from Headmaster Glenn. "Who's your favorite Founder?" asked the eager host. The guest flashed her famous smile. "'Um, you know, well,' she said. 'All of them.'"

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STATE QUESTIONS

What's Real Reason For Opposing SQ 744?

By Jim Wilson

There has been much discussion about SQ 744 – the state question that proposes Oklahoma spend the regional average of the per pupil amount for common education.

The proponents suggest we will never properly fund common education if we don't do something such as this. They may have a point in that if the common education budget had increased at the same percentage as that of higher education in the eight years since the "fund education first initiative" there would be an additional \$600 million in their budget. If the \$700 million in tax cuts from five years ago produced the unconditional increase in revenue as promised by the proponents there would be ample money to fund common education.

The opponents almost universally agree we have ignored common education funding over the years and we should do a better job of funding it – but not now and not in this way. They suggest we will be damaging other government services if it passes. They have not suggested postponing the next \$120 million [\$2.77 per month per person] in scheduled tax cuts nor have they suggested a moratorium on some of the \$1 billion in new tax cuts proposed every year.

For 30 years we've been led to believe that government is the problem



and those who believe it are the best leaders. We've ignored the role of government for which studies show a positive causal relationship between public investment and prosperity. We don't do these studies in Oklahoma but we can look at other states and regions for results.

Jeffrey Thompson, a research

economist at the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, published a study in August of this year that looks at the available research on what works and doesn't work to improve productivity and economic prosperity in six New England states.

Among other things he shows the

most effective options for creating jobs are investing in infrastructure and workforce skills. Tax cuts and business subsidies do little to create jobs in the short run and are not the most effective in the long run.

In particular, public spending on education has been found to raise gross state product, increase employment and raise incomes. For instance, reducing elementary class size from 25 to 15 students creates a net benefit to society of \$66,000 for each student over a period of 20 years.

Total jobs created by \$1 million in education spending average 28. Total jobs created with each \$1 million spent on early childhood education average 35. Infrastructure investment spending creates a minimum average of 13 jobs per \$1 million invested and rivals education job creation when matching dollars are added.

It is fair to ask Gov. Henry, Mary Fallin, Jari Askins and One Oklahoma Coalition to agree to a moratorium of any tax cut or tax credit until the goals of SQ 744 are achieved. The answer must be an unqualified "yes."

If not we can assume "other critical services" are not the reason for opposition to SQ 744.

– The author, a Tahlequah Democrat, represents District 3 in the State Senate

Education Funding Mandate A Game-Changer

By Walter Jenny Jr.

It's the fourth quarter, and you're behind by five points. It's fourth down and long yardage for a first down, much less a touchdown. The clock is ticking. Your only chance is to throw a "Hail Mary" pass. Throw it deep, throw it long. The chance your opponent will intercept the ball is literally a toss-up. But it's possible that, just maybe, one of your teammates will catch it, hang on to it, and stumble across the end zone for victory.

That kind of last-ditch effort to pull off a miracle is exciting football. But it's also an apt description for SQ 744, the best-known proposition on Oklahoma's Nov. 2 ballot.

SQ 744 is the only question on the ballot that came from an initiative petition; all the rest are creatures of the Republican Legislature – 234,446 voters signed the petition, nearly 100,000 more than the required 138,970 signatures. State questions on the ballot four years ago needed about 440,000 votes to be approved, so there appears to be strong support for SQ 744 among voters.

This is, after all, the people's government. "All political power is inherent in the people; and government is instituted for their protection, security, and benefit, and to promote their general welfare; and they have the right to alter or reform the same whenever the public good may require it," says the Oklahoma

Constitution. The people have every right to set priorities for public officials. If they want public schools to be funded at the regional average, they should fix that bar and force public officials to construct state government around it.

According to SQ 744 supporters, Oklahoma is currently dead last and \$1,627 per student behind the regional average. We're also 49th in the nation. The status quo is obviously not working.

SQ 744 would mandate that the Legislature must fund public schools at a rate at least equal to the average spent per pupil by the six states surrounding Oklahoma. If the average from the bordering states drops, Oklahoma must spend the amount it spent the year before.

But we also would deal with the Lake Wobegon effect. In Garrison Keillor's mythical Minnesota community, all the children are above average, a statistical absurdity. As

Oklahoma raises its spending, the regional average would also rise. It's not just a matter of spending \$1,627 more per pupil; it will cost more than that, and even more as other states increase their expenditures to avoid losing ground. It would be an interesting dilemma if each of our neighbors committed themselves to spend more than the regional average.

Aren't we spending enough on education? After all, Brad Henry's
See GAME-CHANGER Page 12

Voter ID Hurdles Not Easily Cleared

By John Parker

Thank you for pointing out how obtaining and showing an ID for voting is not such an easy thing to do.

I'm a middle-class professional who is determined to vote in November. But my native state is putting me through hoops to become eligible.

In early summer, we moved back to Oklahoma from Washington state and I needed to secure an Oklahoma driver's license.

I surfed to the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety site and found out that they have only a few sites in the metro area to convert an out-of-state license to an Oklahoma license. You can't just go to a tag agent.

I then planned ahead and allowed myself an hour to visit the OHP Headquarters on I-240 during my workweek lunchtime to knock that chore off my list.

Upon opening the door, I saw six rows of chairs with people in nearly every one.

I asked the greeter at the desk how long it would take to be seen.

"At least two hours," she said.

"Do you have a 'slow' time?" I asked.

"Nope."

I've got a job where I can't just take two to three hours off to get my license switched over. The OHP office

opens at 7 a.m., but that means I'll still be late for work.

Just think how this ID requirement will affect people who are poor, infirm, without a car, a busy parent with children, etc.

Only 25% of Oklahoma registered voters bothered to vote in the July primaries. Passing State Question 746 will only reinforce the injustice of keeping actual voters to a small elite with relatively higher incomes and capabilities.

Oklahoma's a bigger, better place than that.

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

Waiting For Superman Is Fabricated Attack

By Dana Goldstein

Here's what you see in *Waiting for Superman*, the new documentary that celebrates the charter school movement while blaming teachers unions for much of what ails American education: working- and middle-class parents desperate to get their charming, healthy, well-behaved children into successful public charter schools.

Here's what you don't see: the four out of five charters that are no better, on average, than traditional neighborhood public schools [and are sometimes much worse]; charter school teachers, like those at the Green Dot schools in Los Angeles, who are unionized and like it that way; and non-charter neighborhood public schools, like PS 83 in East Harlem and the George Hall Elementary School in Mobile, AL, that are nationally recognized for successfully educating poor children.

You don't see teen moms, households without an adult English speaker or headed by a drug addict, or any of the millions of children who never have a chance to enter a charter school lottery [or get help with their homework or a nice breakfast] because adults simply aren't engaged in their education.

These children, of course, are often the ones who are most difficult to educate, and the ones neighborhood public schools can't turn away.

You also don't learn that in the Finnish education system, much cited in the film as the best in the world, teachers are – gasp! – unionized and granted tenure, and families benefit from a cradle-to-grave social welfare system that includes universal daycare, preschool and healthcare, all of which are proven to help children achieve better results at school.

In other words, *Waiting for Superman* is a moving but vastly oversimplified brief on American educational inequality. Nevertheless, it has been greeted by rapturous reviews.

CAN IT SAVE THE SCHOOLS?

"Can One Little Movie Save America's Schools?" asked the cover of *New York* magazine. On Sept. 20 *The Oprah Winfrey Show* featured the film's director, Davis Guggenheim, of *An Inconvenient Truth*. Tom Friedman of the *New York Times* devoted a column to praising the film.

Time published an education issue coinciding with the documentary's release and is planning a conference built in part around the school reform-strategies the film endorses.

NBC, too, hosted an education reform conference bashing public education. *Waiting for Superman* was screened and debated there, and many of the reformers involved in its production were there.

Meanwhile, mega-philanthropist Bill Gates, who appears in *Waiting for Superman*, hit the road in early September to promote the film; while he was at it, he told an audience at the Toronto International Film Festival that school districts should cut pension payments for retired teachers.

Other players in the free-market school reform movement, most of whom had seen the documentary at early screenings for opinion leaders and policy-makers, anticipated its release with cautious optimism.

Indeed, a tense public sparring match over the achievement gap, unions and the future of the teaching profession is already under way. The *Los Angeles Times* defied the protests of unions and many education policy experts by publishing a searchable online database of elementary school teachers' effectiveness rankings.

