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Voting For A Nightmare Republican Oklahoma?

By Frosty Troy

I have been having a nightmare about what Oklahoma would look like with a Republican governor, Legislature, state school superintendent, attorney general and state auditor.

With a Republican Legislature, Democrat Brad Henry played the bipartisan game until the last six months of his second and final term – using the veto against the Republicans relentlessly.

Together Henry and the Republicans – along with a few half-assed Democrats – cut taxes more than \$770 million, leading to the fiscal crisis looming in the next fiscal year. [Tragically, they also cut the tax rate.]

Thanks to a campaign spearheaded by the Daily Oklahoman, taxes can only be raised by a three-fourths legislative vote or a vote of the people. That means never.

Thousands of working Oklahomans would be on welfare or food stamps today if it hadn't been for \$37.5 billion in Obama stimulus money. It saved 1,900 teaching jobs.

To begin with, the Republican governor will have to forge a budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. There isn't any "maybe." The State Constitution requires a balanced budget. Period.

Facing a minimum \$865 million hole, plus a possible additional income tax cut of \$120 million, what would Mary Fallin propose?

Whether State Question 744 passes or fails, Oklahoma still faces more than \$2 billion in tax exemptions that have yet to create a single job.

In fact, since 2004 another \$300 million-plus has been added to exemptions for fat cats. Primary beneficiary

is the oil industry, supreme financial supporter of the Republican Party in Oklahoma and Washington.

Since half the budget goes to education – public, higher and CareerTech – Fallin has to face up: either the exemptions go and education funding holds steady, or she shreds education.

You can bet that higher education

will fare best in any budget outcome. Legislative Republicans despise public education for their unions – OEA and AFT.

In the current fiscal year higher education took a 2% cut while public education suffered a drastic cut of 6% – and in some districts 9%. CareerTech had to cut back at a time when skilled crafts are in short supply.

One possible Republican answer? Vouchers – not for a few schools but for all schools. The groundwork was laid last session when the Legislature passed and a witless governor signed a voucher bill for special education.

The Department of Human Services would have their programs outsourced. Private prisons would abound. Some agencies would be eliminated – “downsizing government” is a Republican mantra.

The Mental Health and Substance

Abuse Department is grossly underfunded. There is no high-powered lobby for those folks. Thousands are in jail or prison or homeless on the streets – begging for handouts.

For the first time, county health departments are charging for flu shots. Thanks to the Democratic legislative minority, \$5 million for senior nutrition stations was saved from the Republican budget ax.

Goodbye funding for DAs and county roads. Look for a major change in the Ethics Commission – which members of both parties dearly hate. Will OETA bite the dust?

If there is one thing Republicans can't stand, it's an independent judiciary. If they fail to hammer the courts in the Nov. 2 election, they will return to the issue in February.

Since Fallin has already said she thinks the income tax should go away – that's 40% of the state budget – one of two things would happen – up with ad valorem and sales taxes, or a combination of the two.

Home ownership in Oklahoma is one of the five most affordable in America, mainly due to the fact that the ad valorem burden was shifted from homeowners to the Legislature.

Both taxes are regressive but don't try explaining that to your typical Republican legislator. Look for Republicans to scour the tax code, eliminating those paid by corporations.

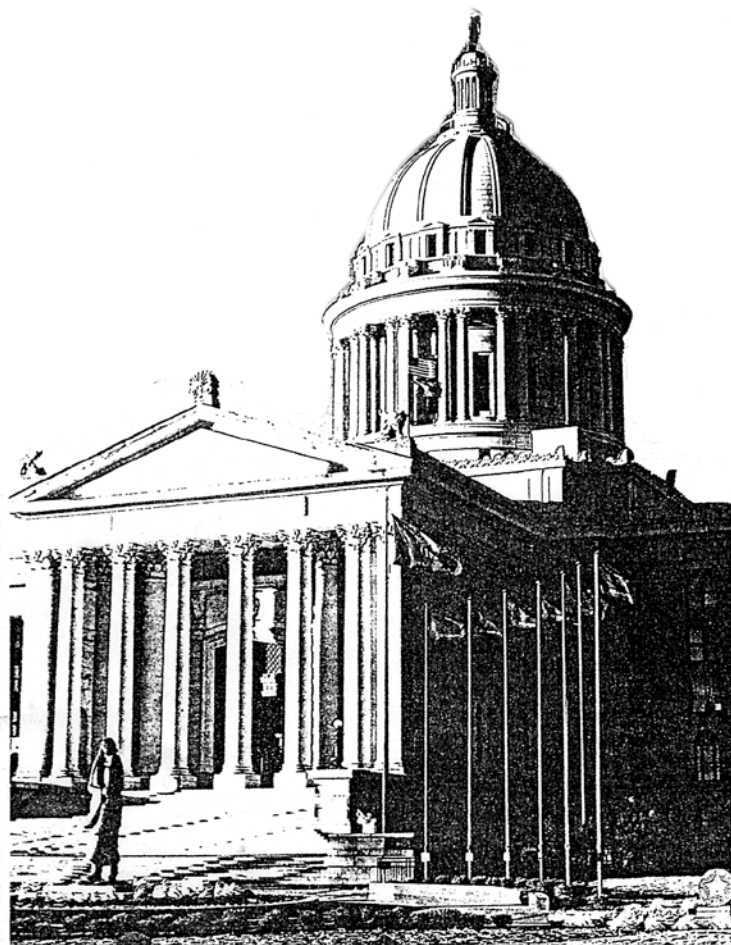
Following in Frank Keating's footsteps, Fallin would only sign important legislation authored by Republicans. If, as expected, the GOP will be veto-proof, some lobbyists are already shopping for Republican authors.

A public official plopped down by me as I was having an early morning coffee at the State Capitol snack bar.

“When are the people going to wake up? Can't they see what's happening. It's obvious, this hatred of government. Will they wake up? They can't all be stupid.”

Republicans don't have to worry about an informed public; the media are owned body and soul by rightwing interests, feeding the public a steady diet of anti-government propaganda.

See NIGHTMARE Page 19



Observations

It's The Truth

The battle over State Question 744 brings to mind billionaire George Kaiser, head of Kaiser-Francis Oil Co., who did something unusual for someone in his line of work. He told the truth about the subsidies that the oil and gas industry receive from the Republican Legislature.

During his testimony, Kaiser said he could "say unequivocally" that the tax subsidies in question have never influenced his companies' decisions to drill or restore any well in Oklahoma.

Kaiser even joked, "In fact, I may lose my day job as a result of my testimony."

Today there are at least \$2 billion in tax exemptions that have yet to create a single job. The Legislature not only granted \$340 million more since 2004, Republicans cut taxes \$771 million and reduced the rates.

Another humdinger is staring at the next session – \$120 million further reduction in state income tax revenue unless it is repealed.

Yet GOP gubernatorial nominee Mary Fallin talks about doing away with the income tax – nearly 40% of all state revenue.

Kaiser focused his comments on the number of Oklahomans who could receive health care [125,000] and the raises that could be given to teachers [\$1,300 each] if the state's priorities changed and the average \$75 million in tax credits given to the energy industry over the last four years were put toward other priorities.

Business analysts know that if a company is making business decisions based on tax breaks, then the company isn't on very strong footing to begin with. But comments like these made by billionaire businessmen are quite helpful in cutting through the false claims made about taxes.

Pity The Kids

When will people wake up to the price of law and order – Oklahoma

style?

More than 28,000 Oklahoma children have a father in prison. An additional 4,300 have a mother in prison.

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, which sponsored a conference on the crisis at the University of Central Oklahoma, is not soft on crime. If you run the social numbers, taxpayers are reaping a whirlwind because there isn't a stronger movement to alternatives to incarceration.

Oklahoma leads the nation in the percentage of women in prison, nearly 190 per 100,000 population – the vast majority for non-violent crimes.

Oklahoma has slightly improved its numbers on men – from fourth highest incarceration to fifth. Many of these men say they haven't seen their children since being incarcerated.