The newspaper's calculations were made using a new statistical method called value-added measurement, which is based on children's standardized test scores and which social scientists across the political spectrum agree is volatile and often flawed.

VOTERS TOSSED THE MAYOR

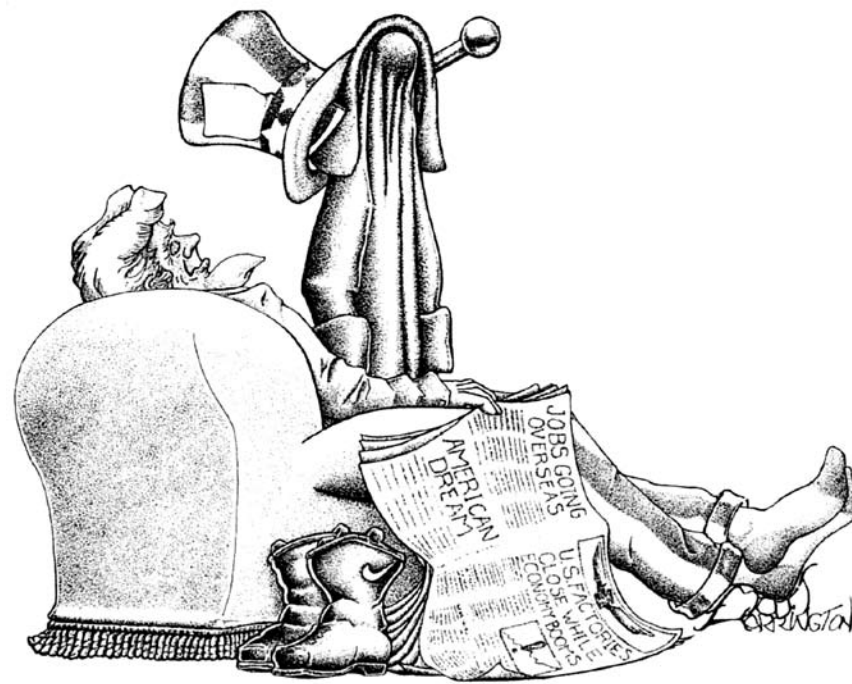
In Washington, Mayor Adrian Fenty lost his re-election bid in part because of black voters' skepticism toward his aggressive school reform efforts, led by lightning-rod schools chancellor Michelle Rhee, who pursued an agenda of closing troubled neighborhood schools, instituting a privately funded merit-pay program for teachers and firing teachers and principals deemed ineffective.

And at the federal level, President Obama's signature education program, the Race to the Top grant competition, pressures states to implement many of the most controversial teacher reforms, including merit pay based on value-added measurement.

Yet under the radar of this polarized debate, union affiliates across the country are coming to the table to talk about effective teaching in a more meaningful way than they ever have before. These stories of cooperation, from Pittsburgh to Memphis, are rarely being told, in part because national union leaders are worried about vocally stepping out beyond their members, and in part because of the media's tendency to finger-point at organized labor.

As in the work of influential magazine writer Steven Brill, this intra-union ferment is ignored in *Waiting for Superman*. The film presents teachers unions as the villains in the struggle to close the achievement gap, despite their long history of advocating for more school funding, smaller class sizes and better school resources and facilities. Guggenheim represents the unions through Randi Weingarten, president of the 1.5 million-member American Federation of Teachers.

Ominous music plays during some of her interviews, which are presented alongside footage of Harlem Children's Zone founder Geoffrey Canada and former Milwaukee superintendent and school-voucher proponent Howard Fuller complaining that union contracts protect bad teachers.



In real life, Weingarten is the union leader most credited by even free-market education reformers with being committed to retooling the teaching profession to better emphasize professional excellence and student achievement.

"The education landscape has changed pretty profoundly, and the unions have to adapt," says Tim Daly, president of the New Teacher Project, a Teach for America [TFA] offshoot often seen as a counterweight to the power of unions and teachers colleges.

"It's no longer just school districts they're dealing with but charter schools, accountability measures that flow from Washington and new governance structures such as mayoral control and state takeovers.

"Teachers unions have really struggled over the last two decades to recruit good, visionary new leadership prepared to help the unions navigate this," Daly continues. "There are exceptions. The most glaring, notable exception is Randi. She has a long career ahead of her."

GATES EMBRACES UNIONS

The film doesn't acknowledge that Bill Gates, who began his philanthropic career deeply skeptical of teachers unions, has lately embraced them as essential players in the fight for school improvement.

His foundation finances a program in Boston called Turnaround Teacher Teams, which works with the district and its teachers union to move cohorts of experienced, highly rated instructors into high-needs schools, while giving them extra training and support.

Weingarten admits that because systemic school reform is often about boring topics such as the scalability and sustainability of success in a field "littered with pilot programs, it can be difficult to add complexity to the media war over teaching. "We've never figured out how to tell that story in a compelling way," she says.

The unions are also hurt by public frustration with teacher tenure, a level of job security inconceivable to most American workers, who are barely hanging on

See SUPERMAN Page 16

GAME-CHANGER

From Page 11

principal campaign promise was to bring Oklahoma up to the regional average in teacher pay. Surprisingly, over the past two years we've cut funding for common education by over \$200 million.

Will this mean raising taxes? Probably, along with a good stiff kick in the pants toward reform in state government. But that's not part of the Republican agenda. So, after SQ 744 was circulated, Edmond Sen. Todd Lamb and his buddies put SQ 754 on the ballot. That proposal would cause a constitutional crisis by banning what SQ 744 seeks to accomplish. Check. Checkmate.

Interestingly, despite the quote above, SQ 754 includes a provision that claims it cannot be repealed or amended, even if Oklahoma voters unanimously wanted it changed. By doing so, Republican lawmakers seek to strip Oklahoma voters of their fundamental right of self-governance. That's how little they trust the voters.

The mix of State Questions 744 and 754 on the same ballot guarantees protracted and expensive litigation if they both pass. With one mandate pitted against another, even-

tually the Supreme Court will have to untangle the mess. Voters would be wise to stand up for their right to govern themselves and save a lot of taxpayer dollars by voting no on SQ 754.

As for 744, it's a good idea. Republican lawmakers have already strangled Oklahoma education too much. We need to educate our children, to give them a solid foundation on which they can begin their lives, so this state can be a better place in which to live. A decent education is one of the fundamental expectations we should have for state government.

But lab equipment and textbooks and computers cost money. SQ 744 should end Oklahoma's cottage industry of bake sales and car washes to pay for pencils and paper.

This is indeed a "Hail Mary" attempt to score a touchdown in the education game. Lawmakers have had 103 years to get it right, and they've failed miserably. It's time for the voters to make their priorities clear by voting yes on SQ 744, and forcing lawmakers to play the game of government by the people's rules instead of their own.

- The author lives in Edmond

U.S. Dollars Feed Taliban Insurgency

By David McGraw

A few recent news items help expose the true drivers of current wars around the world.

Wherever there is a war, look for CIA/IMF/private military war profiteers covertly funding and supporting BOTH sides in order to keep the wars raging and the profits rolling in. As former CIA Station Chief John Stockwell explained: "Enemies are necessary for the wheels of the U.S. military machine to turn."

Here's an important glimpse of truth to seep through recently in the New York Times, via Raw Story:

• On June 7, the day Afghanistan became America's longest-ever war, the New York Times reported on an ongoing investigation poised to prove that private security companies "are using American money to bribe the Taliban" to fuel combat and thus enhance demand for their services. The news follows a "series of events last month that suggested all-out collusion with the insurgents," the Times said.

OUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

"The American people are paying to prop up a corrupt government that may be using our money to pay private companies to drum up business by paying the insurgents to attack our troops," [Kucinich] said ... The Times interviewed a NATO official in Kabul who "believed millions of dollars were making their way to the Taliban."

• On top of that report, recent headlines read, "Pakistani spy agency supports Taliban."

Pakistan's main spy agency continues to arm and train the Taliban and is even represented on the group's leadership council despite U.S. pressure to sever ties and billions in aid to combat the militants, said a research report.

The findings could heighten tension between the two countries and raise further questions about U.S. success in Afghanistan since Pakistani cooperation is seen as key to defeating the Taliban, which seized power in Kabul in the 1990s with Islamabad's support.

U.S. officials have suggested in the past that current or former members of Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency, or ISI, have maintained links to the Taliban despite the government's decision to denounce the group in 2001 under U.S. pressure.

TALIBAN GETS OUR MONEY

First off, these two reports are really not news at all. Reports of American tax dollars ending up in the hands of the Taliban have been coming out since the start of the war and the ISI, as the CIA has been well aware of for years now, has been playing both sides of this war and is pivotal in keeping the war going.

Secondly, I have long wondered when the CIA/US military would start exposing all of this in the mainstream propaganda press as a pretext to further expand the war into Pakistan.

• As a result of all this, and not surprising at all to people who were paying close attention to Obama's surge strategy, costs and death counts are quickly rising. Jim Lobe reports from Afghanistan that the "News is Bad."

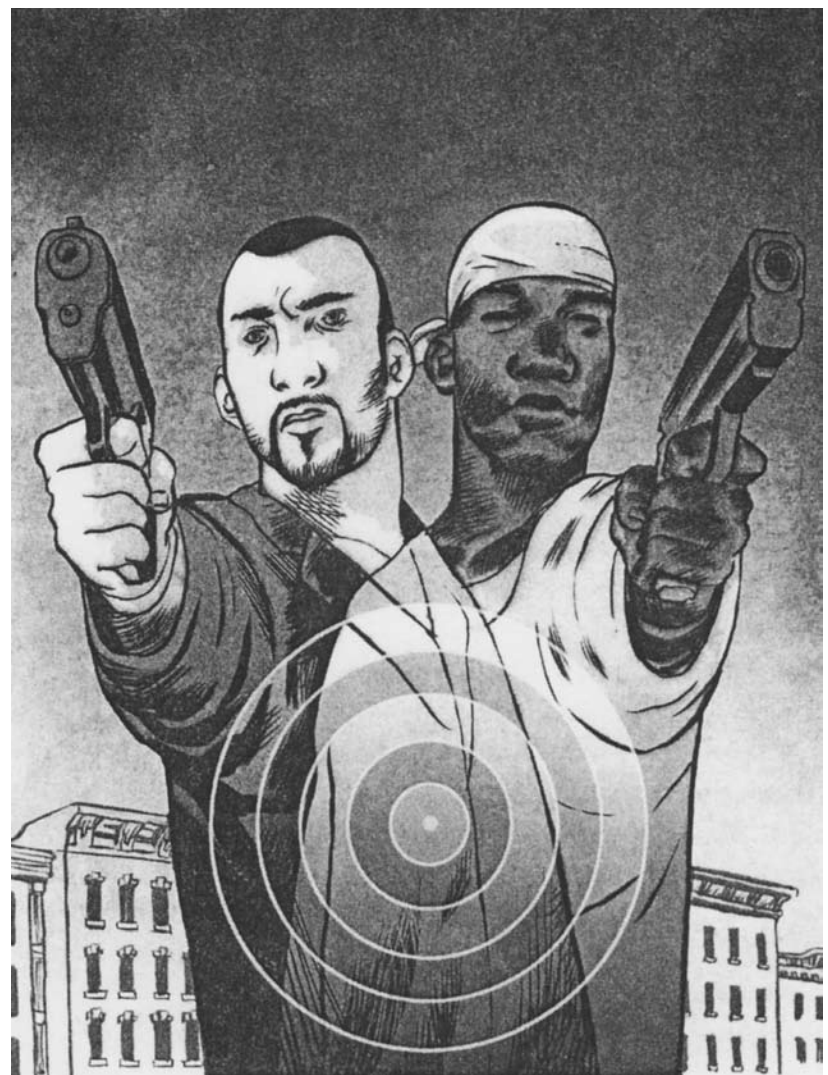
While U.S. officials insist they are making progress in reversing the momentum built up by the Taliban insurgency over the last several years, the latest news from Afghanistan suggests the opposite may be closer to the truth.

MILITARY PRIVATELY ADMITS IT

Even senior military officials are conceding privately that their much-touted new counterinsurgency strategy of "clear, hold and build" in contested areas of the Pashtun southern and eastern parts of the country are not working out as planned despite the "surge" of some 20,000 additional U.S. troops over the past six months.

Casualties among the nearly 130,000 U.S. and other NATO troops now deployed in Afghanistan are also mounting quickly.

• In a propaganda effort to spin away from all the latest bad news, the desper-



ate U.S. military has pulled this dusty old news report out of their back-pocket and launched a psychological operation in the NY Times to give a positive spin in hopes of further manipulating U.S. public opinion:

U.S. Identifies Vast Riches of Minerals in Afghanistan.

The United States has discovered nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves.

The previously unknown deposits – including huge veins of iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like lithium – are so big and include so many minerals that are essential to modern industry that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world, the United States officials believe.

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

An internal Pentagon memo, for example, states that Afghanistan could become the "Saudi Arabia of lithium," a key raw material in the manufacture of batteries for laptops and BlackBerrys.

In the process of this latest propaganda campaign, the Pentagon has unwittingly exposed two things that I will now jump on.

A] The real reason why we are in this war to begin with: it's all about natural resources.

B] All the BS statements about these "previously unknown deposits" clearly prove, yet again, that the NY Times is only too happy to play the role of a straight-up propaganda paper.

For those of us paying attention, we've been reading reports about these minerals for the past decade!

"The New York Times, when it was beating the drums of war in 2002, failed to mention that the USGS published a report, at that time, Mines and Mineral Occurrences of Afghanistan Compiled by G.J. Orris and J.D. Bliss, Open-File Report 02-110.

On page 16, they list as 'Significant Minerals or Materials' magnetite, hematite, chalcocite, covellite, chalcocite, cuprite, malachite, azurite, molybdenite, and native gold – lithium is mentioned on page 10 under 'References.'"

Republican Small Business Scam

Some firms with billions in revenues get to pay less tax than traditional corporations. A number of companies with multi-billion dollar revenues have been registered as small businesses for tax purposes, according to a report.

Among them were the "biggest companies in the world and the richest people in this country" Keith Olbermann said in a special report on his MSNBC cable show, "Small Business in Name Only."

Because IRS tax returns are not public record, the names of companies were ascertained from public documents such as court records or the companies' postings.

Among the examples given on "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" were:

• Enterprise Products Partners LP, a pipeline company with 2009 revenues of \$25 billion.

• Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co., a Wall Street firm with \$445 million in revenue in 2009.

• Price Waterhouse Coopers, an accounting firm with \$26 billion in revenue in 2009.

• Koch Industries, a conglomerate of partnerships with 70,000 employees.

• The Hillman Company, an investment firm founded by billionaire philanthro-

pist/industrialist Henry Hillman.

• Venn Strategies Inc., whose chief operating officer is Brian Reardon, a former special assistant to former President George W. Bush.

• Ferrellgas, a propane and propane accessories business, with \$2 billion in revenues in 2009 and one million customers.

• CoorsTek, a ceramics manufacturer founded by Adolph Coors, with 2009 revenue of \$549 million.

• Dead River Co., with \$500 million in revenue and 1,200 employees.

• McIlhenny Co., the Tabasco maker, with \$250 million in revenue in 2007.

The revelation comes as Democrats and Republicans debate tax cuts and the economy.

President Barack Obama and most of his fellow Democrats want tax cuts enacted under former President George W. Bush to be extended only for the first \$200,000 of a person's income or \$250,000 for a family, saying the country cannot afford the cuts for higher earners.

Republicans want the lower rates renewed for all Americans, regardless of income, and say that losing the cuts would hurt small businesses and job cre-

See SCAM Page 14

Answer Their Prayers Already

By Harry T. Cook

From time to time, there appears draped over a low wall at the front of a sizeable Roman Catholic Church near my home a large banner that reads: "PRAY TO END ABORTION."

The imperative is a familiar message from an institution obsessed with sex and sexuality in ways that tend to the misogynist and the just plain goofy.

The Catholic Church, at least officially, has no respect for women's hard-won reproductive rights. In fact, its learned theologians insist, such rights have no place in the divine scheme of things. Thus is birth control in any form, save abstinence, forbidden – and not only to members of the Catholic Church but to all members of the human race, who would be Catholics if only they would see the light.