To cite a few examples:

- The 28,000 children represent 3% of the state's child population.

- Half of the kids are under 10 and 25% are under five.

- The children are five times more likely to end up in prison themselves.

The conference focused on the Kid Counts annual report, a non-partisan look at the status of children in America. Oklahoma ranks 44th in the well-being of children.

Our Legislature, under both Democrats and Republicans, have exploded a minefield of sentence add-ons, leading to nearly 25,000 incarcerated. Hundreds are backed up in county jails for want of prison space.

It takes less than \$6,000 to rehabilitate a felon [drug court, mental health court] but it takes \$19,000 a year of taxpayer dollars to keep a person in prison.

You do the math.

Foster Care

Preliminary data from a 10-year study conducted by University of California-Berkeley that compared California foster kids against their at-risk peers suggests that academic chal-

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER 9 YEARS...



San Diego Union-Tribune
CREATORS.COM 10-10-10

lenges posed by poverty, disability, and language barriers are compounded when children also have to shuffle from school to school because they have no permanent family.

Oklahoma's Department of Human Services is presently being sued in Tulsa federal court for allegedly mistreating foster children.

Foster children consistently scored lower in state English and math tests, even when factors such as income, race, and learning disabilities were taken into account.

The findings confirm earlier studies analyzing foster children in the Midwest and Washington state, but the final California report, due out later this year, will be the first to examine how different circumstances within the foster care network affect student learning, researchers said.

There are some 400,000 children in foster care at any one time in the United States. The average time a child spends in the foster care system is about 27 months.

Legislation sponsored by Sen. Al Franken, D-MN, would direct child-welfare agencies to collaborate with local school districts to ensure that foster children remain in their current schools after they move to new school districts if it's in their best interest.

Let's hope Congress and the President act favorably on Franken's bill – it can't come a moment too soon.

Winners

Those continually bashing state government ought to know that the vast majority of state employees do good work but they never make page one.

One in six Oklahomans has a disability, while 325,535 working-age citizens face disability-related barriers to employment.

In spite of a slow economy in many parts of the state, 1,689 Oklahomans with disabilities began earning paychecks last year, thanks to vocational rehabilitation and employment services from the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services [DRS].

In federal fiscal year 2009, DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services staff also provided 12,431 clients with career counseling, vocational education and training, special

technology, job placement and medical services – all intended to improve their employment opportunities in the near future.

To qualify for services, clients must have a physical or mental disability that is a substantial barrier to employment. They must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services by finding or maintaining employment.

According to the most recent Census data, nearly 30% of Oklahomans with disabilities were employed in 2008, compared to 70% of people without disabilities.

Because of limited employment opportunities, Oklahomans with disabilities are poor at a higher rate. In 2008, 21.8% of people age 16 and over had incomes below the federal poverty level, compared to 12% of people without disabilities.

Employers can get a federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit of up to \$2,400 for salary paid to each new worker.

According to a report from The University of Oklahoma outreach office, An Analysis of Program Impacts, DRS clients who receive vocational rehabilitation services are 77% more likely to be employed within three months after services end.

When DRS clients work 10 years, they repay \$2.30 in taxes for each \$1 spent on their programs, representing a 230% return on taxpayers' investment.

Don't generalize about government.

Correction

An essay in the Oct. 10 print edition incorrectly reported the identification requirements for voter registration. When registering by mail, acceptable proof of identification includes a copy of a current driver's license or other photo ID or a utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or other government document reflecting the name and address of the person registering. If none of those items are attached to the registration, the person still will be registered to vote – but will be asked for ID the first time they cast a ballot. For complete instructions on what is required to register, or to obtain a voter registration form, visit the State Election Board website at www.elections.ok.gov.

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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

Jim Standard's death at 70 brings to a close an important chapter in Oklahoma journalism. He was a fierce competitor at the Daily Oklahoman's Capitol bureau back in the days when there was competition.

Dart: To the Tulsa World Sooner Poll having Jari Askins losing so badly to Mary Fallin for governor. It's a worthless poll that had Askins losing to Drew Edmondson by 16 points, days before she won the nomination.

Republicans have added 24,993 to their party while Democrats lost 1,717. Big gainers: Independents, up from 1.4% in 1980 to today's 11.3%. Dems number 48.4% of the 2,063,613 registered voters while the GOP moves up to 40.3%.

Laurel: To Mid-Del elementary school math teacher Jennifer Evans, winning the 2010 Milken Award, \$25,000 and a chance at the national title.

It's amazing America stumbles along, given the fact that 36% think the feds were involved in 9/11, 31% don't believe in global warming, 29% don't believe the news media and 13 states, including Texas, have active secessionist movements.

Dart: To "One Oklahoma," the anti-State Question 744 group headed by Gov. Brad Henry, for running a TV ad that's a flat lie - it's not \$1.7 billion a year, it's \$850 million each year over three years.

MSNBC reports that Republican attorney Cleta Deatherage, formerly of Oklahoma, is representing two of the wingnut Tea Party women seeking U.S. Senate seats

Laurel: To Taylor Grove of Oklahoma City, named a White House intern for the fall semester. He is enrolled at UCLA studying law.

What is it going to take to interest Oklahomans in citizenship? A mere 25% of registered voters bothered to vote in the primary election. It's the dues you owe to live in America, the greatest country on earth.

Dart: To those who would rewrite the 14th Amendment, granting citizenship to anyone born in the USA. Among the past individuals include Frank Sinatra, Walt Disney, Henry Ford, Colin Powell, Henry Mancini, George Gershwin, and - you guessed it - Barack Obama.

We hate "I told you so" as much as the next guy but there is no escaping the irony of Republican legislators bemoaning the nearly \$1 billion hole in the coming session when they rifled through \$771 million in tax cuts. They also cut the income tax rate.

Laurel: To U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, for being the first to sign a pledge endorsing a two term limit. His departure will raise the Senate I.Q. by half.

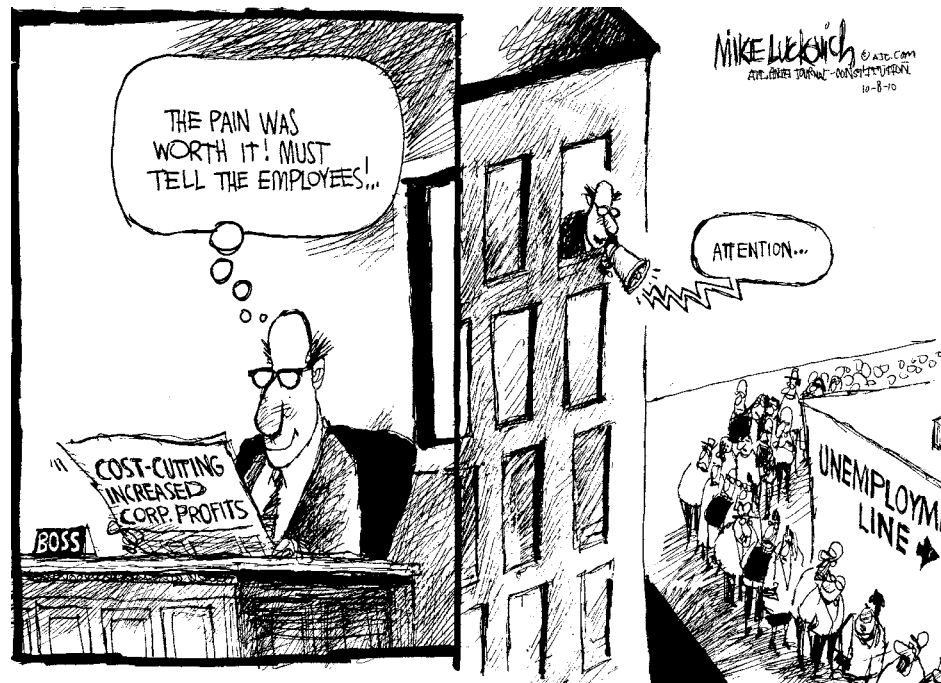
A new Pew Research study found that only 22% of Americans say they trust the federal government. Nearly half claim the feds hinder their daily lives. Let's get rid of Medicare and Social Security - why hinder those folks.

Dart: To the Daily Disappointment editorial battle for SQ 744 without mentioning more than \$5.4 billion in tax exemptions on the books - \$2 billion failing to create a single job. That would more than cover the regional per pupil average.

Why do political aspirants lie about important "facts" that are easily checked? Classic example: President Ronald Reagan told Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that Reagan's army unit helped liberate Nazi concentration camps. In fact, Reagan never served abroad.

Laurel: To President Obama for his pledge to end the Bush tax cut for the super rich. A new Treasury Department study reports that the top 1% of households have 57.5% of all wealth. The bottom 80% have a mere 12.6% of the nation's wealth.

Women now hold a majority of jobs in America. Of the 15 job categories expected to grow in the next decade men dominate only two - janitor and computer engineer. [The Atlantic]



Nearly 19% of Oklahomans have no health insurance. When they are ill they visit the ER, which means the insured are paying a dear price. ObamaCare will change that. Naturally the greedy health insurance industry is funding Republicans in hopes it can be reversed.

Dart: To departing State Treasurer Scott Meacham, endorsing the Republican in the race to succeed him although Democrat Steve Covert is better qualified. Meacham has always been a half-assed Democrat, calling the tax cutting shots for our lazy governor.

"Money doesn't make you happy. I now have \$50 million but I was just as happy when I had \$48 million." - California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, now facing a \$19 billion state budget hole.

Laurel: To Mickey Hepner, associate professor at UCO, for a superb commentary in the Edmond Sun on State Question 744 and its affordability. The anti-744 forces will go down in political history as the single worst prevaricators.

The OKC Fox Channel would handily substitute for a Saturday Night Live skit. Any resemblance to a news channel is hard to find. Their "political expert" is a Republican lobbyist constantly trashing Democrats.

Dart: To parents using retirement funds to send their kids to college. That is an egregious error. Better the students borrow student loans which are payable than use retirement funds that are gone forever.

More than \$275 billion of the \$862 billion federal stimulus funds are yet to be spent by state and local governments at a time when the economy is crying out for job-creating spending. Thus far stimulus funds have been a lifesaver for Oklahoma - despite the critics.

Laurel: To State Sen. Tom Adelson, D-Tulsa, for repeatedly trying to tell Okies the truth about Oklahoma's welfare for the rich. In fact, corporate tax breaks exploded to \$210 million in 2008 - for a total of \$350 million in tax giveaways since 2004.

Insurance Commissioner Kim Holland can run but she can't hide from the fact that she was a delegate at the Democratic convention nominating Barack Obama. She should be proud of ObamaCare, including a patients' bill of rights and 33,000 uninsured Oklahomans to be covered.

Dart: To the Oklahoma Hospital Association for issuing a statement critical of ObamaCare. That's part of the same hospital industry that killed nearly 100,000 Americans last year through preventable mistakes such as the washing of hands.

America's transportation sector consumes 14.3 million barrels of oil a day, 70% of which is imported. We're proud President Obama ordered solar panels back on the White House roof. President Carter put them there, President Reagan ordered them down. Yet the GOP keeps the Reagan "great president" myth alive.

Laurel: To Jenks and Broken Arrow school boards for voting not to follow the new law requiring schools to pay for special education students in private and parochial schools - a voucher by any other name. The Supreme Court will sort things out.

Wonder why the incessant push for high school diplomas? The Wall Street Journal reports that a high school graduate earns an average \$398 a week, dropouts earn \$292, associates degree \$503, some college \$442, bachelors degree \$642, masters degree \$816, PhD degree \$981 and a professional degree \$984.

Dart: To a Democratic governor and Republican Legislature for ignoring the needs of children - 11,714 confirmed cases of child abuse, 32 killed by abuse. Two dirtiest words in the GOP Legislature: unions and welfare.

A comprehensive national study by Vanderbilt University proves merit pay fails to boost test scores - even with bonuses as high as \$15,000. [AP]

Laurel: To J. Andy Sullivan, state mental health board member, for an outstanding Op-Ed in the Oklahoman detailing the superb job done in drug courts - \$5,000 for treatment vs. \$19,000 for incarceration.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Oklahoma ranks 48th in the amount it spends on a student's education and 49th in what it pays teachers. The average IQ in Oklahoma is 99.3 [2006], 36th in the U.S. I believe a well-educated citizenry is fundamental to a strong democracy. Most of us were provided a basic education at public schools.

State Question 744 will require that funding for public schools be at least equal to the average of the amount spent by the states surrounding Oklahoma.

SQ 754 is the Legislature's cynical attempt to do an "end around" 744 and says the Legislature can't be compelled by a formula to provide funding at a certain level and what's more it cannot be amended or repealed. Where's the justice in that?

So far the best the opposition to 744 can say is, "Just say no!"? A better reason might be that other state services could be cut. Since the constitution requires a 75% approval of voters to raise taxes, that's an unlikely option. [I wish politicians had to get 75% of the popular vote to get elected.] I thought a democracy required only a majority approval; that's what I get for thinking.

Gee, the Legislature might have to renege on some of the \$5.4 billion in tax breaks they pass out to big corporations and special interests annually.

However the vote Nov. 2 turns out, it will speak volumes about "Oklahoma Values."

Robert Nilson
El Reno

Editor, The Observer:

Not just public education, but all state services are already suffering because of 20% budget cuts and Republican legislation that prevents raising taxes in Oklahoma. You get what you pay for. You can't fund education comparable to that in other states unless you fund it. SQ 744 has no funding provisions to pay for an estimated \$1.7 billion increase over the three-year phase in.

Since you can't raise taxes, that means the funding SQ 744 gives education must be taken away from other under-funded services - Medicaid [which earns \$3.6 in federal dollars for every \$1 state - unless the state dollars aren't there], meals programs for seniors, public safety, higher education, CareerTech, nursing home programs, etc.

The big lie is that you can keep tax-

es at the same level [or less for the wealthy and big business] and fund critical services at the same or greater level.

SQ 744 is a Republican strategy to shrink the size of state government, including critical public services that are also needed by students and their families.

Vote no. Then elect leaders honest enough to fund all the critical programs we need - not just one at the expense of all the others.

Phyllis Bryant
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

An open letter to Sen. Jim Wilson, re: "What's Real Reason For Opposing SQ 744?" [10.10.10 Observer]:

Thanks for the excellent in-depth article in the Oklahoma Observer per SQ 744 which will get my vote. My son, a Jenks high school and college grad lives in Boston. My visits there confirm all your arguments for SQ 744. Their taxes are high but what a bargain for their high standards of living and quality of public education.

I'm afraid Oklahoma is in a downhill race with Mississippi to the bottom of all categories, reversible only if by an act of God: the air blows out permanently of Oklahoma all footballs and Gaylord and Fox News disappear!

Then we would have to face reality.
Bob Jackman
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Living in Oklahoma it's certainly not difficult to frequently encounter Republicans. On four different occasions I've had a Republican make the same comment to me: "I just don't like Obama."

All four times I've asked the same question in response to their comment: "What has Obama done or not done that you don't like?" Every single time the reply is, "I just don't like him."

Unless someone else has a better theory, my conclusion is that they are ignorant of any real facts, void of any knowledge about what's really happening and damn proud of it.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I am not trying to hog the Letter to the Editor page [a letter of mine was published in the last issue], but something happened this past weekend that was so incredulous I had to share it. An elderly man called

me Saturday morning [from the OKC area] campaigning for Mary Fallin. I politely let him get through his spiel until he said Fallin was joining 20 other states to render Obamacare unconstitutional. I then mentioned that the same thing had happened with Social Security and Medicare, but who did he know [including himself] who refused either? His reply was that the Democrats were also doing their best to take away our Social Security and Medicare and Ms. Fallin would work to protect those programs [as governor?]. I asked him if he had any idea which party and which Presidents signed those programs into law and he said, of course, the *Republicans* under *Ronald Reagan*. I was dumbfounded.