We begin by acknowledging that the taking of human life in a wanton, uncaring way is a terrible thing. It has been prohibited in most civilized societies, including the United States – which nevertheless bears on what's left of its moral conscience the lynchings of institutionalized racism, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

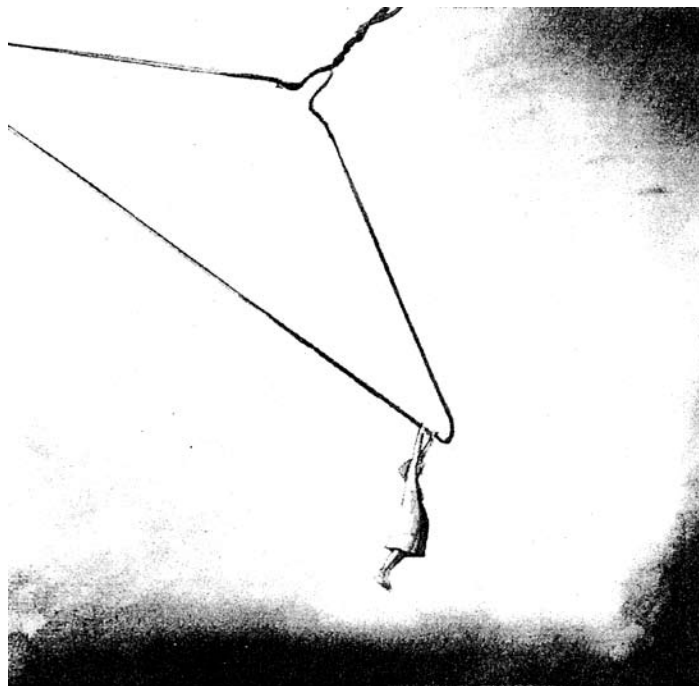
'ONCE IT POPS OUT'

The Catholic Church and the Republican Party despise what the former calls "liberation theology" and the latter socialism, in both of which is to be found an ethic mandating care for the poor not only through charitable works but through the enacting of legislation that puts the seal of law upon such mandates.

The right-to-lifers, Catholic and otherwise, prize life in the womb but tend to ignore it once it pops out and becomes visibly human and, too often, soon in want.

No number of shocking photographs of children with distended stomachs old before their time, no dread statistics of malnutrition, terrible schools and general degradation move the hierarchy of the Holy Catholic Church to righteous indignation so much as the mere suggestion that some woman somewhere, after much mental anguish, may have decided to seek the termination of a pregnancy as a last resort.

From time to time over the years, I have sat with such women and listened, offering such alternatives to abortion as adoption where they



seemed appropriate and workable.

ETERNAL DAMNATION

Now and then the choice of abortion came at the suggestion of a physician, sometimes of a trusted family member, sometimes of the woman herself.

In that latter situation, where it seemed to me that the woman was as emotionally stable as her situation permitted, I have gone on to support her in that dreaded, dreadful alternative to birth. I acknowledged to myself and to her that she possessed such a right, and that all evidence was that she was exercising it responsibly.

On occasion, parents, grandparents, fathers, husbands or just plain buttinskys tried to talk over the woman in question, using bizarre threats of eternal damnation, social opprobrium or even banishment from the family.

I remember one incident in which the parents brought their 19-year-old daughter to my office, insisting that I talk her out of terminating an unexpected and devoutly unwanted pregnancy. Her reasons for wanting to do so were made undeniably valid by the circumstances revealed.

'YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY'

Having listened as long as I could stand it, I finally said to the parents, "OK, since your daughter is an A-student away at college, why don't you turn her room into a nursery, and you care for the child?" The reaction was immediate and negative.

"We can't do that," they said in hor-

ror. "We can't take that kind of responsibility."

Thank providence for Planned Parenthood, on the local board of which I sat at the time. The young woman was helped by the good people of that organization to terminate the pregnancy. She went on to finish college [magna cum laude], graduate from law school, marry and have children.

If you engage in prayer, I say, "Pray for commonsense about such matters as abortion."

I regard the possibility of such blessed deliverance, however, in the same way people think of the millennium, viz. as a good thing that may be coming but not, of course, in their lifetime.

DEPOSIT BABY AT RECTORY

I propose the following response to the Catholic Church's banner: Let any woman who decides the termination of a pregnancy is her only acceptable choice go ahead and have the baby anyway.

Then as soon she leaves the hospital, she should betake herself to the nearest Catholic rectory and place the infant in the arms of the dear priest.

Wish him luck.

Give him a package of Pampers, a week's supply of formula and tell him, QED, that his prayers have been answered.

– The author is an Episcopal priest, journalist and author living in Michigan

SCAM

From Page 13

ation just as the economy is recovering from its worst recession since the 1930s.

On CBS' Face The Nation on Sept. 12, Rep. John Boehner, R-OH, conceded that a nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation found that 3% of small-business people would be impacted if Bush tax cuts for the rich would expire.

Fewer than 750,000 people, less than 0.25% of the country, would be affected by the top rate, according to Joint Committee on Taxation figures.

Owners of such businesses would benefit from continuation of Bush era tax cuts due to expire at the end of this year.

Rather than paying corporate taxes, the firms operate as S Corporations, sole proprietorships or partnerships, including limited liability companies that put LLC instead of Inc. at the end of their names.

All are considered pass-through structures, in which company profits are passed directly to individual owners, who then pay taxes.

Traditional corporations pay taxes on profits and pass along dividends to individuals, who pay taxes on the dividends.

Olbermann explained the rules for classification as a small business.

"It's not the income that's small, it's not the number of employees that's small, it's just the total number of owners that's small," Olbermann said.

In the case of S corporations, the total number of owners can be 100, he said.

'DON'T BLESS MY WOMB IF YOU CAN'T BLESS THE REST OF ME'

By Carol Lauhon

Editor's Note: Harry Cook sought pre-publication response to his essay from Carol Cameron Lauhon, who earned her baccalaureate degree at Kalamazoo College and PhD from the University of Iowa. She has long been active in the protection of women's reproductive rights.

I am interested that Harry Cook characterizes abortion as "that dreaded, dreadful alternative to birth." In my experience, when a woman is confident that her decision is the best for all concerned, the procedure isn't "dreaded" or "dreadful." In fact, it's not the procedure that is the focus. The focus is instead on the woman's responsibility for determining the course of her life and [often] in looking out for how well she can meet the needs of others – the children she already has, for example, or her future children.

Also, I myself would say that childbirth can be "dreaded, dreadful." It's still dangerous to women and babies. Our maternal and infant mortality rates are too high for a developed country, and our African-American population is affected disproportionately.

I suppose that the debate is not as much about abortion as it is about women and power. A patriarchy – whether a church or a family – can't deal with a woman's abortion decision, because it's a matter of a woman exercising power.

I have been trying to think of a phrase to respond to that simple-minded banner. I guess I'd put up: "Don't bless my womb if you can't bless the rest of me." It's hard to respond to a simpleminded slogan.

When I say simpleminded, I realize that what bothers me is that the sentiment "end abortion" is too simple. Behind every abortion is a different story. Many women say, "I want to be a mother, but not right now." If the church wants to influence the abortion decision, I say, let the church work to make the "right now" more congenial to motherhood – full government funding for prenatal care and childbirth services, for child care and health care, for safe and comfortable schools, and for an adequate economic safety net when the family provider is ill or unemployed. We can afford it.

Let the church work on converting the greedy and warmongering among us to practicing an ethic of care, to sponsoring well-being for all of us who are post-born.

Falling Income Hits Young Adults Hard

By Shawn Fremsted

New Census Bureau figures show that in 2009 one out of every three Americans had incomes that fell below the amount [roughly \$45,000 for a family of four] that most Americans and various budget estimates show is needed to “make ends meet” at a basic level.

The Census Bureau released a report on trends in income, including median income, income inequality and income poverty, and health insurance coverage between 2008 and 2009.

As expected given the increase in unemployment – which grew from 7.4% in December 2008 to 10% in December 2009 – the report shows a substantial deterioration in Americans’ economic security between 2008 and 2009.

POVERTY RATE SOARS

Also, of particular note, the report shows substantial increases in the poverty rate and the rate of people without health insurance, as well as declines in median income for various demographic groups.

In 2009, some 43.6 million people had incomes below the federal poverty line. The income-poverty rate increased both overall – from 13.2% in 2008 to 14.3% in 2009 – and for all racial and ethnic groups, except Asians [for whom the increase was not statistically significant].

The number of persons living below the poverty line has now increased for three consecutive years. The largest percentage increases in poverty were experienced by families headed by a single man [3.1%] and children under age 6 [2.6%].

There is broad recognition that the current poverty line [\$21,756 for a family of four in 2009] falls far below the amount of income needed to “make ends meet” at a basic level.

When established in the early 1960s, the poverty line was equal to nearly 50% of median income. Because it has only been adjusted for inflation since then, and not for increases in mainstream living standards, the poverty line has fallen to just under 30% of median income.

The number of people without health insurance rose from 46.3 million in 2008 to 50.7 million in 2009. The increase in the uninsured would have been much larger had public health insurance programs not taken up much of the slack.