He was obviously old enough to know better. I then told him he ought to Google that and if he went on down his list, he would probably have better luck with his other calls than he had with me.

Yet again, stupidity abounds.

I was telling my son and husband about it and my son yelled, "*Thank God for Ronald Reagan!*"

Sherri Goodwin
Cheyenne

Editor, The Observer:

All across the nation we have candidates for office pandering to the wealthy CEO's and the rich billionaires. None worse, it seems, than a couple of Oklahomans who are public servants, yet have no clue that the poor and disadvantaged among us pay a higher proportion than the rich in taxes ... part of which goes to fund Congressional salaries.

Fifth District Congresswoman Mary Fallin recently spoke at a GOP fundraiser in Tulsa and exclaimed happily, "I don't know about you, but I've never been offered a job by a poor person." Our junior senator from Oklahoma, Dr. Tom Coburn, himself a wealthy physician, recently stated, "No one has ever been hired by a poor person."

Really, Mary and Tom? How did you get your current jobs? And where does the money come from to pay your salaries?

A disproportionate share is paid from taxes collected from the poor and disadvantaged and hard working low-wage earners [read poor people]. Did you not know that? Or is it that you are so insensitive that you don't really care?

With the blowfication by these two,

either scenario might be true and probably is!

To make such insensitive remarks shows the true character of each of these individuals. Tom, though, wins hands down when it comes to insensitivity towards the poor and disadvantaged. He has been putting a hold on our aid to Haiti, where nearly two million people are homeless and dying in the wake of the devastating flooding there. Obviously, he doesn't subscribe to the same philosophy as that Jewish Rabbi from Nazareth!

Bob Bearden
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

It just made my day watching Karl Rove call Democrats dirty for going after the American Chamber of Commerce about foreign money. Every dirty political trick - ever even thought of - has been used by Karl Rove.

He bugged his own candidate's office in Texas and accused the other side.

He has stolen personalized stationery from the opponents' offices and sent really dirty stuff to the public.

If he hasn't done it, give him time. GHW Bush fired him from his campaign in 1992 for being too sleazy. Being too sleazy for a Bush is more sleazy than anyone should be.

Rove is pure filth.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Are we really talking about capitalism in this country, in this century, in this election year? When everything we are forced to buy comes from China, where it is outsourced from the USA, manufactured, brought back into this country with all the tax loops, it seems to me that we have capitalism, communist style. It makes me sick! Buy USA [if you can find it!]

Carri Parks
Via E-Mail

Editor, The Observer:

Being concerned with the current and future increased levels of hydraulic fracturing, dewatering and salt water disposal that is happening in western Lincoln County has prompted us and others to educate ourselves and discuss available options. We are learning about how these activities may affect our water well aquifers, our air quality, the potential loss of

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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.

Superman



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

The national media are gaga over a documentary entitled *Waiting for Superman*. The thesis is plain – public schools are bad, charter schools are good.

Wonder how many of those news anchors and other fat cats have their kids in private schools? The author of the documentary admits he has three kids in expensive private schools.

Author Dana Goldstein, professor of journalism at Columbia University, has a problem with the documentary. It's the same problem I have with the charter school movement. Critics of public education haven't done their homework.

It's easy to blame Oklahoma teachers for failing public schools – I am amazed that teachers stick it out, knowing they could move to Texas and make more money. Or for that matter, they could move to ANY state and do better.

NBC went nuts over the documentary and included Bill Gates, America's richest citizen, as some kind of authority on public education. [By the way, he's in the documentary.]

Goldstein notes what the documentary doesn't portray but acknowledges that parents are desperate to get their kids in successful public charter schools.

Sure Oklahoma has the four out of five charters that are superb. But on average, charter schools are no better than traditional neighborhood public schools [and are sometimes much worse].

Charter school teachers can avoid paying union dues but reap the benefits of teacher unions fighting for them at the Capitol and before local school boards. It's right-to-work writ small.

Goldstein notes what is absent from the documentary. 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 students, of course, are often the ones who are most difficult to educate, and the ones neighborhood public schools can't turn away.

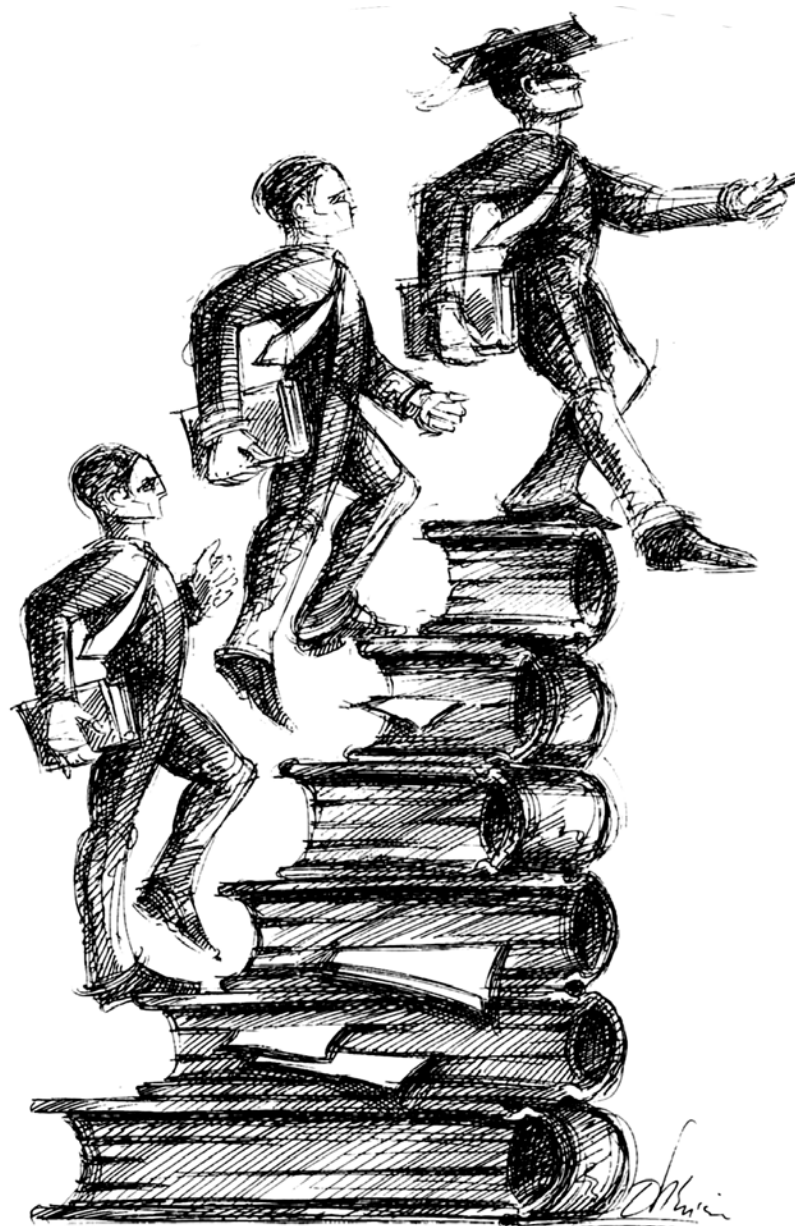
The Finnish education system? Based on test scores it's the world's best. The documentary doesn't mention the fact that Finnish teachers are unionized and are granted tenure.

According to the critics, that's exactly what's wrong with American schools – unions and tenure!

Also unmentioned is the fact that Finnish 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.

Imagine those benefits for Oklahoma's children – fifth poorest in the nation, Top 10 in obesity and 27,000 whose parent[s] are in prison.

Critics are bemoaning the departure of Michelle Rhee, relentless reformer of



one of America's worst school systems – Washington, DC. She did a lot of good for the district but her arrogance knew no bounds.

Another example of arrogance is the "pay for grades" President Obama brought to the nation's public schools – a limited pile of money if schools raced for the top by teaching to the test. Some schools have become test prep facilities.

Race To The Top is a setup for failure just like the infamous No Child Left Behind Bush legacy. The No. 1 priority for nationwide school reform remains the same – parent[s].

If they aren't motivated at home, the odds are against them. That also means the teacher carries the burden of "miracle worker" – teacher, parent, counselor, friend.

Waiting For Superman is another attempt to smear education, using the news media such as NBC as a cheering section.

Were awaiting the Finnish solution. Chances are it will be the Roadrunner not Superman – another "reform" falling off a cliff.

Maternal Homicides Claim Pregnant Women

It is ironic that just as Oklahoma has two women squaring off for governor, out comes a report that homicide is the second most common cause of injury-related death among pregnant women and new mothers.

Guess which leads the nation in domestic abuse? Oklahoma.

In the Centers for Disease Control's first national examination of pregnancy and homicide, Jeani Chang, an epidemiologist with the Division of Reproductive Health at CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and colleagues documented injury-related deaths of pregnant women and women who had recently given birth in 30 states.

Oklahoma also is No. 1 in imprisoning women.

MATERNAL HOMICIDES

Between 1991 and 1999, 617 maternal homicides were recorded, and researchers estimate that there are 1.7 maternal homicides per 100,000 live births in the United States.

However, researchers say that number is "significantly understate[d]" because many of the 30 states studied do not have reliable methods for keeping track of such deaths.

According to the study – which examined trauma deaths only and did not compare them to maternal deaths due to medical causes – auto accidents accounted for about 44% of maternal trauma deaths, homicide accounted for 31%, other unintentional injuries accounted for 13% and suicide accounted for 10%.

Black women and women under age 20 were at highest risk of being murdered during or after pregnancy, according to the study. Black women had a maternal homicide risk about seven times that of white women, and black women ages 25 to 29 are about 11 times as likely as white women in that age group to be killed when pregnant or in the year following childbirth.

WHAT RESEARCHERS FOUND

The researchers also found that married women and women who had prenatal care during pregnancy were less likely to be murdered during pregnancy or the

year following than unmarried women or women who did not access prenatal care, respectively.

The researchers recommended that state and local health officials take "ambitious steps" to more accurately track the number of maternal homicides, including combining information from autopsy records, police reports, and birth and death records to gain a better understanding of the magnitude of the issue and who is affected.

The study also said that it is "important but difficult to assess" whether women are generally at an increased risk for homicide during pregnancy and the year following childbirth because homicide is the leading cause of death among black women and young women, regardless of pregnancy.

STUDY IS LAUDED

Several health experts "lauded" the CDC study, published recently in the *American Journal of Public Health*, for "recognizing an overlooked phenomenon."

"I think it's a very important first step," said Jacquelyn Campbell, a domestic homicide researcher at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

Additional research is needed, she added, "to really understand how widespread it is" and determine "how best to intervene to prevent these deaths."

Cara Krulewicz, a researcher at the University of Maryland-Baltimore School of Nursing, said the findings are "significant."

She added that although most pregnant women are not in danger, "there is a phenomenon going on out there, and we don't understand it yet."

However, Isabelle Horon – co-author of a study on maternal deaths in Maryland, which was published in 2001 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* – said that state studies have found maternal homicide figures to be much higher than the CDC study reported.

The CDC study might "call attention to the problem," she added, "but I think it also does a disservice to the problem because it suggests the magnitude of the problem is less than what it is."

How We're Voting On State Questions And Why



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

Each election year, as balloting nears, our phones at The Observer start ringing, loyal readers and friends seeking guidance on individual state races and on state questions.

It's been The Observer's long-standing policy not to endorse candidates and we rarely editorialize for or against ballot propositions.

The reason: We believe it is our duty to provide information and analysis, not to tell you who to vote for or what to think about the state questions.

Let your conscience be your guide.

This year, though, Beverly, Frosty and I have fielded more inquiries than ever on state questions, no doubt in part because an eye-glazing 11 will appear on the ballot.

We devoted considerable space in The Observer in recent months to the issues – giving, for example, both sides of SQ 744 [the education funding proposal] opportunities to make their

case.

And our Sept. 25 cover focused on this trend toward governing-by-ballot-proposition and we included an analysis of each state question [now posted on our web site www.okobserver.net if you misplaced your printed copy].

Still, so many are asking our opinions on this year's state questions that we decided to spell out how we intend to vote. All three of us are on the same page:

Yes on State Questions 744 and 757 [increasing the Rainy Day fund], no on the other nine – which are either bald-faced power grabs by the Legislature's Republican leadership or hate-mongering by the far right's birthers, tenthers, birchers, homophobes, tea partiers, theocrats and xenophobes.

We are mindful that SQ 744 sharply divides The Observer family – many worry that mandating education funding at the regional, per-pupil average could negatively impact other essential services, from child welfare to mental health, corrections to highways.

But we believe SQ 744 is the state's best opportunity to propel education forward since Gov. Henry Bellmon's marvelous HB 1017 reforms – all but dismantled by a GOP legislative majority that favors private and home schools, mostly because of a blind hatred of the state's teacher unions.

Senator Makes Case For Electing Askins

By Jerry Ellis

Our choice for governor is clear. Jari Askins is uniquely qualified to be our next governor.

Askins will use her experience in all three branches of government to help build a better Oklahoma for all families.

Serving 12 years in the Legislature and the past four years as our lieutenant governor, Askins has worked with both political parties because neither party has all the answers.

Jari Askins has the experience, intelligence, and integrity to be a great governor.

Some of the important issues our next governor will address include water, taxes, school consolidation, and immigration to name a few.

The federal government is responsible for protecting the borders of the United States. As a whole, both political parties in Washington, DC have failed to seriously address this problem.

Jari Askins' opponent has served the past four years in the United States Congress. She did nothing about immigration, but she was a "yes" vote on bailing out the fat cats on Wall Street to the tune of nearly ONE TRILLION DOLLARS!

Jari Askins' opponent has brought her half-baked Washington ideas back to Oklahoma like her campaign

manager even saying "lobbyists are the stake holders in the process." Guess again, Congresswoman! The correct answer would be the citizens of Oklahoma are the stake holders.

A few powerful lobbyists in Oklahoma City have fought my pro-gun legislation [which allows you to store a legal weapon in your vehicle while at work] and they have fought my legislation that stopped the sale of water to Texas. Many of these same lobbyists are fighting Jari Askins.

In 2009 the Oklahoma Legislature passed legislation stopping the sale of water outside of Oklahoma. The rich and powerful have failed three times in federal court to get around this law.

Jari Askins knows water is our most valuable natural resource. Jari Askins believes water is the key to bringing jobs and industry to Oklahoma. Growth will go where the water goes. Don't take a chance on a governor that will sell our water.

Some citizens in the metro areas truly believe there should be only one school per county. In large rural Oklahoma counties, children would spend half the day riding the bus. Askins says NO!

With the wrong governor the state income tax will be abolished while
See ASKINS Page 7

What's more, we are persuaded that SQ 744 can be funded without putting other vital programs at risk – if only a pay-to-play Legislature can be forced to curtail billions of dollars in corporate welfare, at least \$2 billion of which has never created a single job.

Oklahomans in the 21st Century remain rightly suspicious of silk-stocking corporatists who all too often preach free enterprise and laissez faire economics, yet quickly belly up to the taxpayers' trough to bolster their bottom lines.

We're tickled to death that Oklahoma City has an NBA team – we cheer the Thunder as loudly as anyone – but did they really need a multi-million-dollar tax break to be successful? Did Devon really need a taxpayer-financed gateway to its new corporate skyscraper?

Of course not. But why would these executives take millions of dollars away from their corporate bottom lines when they can invest a few thousand dollars currying favor with a Legislature that has proven itself all-too-willing to siphon taxpayer money away from essential services that benefit all in order to reward their campaign benefactors, the privileged few?



Oklahomans love their public schools. They know that our future depends primarily on our shared commitment to common education. They also recognize our elected officials rarely have paid anything but lip service to making our state as competitive academically as we are athletically.