MUCH POORER TODAY

As a result, to be counted as officially “poor,” you have to be much poorer today, compared to a typical family, than you would have in the 1960s.

Both public opinion research conducted by Gallup and other pollsters, and basic budget analyses conducted by the Department of Commerce and various non-governmental research organizations, suggest that the minimum amount needed to “make ends meet” at a basic level is around \$45,000 to \$50,000 for a family of four.

While the Census report does not report data for such a standard, it does provide data on the number of people with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line, which is a roughly equivalent income level.

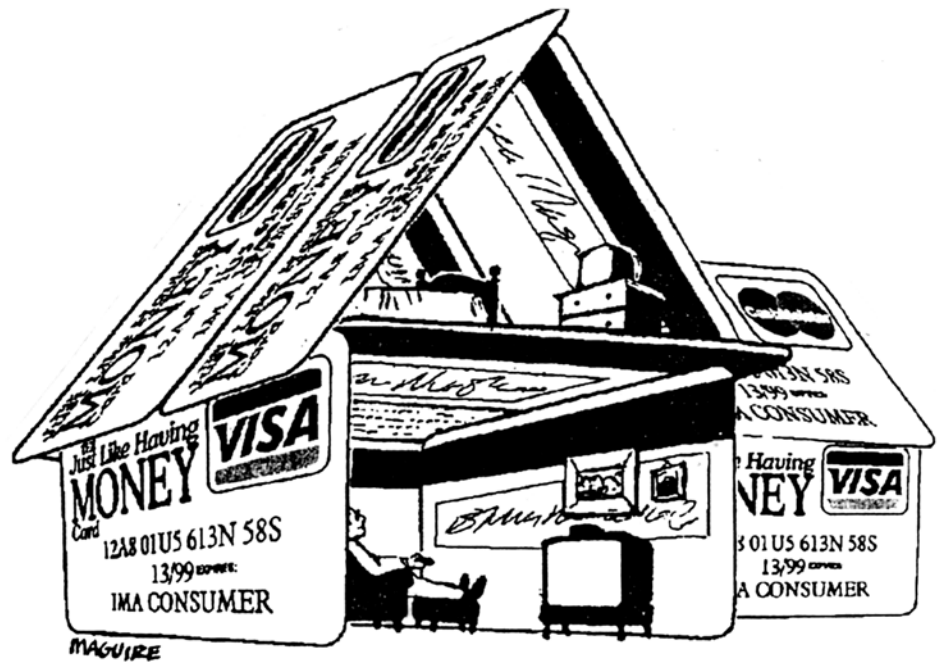
These figures show that one out of every three Americans in 2009 had income below 200% of the poverty line, and that the percentage of such people increased by 1.1 percentage points between 2008 and 2009, and by nearly 4 percentage points since its lowest recorded level [29.3%] in 2000.

YOUNG HIT HARDEST

Young adults and adults in their 30s and early 40s were particularly hard hit. For example, householders age 24 and younger saw their median incomes drop by 4.4%, a decline second only to that of non-citizens [4.5%].

Young adults age 25 to 34 – who already had among the highest uninsurance rates, with more than one in four uninsured in 2008 – experienced the largest increase in the share of people without health insurance [2.6%].

Oklahoma includes 625,000 persons without insurance and the fifth worst poverty level. One in five Oklahomans go to bed never knowing where their next



meal will come from the following day.

After a record decline between 2007 and 2008, overall median income apparently stabilized in 2009 [the decline from \$50,112 in 2008 to \$49,777 in 2009 was not statistically significant]. However, there were considerable differences in the median income of various demographic groups. In general, non-Hispanic whites, Blacks, young adults, married couples, and people living in the suburbs experienced declines in median income.

BLACKS TOP THE LIST

The largest declines were experienced by blacks [4.4%]; householders under the age of 24 [4.4%]; and non-citizens [4.5%]. The elderly were the only group to experience an income gain of a similar magnitude [5.8%].

This increase reflects in part the roughly \$13 billion in supplemental Social Security payments that last year’s Recovery Act provided to seniors.

There were also steep declines in the number of workers with full-time or any earnings during the year. The number of workers with full-time, year-round earnings declined by 4.8 million between 2008 and 2009, a 4.6% decline.

The decline in full-time, year-round workers was greater for men [3.8 million jobs and 6.3%] than for women [1 million jobs and 2.3%].

LESS DIFFERENCE

Similarly, the number of workers with any earnings during the year declined by 2.4% between 2008 and 2009, although there was less of a difference between male and female workers on this measure [a 2.6% decline for men and a 2.2% decline for women].

The number of people covered by private insurance fell from nearly 201 million in 2008 to 194.5 million in 2009; this decline was offset by a nearly 5 million person increase in the share of people covered by Medicaid and military health care programs.

It’s important to note that these numbers largely do not reflect legislation enacted in 2009 and 2010 to boost job growth and increase economic security.

RECOVERY ACT NOT COUNTED

While the Recovery Act was signed into law in the first quarter of 2009, most of the financial assistance provided by it to low- and moderate-income households comes in forms [including tax credits and in-kind assistance] that are not factored into the official poverty and median income numbers.

In addition, many of the investments in the Recovery Act were not made until the latter half of 2009 and this year. The impact of these investments will only show up in the figures for 2010 [released this time next year] and in subsequent years.

Finally, health care reform, which will, among other things, ultimately extend public health insurance to nearly all currently uninsured Americans with incomes below 125% of the poverty line, and provide subsidies for insurance up to 400% of the poverty line, has only begun to be implemented.

Most of the expansions in coverage will not occur until 2014. Many uninsured young adults, however, will benefit next year from a health care reform provision that allows them to stay on their parents’ insurance policies until age 26.

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Super-Rich Richer, Rest Down The Drain

By Robert B. Reich

The super-rich got even wealthier this year, and yet most of them are paying even fewer taxes to support the education, job training, and job creation of the rest of us.

According to Forbes magazine’s annual survey, the combined net worth of the 400 richest Americans climbed 8% this year, to \$1.37 trillion. Wealth rose for 217 members of the list, while 85 saw a decline.

For example, Charles and David Koch, the energy magnates who are pouring vast sums of money into Republican coffers and sponsoring tea partiers all over America, each gained \$5.5 billion of wealth over the past year. Each is now worth \$21.5 billion.

Wall Street continued to dominate the list; 109 of the richest 400 are in finance or investments.

From another survey we learn that the 25 top hedge-fund managers got an average of \$1 billion each, but paid an average of 17% in taxes [because so much of their income is considered capital gains, taxed at 15% thanks to the Bush tax cuts].

The rest of America got poorer, of course. The number in poverty rose to a

post-war high. The median wage continues to deteriorate. And some 20 million Americans don’t have work.

Only twice before in American history has so much been held by so few, and the gap between them and the great majority been a chasm – the late 1920s, and the era of the robber barons in the 1880s.

And yet the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, which conferred almost all their benefits on the rich, continue.

Democrats have decided to delay voting on whether to extend them for the top 2% of Americans or for the bottom 98% until after the mid-term elections.

Democrats have thereby given up a defining issue that could have enabled them to show the big story of the last three decades – the accumulation of almost all the gain from economic growth at the top – and to make a start at reversing it.

When will they ever learn?

– The author is professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley. He was secretary of labor in the Clinton Administration.

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Focus On The Family Sees 'Gay Conspiracy'

By Alvin McEwen

Focus on the Family is targeting anti-bullying efforts in schools, claiming that they actually push the so-called "gay agenda."

You remember Focus on the Family? That's the James Dobson outfit that said homosexuality is curable and to prove it they hired a gay guy to preach the gospel.

Oops! He was subsequently arrested in a gay bar propositioning another gay.

As kids head back to school, conservative Christian media ministry Focus on the Family perceives a bully on the playground: national gay-advocacy groups.

School officials allow these outside groups to introduce policies, curriculum and library books under the guise of diversity, safety or bullying-prevention initiatives, said Focus on the Family education expert Candi Cushman.

PARENTS BELITTLED?

"We feel more and more that activists are being deceptive in using anti-bullying rhetoric to introduce their viewpoints, while the viewpoint of Christian students and parents are increasingly belittled," Cushman said.

This stance against anti-bullying efforts seem to be part of a larger campaign by Focus on the Family to push the inaccurate notion that "homosexuals are indoctrinating children in America's schools" [TrueTolerance.org].