Whether SQ 744 passes or fails, there is an elephant [pardon the pun] in the Capitol's marbled halls that must be addressed next year – \$5.4 billion in tax credits, exemptions and breaks, a number that has exploded since the GOP took control of the state House in 2004.

It's up to each of us, whether we're for or against SQ 744, to join forces afterwards and demand the Legislature serve all Oklahomans, not just the privileged and powerful. SQ 744 just might be the dynamite that demolishes the corporate welfare pyramid and restores balance to an out-of-whack state government.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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GOP's Campaign Of Confusion And Corruption

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Having watched any number of current campaign TV ads in the Oklahoma governor's race, I find that somebody is confused. It could be me, but logic points toward the designer of those ads.

One ad tells me that Mary Fallin went to Washington for a while, but did not like it there. That part I understand. But then the ad goes on to say that she is coming home to run for governor to fight Washington. She now wants to fight the President and the "Washington liberals" by running for governor of Oklahoma.

Now I could be wrong, but wasn't Congress the place to fight with all those other folk in Washington? She represented Oklahoma there for two terms. Oklahoma has its own problems, and most of them have nothing to do with Washington.

WASHINGTON IS PROBLEM?

Our major problem in Oklahoma is the lack of sufficient state funds to finance education, higher education, corrections, mental health, children's support services, homes for the mentally and physically challenged, highways, and other needs. Washington has done more to help us with that problem than anyone else, in spite of our state Legislature.

Our fiscal problems have been exacerbated by the tax cuts made recently by Republican legislators. Only the Democratic-sponsored federal stimulus funds, criticized by Republicans, have enabled the state to keep its school house doors open and to fund other needed state services at severely reduced levels.

Why then is "Washington" the problem in Oklahoma?

PAGING WYATT EARP

Then there is the matter of the outsider attack ad accusing her Democratic opponent of voting against legally allowing everybody in Oklahoma without a criminal record to carry concealed guns.

Well, duh, the only ones in favor of that were her party extremists in the Legislature. They also had bills to allow anybody on college campuses to carry guns. Remember? What sensible person would not oppose such crazy legislation? Even Wyatt Earp kept Dodge City in better control.

What about the accusation of voting against tax cuts - in the midst of a financial crisis threatening the state with bankruptcy, bond failure, and ruin? Who are the fiscally foolish ones on that issue? Who cuts income with the wolf at the door?

And her opponent voted against "spending limits," an ad says. That is not a very specific accusation. There have been a few attempts to "freeze" everything in place, as though whatever is now is right forever, and as though conditions and needs will never change.

Bills and referendums like that are foolish, and they have proven disastrous elsewhere.

HEALTH CARE SCARE

Then there is the ad saying that the Republican candidate is against "government run health care." But any informed person knows that the new health bill regulates insurance companies, and it tries to provide ways for everyone to buy private insurance from some company.

The only "government run" health programs in this country are Medicare, Veterans Administration, and Indian Health Care. Eliminate those? Do we not know the difference?

What about that hated "bailout" measure, sponsored by former Republican President George W. Bush and passed by Democrats over Republican opposition, to

ASKINS

From Page 6

there are those who say we need to be like Texas and go to property tax.

Texas pays at least four times the property tax we pay in Oklahoma. Check with a family member or friend living in Texas. It comes due at Christmas time. If you don't own property, your rent will go up.

The two ladies running for governor - their names begin with an "A" and an "F." This is an easy "A." Don't flunk this test!

As your state senator I am proud to recommend Jari Askins to be our next governor. Together we can make a difference.

On Nov. 2, Askins is the answer.

- The author, a Valliant Democrat, represents District 5 in the State Senate

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

save the nation from breakdown of its banking system and throwing the economy into panic?

It turns out that paybacks have already reduced that \$700 billion cost to less than \$50 billion. And, it worked.

A lot of money is coming into Oklahoma to finance those attack ads. Billionaires and corporations have been made free to try to buy elections legally by a vote of the five Republicans on the Supreme Court. They are taking advantage of that opportunity all over the country.

7 TO 1 GOP FUNDING EDGE

Money coming into Republican political attack groups this year is running past \$80 million, compared with \$16 million two years ago. Republicans have a 7 to 1 advantage over Democrats on money coming into their interest groups. Their political groups are airing attack ads against Democrats all over the nation.

These Republican political attack groups go by high-sounding names. American Futures has given away \$7 million already, all to Republicans. American Crossroads, handled by Karl Rove, has handed out \$18 million to Republican ads and is due to spend \$50 million to defeat Democrats in the campaign's final weeks.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the bastion of big business, is funneling \$75 million to defeat Democrats, some of it alleged to come illegally from foreign corporations. From the United Arab Emirates has come 450 donations of \$8,500 each. Notice any odor about that?

GRASS ROOTS BILLIONAIRES

The faux grass roots Tea Party movement has been sponsored by billionaire money. Enough is traceable to know that is true. They are a "front" for big money and most don't know it. But tighter efforts are being made by these special interest groups to keep their donors secret.

Not in the public interest? Then tell that to the Republicans in the Senate who have blocked the bill to make all donor lists public.

This next election may well be in the process of being bought by corporate and billionaire money.

It all depends upon the gullibility of the American voter to their campaign attack war. They are counting on voters being ignorant of the facts, and easily swayed by simple, false arguments repeated over and over.

Buying an election means buying a government. Voters beware!

- The author, AKA The Militant Moderate, lives in Enid. More of his essays appear at www.okobserver.net.

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It's Time To Answer The Call For Public Ed

By Whitney Allen

A recent Census Report reveals that 1 in 7 Americans live in poverty – a total of 44 million people. Much focus has been on education reform and educators are answering that call. Schools make a concerted effort to focus on the improvement of student learning daily in an environment that vacillates like an oscillating fan.

Just ask our teachers who are now modifying their curriculum to a four-day week due to budget constraints, not only in anticipation for this fiscal year but even for next.

Adjustments are good. Adjustments demonstrate a genuine concern to improve by self-assessing, by being self-critical, and by self-benchmarking. Educators are answering the calls to perform.

But as Colin Powell said recently on Meet The Press, education doesn't begin in the first grade. We need, he continued, to concentrate on what is being done at home to get kids ready for school.

If children can't recite the alphabet, can't focus, haven't been read to, and don't know how to mind an adult, then the child is set up for a cascade of problems.

Teachers then become truant officers that divert attention from teaching students how to learn to teaching students how to behave or teaching them the school-ready skills that they need on the day they show up to start school.

We are seeing students who can't read by the third grade, according to Powell. By seventh and eighth grade these students start thinking about dropping out and go ahead and drop out later in high school.

This creates a compelling and convincing case that truly acknowledges the plight educators are up against.

Education answers the calls for early education through early childhood intervention programs; for dropout prevention through dropout prevention programs; for bullying prevention through bullying prevention programs; for childhood obesity through child wellness programs; for student health issues by providing vision and hearing screenings; for student immunizations by requiring immunizations throughout a child's development; for proper nutrition by providing breakfast and lunch; for improved communication with parents by providing online records of grades, by texting parents, by Twittering and Facebooking with parents and by establishing school websites.

Education answers the call to equip students with 21st Century skills by providing staff development for teachers who introduce new technologies like iPads and iTouches embedded into the curriculum.

Education answers the calls!

Education is a switchboard for a myriad of societal neglects. Education answers the call for a plethora of palates by offering more flavors than Baskin Robbins.

If you were to ask the average

parent of a 4-year-old or 5-year-old or even 6-year-old how many books were in their home, the reply would probably surprise you. The average home probably has more flavors of ice cream in their freezer than books on their shelves.

If you have not read the Meaningful Differences Report, do. If you haven't read Jim Trelease's book, *The Read Aloud Handbook*, do.

Reading aloud is the most benefi-

cial thing a parent can do for a child. The number of words a child hears before they begin school directly impacts their ability to read, thus their readiness.

It's not the toys, it's the ears that are important.

When you answer your next phone call, what will you say? Will that be a double dip or single dip? Will that be German Chocolate or Black Walnut?

Please vote yes on SQ 744. It will

amend the State's Constitution to fund schools at the regional average.

The per pupil expenditures in Arkansas exceed the per pupil expenditures in the state of Oklahoma. Just like state Board of Education member Tim Gilpin said on FlashPoint, how can our students compete globally if we can't even compete with Arkansas?

Answer the phone! It's ringing!

- The author lives in Asher

Fall Peace Festival



Celebrate Peace & Justice

Sunday, November 14th, 11 am to 4:30 pm

Civic Center 'Hall of Mirrors' - 201 N. Walker, OKC

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CAMPAIGN 2010

Don't Return Robber Barons To Power

By Nathaniel Batchelder

We cannot go backwards. The Nov. 2 elections must propel us forward in building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. We, the Reasonable Majority, must vote with the energy demonstrated in 2008, so that good candidates win and others are dismissed.

Idealists are always disappointed with politics, because policies never reflect our hopes and visions. But electoral choices are always clear: one is better, and the other is worse. Defeating the worst makes a space for the better.

Rupert Murdoch's Fox radio and TV empire recklessly and relentlessly attacks the current administration and Congress, pushing a greedy robber baron's agenda: more tax cuts benefiting primarily the rich; more budget cuts to programs serving the vulnerable; wholesale deregulation of environmental protections, banking and finance.

With such extremists in control, America would come to resemble El Salvador, where the wealthy minority rules, but must be protected from the people by the Army and police. May we never settle for government of, for, and by the rich.

WAR DEBT, BAILOUTS

The G.W. Bush Administration and Congress started two wars without asking Americans to pay for them. They borrowed more than \$2 trillion to make war seem financially painless, passing on the bills to the future. The economic crash of 2008 resulted from 25 years of deregulation of corporate banking, mortgage lending and finance.

Now, conservative zealots blame President Obama and Congress for not fixing in two years the recession and wars they inherited. We cannot give government's reins back to such people.

Everyone disliked the big bailouts. But most economists agree that they

prevented an economic collapse into depression. And they are being repaid. People angry about conditions rarely credit those who prevented a worse fate. The Reasonable Majority should.

All of us wish that job stimulation had been a higher priority. We must elect to government people at least open to hearing advocacy for such policies.

AN IMPERFECT START

There have been astonishing successes in just two years that deserve heralding:

Health care reform – an imperfect start – must be protected from those who would repeal it [not one Republican voted for it]. Opponents say it will cost too much; the Congressional Budget Office says it will save America



billions. [Opponents like The Oklahoma have already applied for its cost-saving benefits. And every privately insured person is benefiting from the reform's elimination of "caps" on what insurance companies must pay for catastrophic illness.]

The Washington Post reported recently that the stimulus package is on track and under budget, with few claims of fraud or abuse. Tax relief has blunted the pain of the recession to small businesses and families.

Millions of jobs have been protected, or created by the stimulus. Not enough, of course, for us fans of FDR job-creation programs like WPA and CCC back in the 1930s. Nothing is perfect, but things are not nearly as bad as they could have been.

The government take-over of auto manufacturers was denounced as "socialism" and an act of a power-mad administration. But GM and Chrysler are still alive and more than half of that stimulus has been repaid. Imagine the job loss had they failed. Imagine the disappearance of pensions had they failed.

IMPROVED FOREIGN RELATIONS

Agreement with the Russians on reductions of nuclear weapons is progress reversing much of that "axis of evil" talk. And a growing alliance with Russia could support efforts for balance and peace in the Middle East. Has anyone noticed that there has been no provocative missile launch by North Korea in two years?

I pray America's Reasonable Majority will vote in massive numbers to say "NO" to the robber barons that would take us backwards to policies and values celebrated only by the rich and global corporations: excessive consumption, disregard for the environment, tax cuts benefiting primarily the wealthy, and deregulation of business, finance, and global corporations.

We are at the threshold of a whole new world, in which reasonable people and good citizens must advocate for policies supporting sufficiency not excess, education and possibilities for people everywhere, development of clean energy production, coexisting with nature and all living things on earth.

Which side will win?

That's up to us – to you and me – the voters and citizens whose energy, creativity and vision must now be felt in every aspect of society: politics, industry, non-profits and NGO's, arts and sciences, religion and houses of worship.

The future is ours to build. May we persevere, persist and prevail.

– The author is director of the Peace House in Oklahoma City

Fallin Embarrasses Oklahoma Again

Mary Fallin has embarrassed her constituents yet again by being featured recently as Keith Olbermann's Worst Person in the World on MSNBC.

This is the third time since May the congresswoman has garnered negative national media attention. This time, she was given the title in response to her refusing to speak at a nonpartisan event until several Democrats were removed from the audience.

Her ability to bring negative attention to Oklahoma is only one of the many reasons Fallin is wrong to lead our state. From day one of this campaign, Fallin has been focused entirely on Washington, DC issues and Washington, DC politics.

Some of her biggest supporters have been the DC interests, which have poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into advertisements that attempt to falsely smear her opponent, Lt. Governor Jari Askins.

The Washington-based Republican Governor's Association has been running numerous misleading attack ads against Askins. These ads seem to be counterproductive for Fallin's campaign.

According to Tulsa's News on 6, the ads misrepresent Askins' record.

Conservative commentators have expressed concern of a possible backlash as well, saying Oklahomans are not receptive to negative political advertising, and these attacks ignore that trend.

Todd Goodman, chairman of the Oklahoma Democratic Party, said this is another example of Fallin's disconnect between DC and Oklahoma.

"We are hiring the new CEO for the state of Oklahoma in November," Goodman said. "Jari Askins' concern has always been and will always be the state of Oklahoma and Oklahoma's needs. Fallin seems more concerned with representing special interests of Washington and only those who already agree with her.

"Despite her attempts to distance herself from the RGA's ads, Fallin's very

Washington connections and relationships make that claim laughable. Fallin is in bed with these Washington insiders and again making decisions the Washington way, not the Oklahoma way."

EXTRA PROTECTION

The church organist, Miss Beatrice, was in her 80s and had never been married. She was admired for her sweetness and kindness to all.

One afternoon the pastor came to call on her and she showed him into her quaint sitting room. She invited him to have a seat while she prepared tea.

As he sat facing her old pump organ, the young minister noticed a cut-glass bowl sitting on top of it. The bowl was filled with water. In the water floated, of all things, a condom!

When she returned with tea and cookies, they began to chat. The pastor tried to stifle his curiosity about the bowl of water and its strange floater, but soon it got the better of him and he could no longer resist.

"Miss Beatrice," he said, "I wonder if you would tell me about this?" pointing to the bowl.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "isn't it wonderful? I was walking through the park a few months ago and I found this little package on the ground. The directions said to place it on the organ, keep it wet and that it would prevent the spread of disease. Do you know, I haven't had the flu all winter!"

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

BOOKS

Carter Revisits Presidency, Settles Scores

By Tim Rutten

WHITE HOUSE DIARY

By Jimmy Carter
Farrar, Straus & Girous
512 pages, \$30

Presidents Jimmy Carter and Herbert Hoover might be bracketed together for a number of reasons.

Both were engineers by training, shared an almost theological faith in the chimeras of governmental efficiency, believed effective management grew from close attention to detail and were powerfully influenced by their religious upbringings – in Carter's case that meant the Baptist Church, in Hoover's Quakerism. Most important, both left office as wretchedly unpopular, one-term chief executives, but then went on to become widely admired [and generally admirable] ex-presidents.

Both also turned out to be genuinely interesting writers: Hoover and his wife translated a Renaissance Latin tract on mining, and he penned the only study of one president written by another, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson*.

Carter has written more than 20 books since leaving Washington; *White House Diary* stands out as a substantial contribution to the history of the presidency. This volume consists of his edited version of the diary he wrote and dictated during his tenure. [The unexpurgated manuscripts are in the Carter Library and open to scholarly examination.]