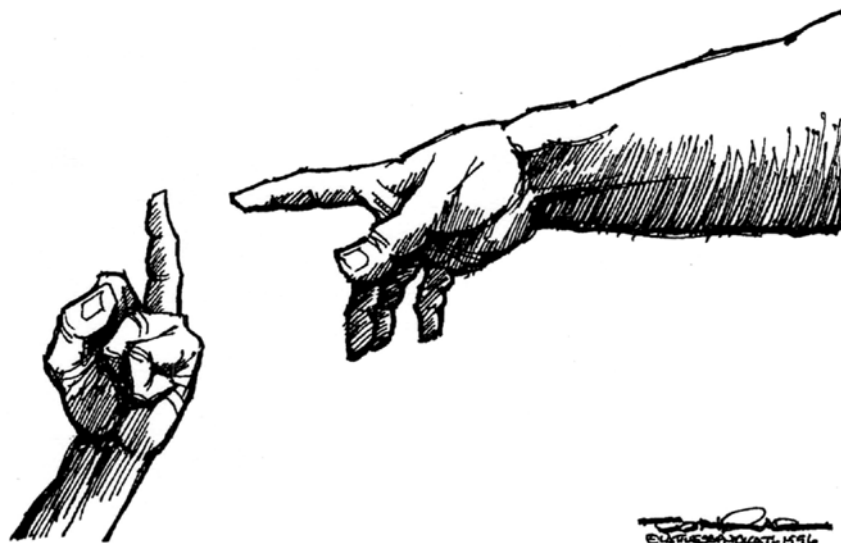
The following article in the American Family Association's One News Now goes into more detail about Cushman's claims and efforts:

With the new school year starting up, many parents are concerned about homosexual promotion in public schools, so a prominent pro-family group is informing parents about what they can do to protect their kids.

Candi Cushman, education analyst for Focus on the Family's CitizenLink, tells One News Now that one simple way to stay on top of the issue is to go to the school's online library catalog.

GAY TERMS USED

"Enter key terms in the search function like 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' ... and if you start pulling up a lot of books with homosexual themes, that's a real red flag to you because technically, the library should reflect the school curriculum," Cushman explains. "It's also a place teachers can



go to pull out resources for use in the classroom."

It also seems that a major bone of contention of Cushman and Focus on the Family is a booklet which was put out by GLSEN [the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network] to be distributed to school officials entitled Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth.

The contention by Cushman and Focus on the Family is that this booklet is wrong and "one-sided."

Eliza Byard, head of GLSEN, told The Denver Post that while GLSEN thought up the idea, the booklet was actually written by a coalition of 18 medical, mental-health and education organizations.

TRUE TOLERANCE POSTING

Now to combat this, Focus on the Family has a piece on the True Tolerance site called Just The Real Facts Please which supposedly gives a refutation of the GLSEN booklet. Just The Real Facts Please is a part of a packet that parents are encouraged to give to school officials.

But it's obvious that Focus on the Family didn't research its facts well. Three errors stick out greatly.

On page 22 is this claim: *According to a scientific article published in the journal Pediatrics, nearly 26% of 12-year-olds are unsure about their sexuality. The study showed that this uncertainty diminished significantly in older age groups.*

So pushing a particular sexual agenda onto children during this vulnerable time period is irresponsible, and can even amount to taking emotional advantage of youth.

The article in question is from Gary Remafedi, MD, MPH, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Minne-

sota. And on more than one occasion, Remafedi has complained about how it was being distorted.

YET ANOTHER DISTORTION

Another distortion is the following on page 17: *Dr. Robert Spitzer, a pro-gay ally and former APA [American Psychiatric Association] Fellow – as well as a Professor of Psychiatry and Chief of Biometrics at Columbia University – published his study of 200 men and women who had reported some change "from homosexual to heterosexual orientation that lasted at least five years."*

He found that "almost all of the participants reported substantial changes in the core aspects [of] sexual orientation, not merely overt behavior." He also noted that "participants reported benefit from non-sexual changes, such as decreased depression."

The problem with this citation is that Cushman omitted the fact that Spitzer later continuously complained that his work was being distorted.

WERE THEY LYING?

In addition, in a 2006 interview with the Los Angeles Times, Spitzer said that he now believes that some of those he interviewed for his study may have been either lying to him or themselves. [Ex-Gays Seek A Say In Schools, Los Angeles Times, May 28, 2006]

But the most egregious error in Cushman's piece, and it's an error that says a lot not only about her mindset but that of Focus on the Family, is the following:

According to the medical and psychological experts writing in the Handbook of Child and Adolescent Sexual Problems, "The consequences of choices made with the advantage

of developmental maturity are preferable to those consequences resulting from decisions made impulsively, in the absence of adequate knowledge, or without the moderating benefit of maturity.

"The latter choices will, of course, be imperfect, but the former regularly result in personal and social consequences that are painful, destructive, and not fully reversible."

WHO THE 'EXPERTS' ARE

And just who are these experts? A quick look at the endnotes tells us the following:

Lundy, MD, MS, Michael S. and George A. Rekers, PhD, Fellow of the Academy of Clinical Psychology, "Homosexuality: Development, Risks, Parental Values, and Controversies," Handbook of Child and Adolescent Sexual Problems, Ed. George A. Rekers, New York: Lexington Books, 1995, p.290.

You read that right. Our "beloved" solicitor of "luggage lifters," George Rekers.

Even after the scandal involving the rentboy and the knowledge that his very presence at anti-gay judicial cases almost ensures victories of the LGBT community [due to the fact that judges don't find him credible], Cushman and Focus on the Family still think of him as a credible source when it comes to LGTB issues.

BIG IRONY

The big irony is that Cushman contends that Focus on the Family wants to establish an anti-bullying program to help all students. I find that hard to believe on so many levels. The citation of Rekers as a reliable source is one reason. The entire campaign in general is another.

If they don't want schools to acknowledge LGBTs, how can they talk about protecting LGBT youth?

Focus on the Family isn't the only rightwing group seeking to influence America's schools through inaccurate information on the LGBT community.

In March, the American College of Pediatrics, a shell group of phony anti-gay data, sent out information to school officials about a website featuring junk science and legitimate studies taken out of context. The organization received numerous rebukes for the false data.

– The author is the blogmaster of Holy Bullies and Headless Monsters. In addition, he is also a contributor to Truthwinsout.org, Pam's House Blend, and the Huffington Post.

SUPERMAN

From Page 12

during a recession with a nearly 10% unemployment rate.

"Only 7% of American workers are in unions," Weingarten says, adding matter-of-factly, "America looks at us as islands of privilege."

In part because of the outcry generated by the New Yorker piece among the city's elite – many of whom do not send their children to public schools and are ignorant of the system's inner workings – the Education Department and the UFT have phased out rubber rooms.

Dennis van Roekel, Weingarten's counterpart at the NEA, is also worried about the documentary. His media strategy for the year is to launch a "commission on quality teaching" made up of "teachers of the year," he says. The idea is to amplify teachers' voices in debates about the future of the profession.

Ultimately, though, a new generation of educators, more and more of whom,

like Dustin Thomas, have come up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed through alternative certification programs like TFA, will judge teachers unions on whether they share the commitment that motivates many of the best teachers to enter the profession: a drive toward eradicating the achievement gap.

Unions will need to make the case through actions and words, not least because of a hostile media climate that stacks the deck against them.

Otherwise, unions, and more significantly, truly public, accessible and equitable education, will go out of existence.

– The author is a Spencer Education Journalism Fellow at Columbia University

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Why Are So Many Christians Wingnuts?

By Mike Lux

When you are in the political world, you have decisions to make every single day about who you will try to help and who you won't.

In spite of the earnest quest of good technocrats everywhere, the simple fact is that there are only a few win-win solutions.

Who you tax, who you give a tax break to, what programs you cut or add to, who you tighten regulations on, and who you loosen them on, what kind of contractors are eligible for government work, which school districts and non-profit groups get federal money, etc.: these political decisions are generally not win-win.

Instead, they mean that one group of people win, and one group loses. It is the nature of politics, and you can't take the politics out of politics.

FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE

The most fundamental difference between liberals and conservatives is that question of which side you are on.

Conservatives believe that the rich and powerful got that way because they deserve to be, that society owes its prosperity to the prosperous, and that government's job when they have to make choices is to side with those businesspeople who are doing well, because all good things trickle down from them.

Progressives [code word for liberal], on the other hand, believe it is the poor and those who are ill-treated who need the most help from their government, and that prosperity comes from all of us – the worker as well as the employer, the consumer as well as the seller, the struggling entrepreneur trying to make it as well as the wealthy who already have.

Usually, I might spend my time arguing which of those worldviews gives us better policy outcomes, or which is better politics, but in this post I want to focus on something else: which side the God of the Judeo-Christian Biblical tradition is on.

BECK AND PALIN

Glenn Beck has his conspiracy theories about Christian social justice [since Communists and Nazis both used the words "social" and "justice," sometimes even together, the phrase must be bad along with other words they used a lot like the, and, one, thank you, please, today, tonight, and tomorrow].

Sarah Palin's "spiritual warfare," and my very fun e-mail debates with a much-beloved but sadly misguided conservative Christian relative, I have been thinking a lot about Christians and political ideology of late.

I am always puzzled by how people who claim to be followers of the Jesus I read about in the Bible can be political conservatives.

Now I know there are many people who have not been brought up in the Christian faith, or who were but aren't interested in it anymore.

The Jesus of the New Testament was of course extremely concerned with spiritual matters. There is no doubt whatsoever about his role or interest in the issues of the day, that the spiritual well-being of his followers was a major interest of his.

However much of a priority or focus it was, though, if you actually read the Gospels, it is clear that Jesus' main concern in terms of the people whose fates he cared about was for the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast.

Comment after comment and story after story in the Gospels about Jesus relates to the treatment of the poor, generosity to those in need, mercy to the outcast, and scorn for the wealthy and powerful. And his philosophy is embedded with the central importance of taking care of others, loving others, treating others as you would want to be treated.

There is no virtue of selfishness here, there is no "greed is good," there is no invisible hand of the market or looking out for No. 1 first. There is nothing about poor people being lazy, nothing about the undeserving poor being leeches on society, nothing about how I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps so everyone else should, too.

HIS MESSAGE FOR THE RICH

He says that the rich people will have a harder time getting to heaven than a camel trying to pass through the eye of a needle. He chases the wealthy bankers and merchants from the Temple.

I have never heard a conservative Christian quote any of these verses – not once, and I have been in a lot of discussions with Christian conservatives, and heard a lot of their speeches and sermons. The one verse they always quote [and I mean always – I have never talked to a conservative Christian about economics and not heard them quote this verse] is the one time in which Jesus says that "the poor will always be with us."

The reason they love this quote so much is that they interpret that line to mean that in spite of everything else Jesus said about the poor, that since the poor will always be with us, we don't need to worry about trying to help them.

The Jesus of the New Testament spent his public career preaching about the nature of God and our relationship to God, but also about how we should deal with each other.

WHAT HE BLESSED

He repeatedly blessed mercy, gentleness, peacemaking, community, and taking care of each other. He lifted up the poor and oppressed, and spoke poorly of the wealthy and powerful.

If anyone in modern society talked like he did [i.e. Obama], you can bet your bottom dollar that conservatives would condemn that person as a class warrior, a socialist.

Jesus may not have been primarily concerned with politics, but for what politics he did have, it is virtually impossible to argue that he was anything but a progressive thinker.

All of the first five books of the Torah [the Old Testament for Christians] talk a lot about justice for the poor; the Psalms are full of verses about the helping poor; every Old Testament prophet castigates the Jewish people [and yes, their governments] for mistreating the poor.

LETTERS

From Page 4

ly be asking if she did, indeed, look like "one of us."

She used to answer, "We have freedom of religion in this country, and my religion is a private matter." But, no more.

Now she replies: "When I moved to Oklahoma I adopted the dominant religion here. I became a practicing hypocrite."

Bradley C. Byers
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Several times each month we see, hear or read stories about rape, molestation, burning, beating and other gruesome acts of abuse. Seldom do we see the statistics that point to the frequency of these acts. They are shocking. The FBI reports that one in five women in this country will be raped or sexually assaulted. The figure may be much higher, because shame prevents many women from reporting assaults and violent acts against children are also underreported. The statistics for physical abuse are much higher. Agencies report that as many as one in three women will be violently abused.

There is no doubt this problem is not being addressed. Maybe because it represents the failure of govern-

ment to fulfill its role in the protection and empowerment of its citizens. Or it could be, because women don't have much of a voice in government, men choose to ignore this problem. Whatever the cause, this violence is ripping our society apart and filling our courts and prisons.

Research shows a powerful link between the trauma of abuse and anti-social behavior. Abuse impairs brain's development in a number of ways. It halts emotional development, that manifested as anger issues, by limiting a person's ability to cope with everyday obstacles. It inhibits the development of dopamine receptors, which leads to all types of addictive behavior encompassing every addiction from gambling to smoking to drinking to drugs to hoarding and the list goes on. Gabor Mate's book, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*, is an excellent resource for anyone interested in this subject.

But back to the topic of abuse and what we're going to do about it. Currently, women who have been raped, exploited, or molested, and who frequently and unwillingly become pregnant are unable to end these pregnancies. If we are to protect and empower these citizens we must end this part-

nership many of our legislators have forged with rapists, abusers and molesters as they perpetuate the abuse of these victims, by passing anti-abortion laws. We must give women power over their bodies. We can't let our legislators partner with violence. We can't let our legislators partner with people who exploit children.

We can't ignore and partner with pedophiles as the Catholic Church did. We must take this first step to empower women and to return to them the control of their bodies. If we are to end abuse we must protect and empower the victims, by stopping those who sustain this abuse through legislation.

Hal Spake
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

The national debt has increased every year but one in recent history. That year was the last year that Mr. Clinton was in office. The interesting thing to note is that the national debt, as a percent of per capita income, actually was reduced during many administrations. For an example when Mr. Carter was in office it decreased from 57% to 53% even though the debt increased from \$653,544,000,000 to \$930,210,000,000. This decrease

is explained by the fact that the per capita income in these four years increased from \$5,271 to \$8,822 per person and also the population increased by about nine million people.

During the 12 years that Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush were in office the national debt increased from 53% to 110%. Mr. Clinton was able to bring that percentage down to 90% by Dec. 31, 2000. By the end of 2008 it had ballooned to 130% of the per capita income.

In the last 32 years the national debt, as a percent of the per capita income, has increased every time we have had a Republican in charge of the White House and has decreased every time we have had a Democrat as president.

It was the GOP's desire for no government-imposed restrictions on businesses that brought our country to the brink of a depression. It was the irresponsible fiscal policies during the last three GOP administrations that had burdened us with so much debt that it is very difficult to respond to the present crisis.

For an interesting table showing a short history on the national debt go to info@presidentialdebt.org.

Chris Bolton
Eucha

Former Oklahoman Zapped Wall Street

The government's \$182 billion bailout of insurance giant AIG should be seen as the Rosetta Stone for understanding the financial crisis and its costly aftermath, finally exposed by former Oklahoman Elizabeth Warren.

The story of American International Group explains the larger catastrophe not because this was the biggest corporate bailout in history but because AIG's collapse and subsequent rescue involved nearly all the critical elements, including delusion and deception.

These financial dealings are monstrously complicated, but this account focuses on something mere mortals can understand – moral confusion in high places, and the failure of governing institutions to fulfill their obligations to the public.

Three governmental investigative bodies have now pored through the AIG wreckage and turned up disturbing facts – the House Committee on Oversight and Reform; the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, which will make its report at year's end; and the Congressional Oversight Panel [COP], which issued its report on AIG in June.

The five-member COP, chaired by Harvard professor Warren, has produced the most devastating and comprehensive account so far.

GUESS WHO SUFFERED?

Unanimously adopted by its bipartisan members, it provides alarming insights that should be fodder for the larger debate many citizens long to hear – why Washington rushed to forgive the very interests that produced this mess, while innocent others were made to suffer the consequences.

The Congressional panel's critique helps explain why bankers and their Washington allies do not want Warren to chair the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Instead of appointing Warren to head the new agency to regulate Wall Street, President Obama ducked, naming her instead as a White House staffer to set up the new agency.

The fierce opposition of U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd, D-CT, was a Senate fight the president didn't want to wage. Dodd has picked up millions from Wall Street lobbyists.

The report concludes that the Federal Reserve Board's intimate relations with the leading powers of Wall Street – the same banks that benefited most from the government's massive bailout – influenced its strategic decisions on AIG.

The panel accuses the Fed and the Treasury Department of brushing aside alternative approaches that would have saved tens of billions in public funds by making these same banks "share the pain."

Bailing out AIG effectively meant rescuing Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Bank of America and Merrill Lynch [as well as a dozens of European banks] from huge losses. Those financial institutions played the derivatives game with AIG, the esoteric practice of placing financial bets on future events.

TAXPAYERS STUCK

AIG lost its bets, which led to its collapse. But other gamblers – the counterparties in AIG's derivative deals – were made whole on their bets, paid off 100



cents on the dollar. Taxpayers got stuck with the bill.

"The AIG rescue demonstrated that Treasury and the Federal Reserve would commit taxpayers to pay any price and bear any burden to prevent the collapse of America's largest financial institutions," the COP report said.

This could have been avoided, the report argues, if the Fed had listened to disinterested advisers with a less parochial understanding of the public interest.

Contrary to popular belief fed by radio and TV wingnuts, the AIG bailout was carried out in the waning days of George W. Bush's presidency.

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Why Warren Fights To Protect Consumers

By Elizabeth Warren

Over the past several weeks, the president and I have had extensive conversations about the vital importance of consumer financial protection.

The president asked me, and I enthusiastically agreed, to serve as an Assistant to the President and Special Advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

He has also asked me to take on the job to get the new CFPB started – right now. The president and I are committed to the same vision on CFPB, and I am confident that I will have the tools I need to get the job done.

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

President Obama understands the importance of leveling the playing field again for families and creating protections that work not just for the wealthy or connected, but for every American.

The new consumer bureau is based on a pretty simple idea: People ought to be able to read their credit card and mortgage contracts and know the deal. They shouldn't learn about an unfair rule or practice only when it bites them – way too late for them to do anything about it.

The new law creates a chance to

put a tough cop on the beat and provide real accountability and oversight of the consumer credit market. The time for hiding tricks and traps in the fine print is over. This new bureau is based on the simple idea that if the playing field is level and families can see what's going on, they will have better tools to make better choices.

MUCH WORK TO DO

If the CFPB can succeed at leveling the playing field, we can go a long way toward repairing a gaping hole in the budgets of millions of families. But nobody has ever thought or argued that the consumer bureau can fix everything. Lost jobs, stagnant incomes, rising costs for college, dwindling retirement savings – there's a lot of work to be done.

When she was 16, my grandmother, Hannie Reed, drove a wagon in the Oklahoma land rush. Her mother had died, so she was up front with her little brothers and sisters bouncing around in the back.

When I was growing up, she talked about life on the prairie, about marrying my grandfather and making a living building one-room schoolhouses, about getting wiped out in the Great Depression.

She was hit with hard challenges

throughout her life, but the moral of her stories was always the same: she would solve her problems one at a time by pulling up her socks and get-

ting to work.

It's time for all of us to pull up our socks and get to work.

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Marijuana Arrests Near Record High

Police prosecuted 858,408 persons for marijuana violations in 2009, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual Uniform Crime Report. The arrest total is the second highest ever reported by the FBI, and marks a 1.3% increase in the number of arrests reported in 2008 [847,864].

According to the report, marijuana arrests now comprise more than one-half [approximately 52%] of all drug arrests reported in the United States. A decade ago, marijuana arrests comprised just 44% of all drug arrests.

Approximately 46% of all drug prosecutions nationwide are for marijuana possession.

Of those charged with marijuana violations, approximately 88% [758,593 Americans] were charged with possession only. The remaining 99,815 individuals were charged with "sale/manufacture," a category that includes virtually all cultivation offenses.

Regionally, the percentage of marijuana arrests were highest in the Midwest [62% of all drug arrests] and southern regions [56% of all drug arrests] of the United States, and lowest in the west, where pot prosecutions comprised only 40% of total drug arrests.

In 2007, the FBI reported 872,721 marijuana prosecutions in the United States, the highest total on record.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

From Page One

the past five years show two-thirds of Americans support of eliminating DADT.

People such as rock-solid Republicans Ted Olson and Defense Secretary Gates have endorsed eliminating DADT. Olson served as U.S. solicitor general under President George W. Bush, was an assistant attorney general in the Reagan Administration, a founder of the conservative Federalist Society, board member of the very conservative American Spectator, and represented President George W. Bush in *Bush v. Gore*.

"Many of my fellow conservatives have an almost knee-jerk hostility toward gay marriage," Olson wrote in a Newsweek column, *The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage*. "This does not make sense, because same-sex unions promote the values conservatives prize. Marriage is one of the basic building blocks of our neighborhoods and our nation.

"At its best, it is a stable bond between two individuals who work to create a loving household and a so-

cial and economic partnership. We encourage couples to marry because the commitments they make to one another provide benefits not only to themselves but also to their families and communities."

Marriage requires thinking beyond one's own needs. It transforms two individuals into a union based on shared aspirations and in doing so establishes a formal investment in the well-being of society.

The fact that individuals who happen to be gay want to share in this vital social institution is evidence that conservative ideals enjoy widespread acceptance. Conservatives should celebrate this, rather than lament it.

Flip-flopping Sen. John McCain, R-AZ, spearheaded the Senate fight against repeal of DADT. He's still bitter at his loss of the presidency to Barack Obama. He's a crushing disappointment to millions of ex-fans in both parties.

It should anger Republicans and all Americans when gays are denigrated as degenerates or un-American, or

undeserving of the government's protection of their rights.

It's the Republican Party that once gave voice to genuine outrage when anyone belittled the humanity of another person. Today's Republican Party is offensive in the extreme to the values of this nation, and should be in the forefront of rejecting such truly un-American prejudice.

If you believe we are born with our sexual orientation, it is hard to deny the inequality under the law that exists when people of one sexual orientation are allowed to marry and people of another are not.

Denying two consenting adults of the same sex the right to form a lawful union that is protected and respected by the state denies them two of the most basic natural rights affirmed in the preamble of our Declaration of Independence – liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Oklahoma Republicans constantly claim to be the party that defends the Constitution yet they have fallen in league with tea partiers who are re-

lentless preaching hatred of gays. One day denying gays the right to marry will be viewed as historically corrupt – as corrupt as denying slaves their freedom.

When President Harry Truman integrated the armed forces it was predicted that it would destroy military cohesion. The critics were wrong. Black troops served bravely.

The brief firestorm Truman's edict wrought finally went away and today it's a given that race plays no role in the military.

The GOP ought to get out of the Dark Ages and breathe the fresh air of individual freedom. Republicans are still nominating people like Christine O'Donnell, the GOP Senate primary winner in Delaware.

In a 2006 interview, O'Donnell said: "Homosexuality is an identity adopted through societal factors. It's an identity disorder."

Someday science will figure it out but in the meantime, Sally Kern and her ilk should stay out of other people's bedrooms.

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Libertarians Blister Democrats On DADT

Like abused spouses who keep returning to their aggressors, gay voters keep handing their votes to the Democrats who abuse them.

So declared the Libertarian Party [LP], which wants to break this self-destructive behavior and offers LGBT voters a better alternative.

LP Chairman Mark Hinkle said, "Exit polls indicate that Democrats get over 70% of LGBT votes in federal elections. Those voters must really love the Democrats' rhetoric, because they certainly aren't seeing any action.

"President Obama and the Democrats had almost a year of complete control of the federal government: the Presidency, the House, and a filibuster-proof 60 votes in the Senate.

"They could have repealed 'don't ask don't tell.' They could have gotten rid of the Defense of Marriage Act. But they didn't do either of those things. That's a complete and total betrayal of all the promises they made to gay and lesbian voters for years."

After a carefully orchestrated failure in the Senate, Democrats are now blaming Republicans for blocking the repeal of DADT, according to Libertarians.

"Of course," Hinkle said, "three Democrats just voted against it, too, including Majority Leader Harry Reid. Reid claims he voted for procedural reasons, but the whole situation seems calculated to look like they're trying to help, while making sure they don't actually help."

Unlike the Democratic and Republican Parties, the Libertarian Party believes that gays and lesbians deserve equal treatment under the law.

LP Executive Director Wes Benedict added, "The Libertarian Party neither supports nor opposes gay relationships. Libertarians are black, white, young, old, straight, gay, Christian, atheist, yuppie, hippie, rich, poor, greedy, generous, eccentric and just plain average. Though their backgrounds and lifestyles are diverse, they are united on the principle of minimum government and maximum freedom."

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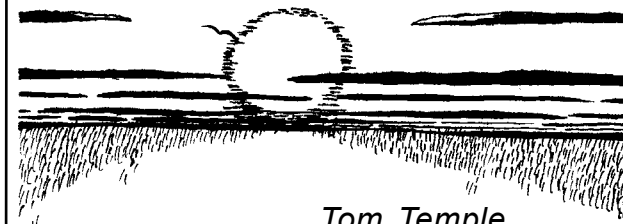
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