At various points, Carter has interjected italicized afterthoughts in which he revisits his appraisals of events and the people involved. It all makes for a uniquely unfiltered look at what occupying the Oval Office day to day means, as well as a bit of second thinking and score-settling.

One of the things that jumps out with particular force is the way in which unforeseen events come to compete with a president's own agenda for the finite amount of time and attention available to the chief executive and his team.

Carter's final years in office, for example, are dominated by the crises over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Islamists' seizure of American diplomats as hostages. [Carter's account of his attitude toward the failed military rescue attempt and his implicit explanations for the reasons it occurred may surprise some.]

Politically speaking, Carter was a legendary grudge holder and his comments aren't surprising regarding Sen. Frank Church, D-ID, whom he particularly loathed; Sen. Scoop Jackson, D-WA; and, of course, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-MA, whom he regarded as a son of privilege with an overactive sense of entitlement.

The same is true in his appraisals of those involved in what Carter rightly regards as his greatest foreign policy achievement, the Camp David Accords. Here, too, you also see the seeds of Carter's recent shrill antipathy to Israel and its interests.

He found Egyptian President Anwar Sadat a man of broad vision and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin narrow and deceitful. Carter characterizes the Palestinians as people with "rights" and the Israelis as people with "demands."

Over and over, he fails to evince any sympathy for the existential condition of Israeli leaders for whom every aspect of the peace process is a negotiation over their country's survival.

In several instances, he also implicitly taxes American Jews, particularly those in government, with the old dual-loyalty slander. It's ugly, small-minded stuff.

At other moments, Carter is generously fair-minded. He admired Republican Howard Baker's bipartisanship, and he calls Warren Christopher, who served as his deputy secretary of state, "the best public servant I had ever known." Few familiar with Christopher's career would disagree.

Carter's description of his press coverage is an interesting example of the way those who opposed him, disappointed him or – in his view – let him down are handled in this volume.

In his afterword, he cites among the failings that brought his presidency to grief "my inability to form a mutually respectful relationship with key news media. Because of the United States' defeat in Vietnam and Nixon's Watergate debacle, I inherited a suspicious, almost cynical attitude among the press toward the presidency."

That odd mixture of self-deprecation and historically inevitable circumstances-beyond-my-control is supposed to remove the sting of the criticism that follows: In the Carter schema, everybody is at fault, but the other guy is more at fault. Thus, in several diary entries, the president and his staff decry the savagery of their press coverage.

Look a bit closer, though, and the evidence of these pages suggests that what's being denounced is the fact that *all* the administration's coverage wasn't positive. In an entry on who in the press could be trusted, for example, Carter notes his White House had good relations with Phil Geyelin and the people who ran the Washington Post's editorial page, and terrible ones with Ben Bradlee and the paper's news staff. New York Times columnist James Reston, then his paper's *éminence grise*, wins the highest Carter rating for trustworthiness.

As far as a reflexively cynical, suspicious press corps goes, there's this entry from Sept. 28, 1977: Press Secretary "Jody [Powell] and [chief of staff] Hamilton [Jordan] discovered a sweeping news media premise claiming that Vice President [Walter] Mondale had lost influence within the White House. It was ridiculous, so I called Jack Nelson with the Los Angeles Times and Hedrick Smith with the New York Times, and succeeded beyond my expectations. The following day superb

articles came out telling how influential the vice president was."

Maybe the press in Georgia, where Carter made his political bones, is more accommodating, but when you can call two of the toughest, most influential reporters of their generation and get that sort of result, it's hard to imagine what a "respectful" relationship might have looked like.

Viewed through one prism, Carter's presidential record involved remarkable achievements – creation of the departments of energy and education, the Camp David Accords, settlement of the Panama Canal issue, regulatory overhaul and a record of legislative success surpassed only by Lyndon Johnson in the post-war era. Still, his administration ended in failure.

In the afterward, Carter explores some of what he believes are the reasons for that and offers President Barack Obama some cautionary advice on pushing too ambitious an agenda, asking Congress to take too many politically costly votes and getting too far out in front of the electorate.

There's little in this diary about stagflation or the economy – and the fact that little else matters to the American people when they're out of work and financially insecure.

It's that absence and its consequences that Obama ought to heed.

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'The Everywoman Of Contemporary Politics'

By Harry T. Cook

The ever-baffling Christine O'Donnell, the hapless shill put forward by the Tea Party movement to represent Delaware in the U.S. Senate, has finally arrived at a salable persona. She looks directly into the camera and says, "I am you."

The point of the exercise is to tell voters that, just as they do, she has trouble with mortgages and debts and is angry about it.

Unspoken is the frustration she certainly must share with the Fox News media stars that a black man with two Arab names and one African one was elected president of the United States way back there in 2008.

O'Donnell wants folk to forget her brush with witchcraft, her loopy ideas about creationism and all the other costumes she has tried on for the benefit of her improbable candidacy. "I am you," she says to whom it may concern. And because she claims to be whoever you are, Delaware voters, you should vote for her because her opposition is only who he is. [You follow?]

HEADS ARE SHAKING

Political analysts shake their heads in wonderment but say the ploy could work.

The mesdames from California, Connecticut and Nevada should only try it – though Carly Fiorina would have a hard time telling any woman voter "I am you," because few women have ever made \$20 million merely for quitting a job.

Linda McMahon – she of the wrestling-as-entertainment world – would also have a deal of trouble connecting with little missy housewife using the "I am you" thing.



Sharron Angle of Nevada would probably scare the hell out of anyone at whom she looked while saying, "I am you."

That leaves O'Donnell as the Everywoman of contemporary politics.

As an avowed evangelical Christian and founder of "The Savior's Alliance for the Lifting of Truth" O'Donnell might be astonished to learn that the gospels of the Christian New Testament variously depict her "Savior," the Jesus figure, as saying pretty much the same thing, viz. "I am you."

WHAT JESUS SAID

The gospel writers often put the words "Son of man" on his lips as an appositive, as in Mark 2:10: "[Jesus

said] but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins – he said to the paralytic – 'I say to you, stand up ...' "

Of course, there is a lot of symphonic stuff in the gospels about Jesus having been the Son of God, the anointed one, messiah, etc., etc. But it is a good bet that whoever Jesus was, he did not go about selling himself as any one of those. According to the gospel writer called "Luke," Jesus was unwilling to say he was anything akin to the much-prophesied and much-hoped for "kingdom of God."

Luke had his Jesus character say to those who wondered when that

kingdom would dawn, "What you're looking for is among you [now]" [Luke 17:20]. It's another way of saying, "God is you. What you're looking for is already here in and among you."

LONG WAY TO GO

The difference between Republican candidate O'Donnell and New Testament character Jesus is that the former wants to govern and the latter wanted no part of it. The candidate wants to dismantle much of the government from which she might earn a considerable living and enjoy many benefits and privileges. The character was generally depicted as an itinerant street speaker to whom is credited by both Matthew [8:20] and Luke [9:58] the statement, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

One possible understanding of that strange term "Son of man" is "the one like us." I am confident enough of that to use it in my analysis of biblical texts.

However, if the character Jesus looked at me and said, "I am you," I'd say, "If that's what you think, then I have a long way to go and a lot to get over before I'm anywhere near you. I did not utter such counter-cultural principles as 'turn the other cheek,' 'forgive as often as it takes,' 'love your enemy' and 'treat others as you wish to be treated.' Moreover, I have a hard time practicing such an ethic. You are not this one. Would that you were."

If candidate O'Donnell looked at me and said, "I am you," I would look back and say, "I hope to Christ not."

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

Latinos Had Darn Well Better Vote

By Froma Harrop

The Hispanic activist grew defensive as we discussed Latinos' low turnouts in recent elections. Indeed, the subject popped up with no prompting from me.

"Latinos don't vote?" said Lydia Camarillo, who runs voter registration drives in San Antonio. "Excuse me. TEXAS doesn't vote."

True, Americans don't participate in elections at the high rates seen in other countries. But Latinos are still less likely to show up at the polls than are Americans in general. A new poll from the Pew Hispanic Center suggests that such low turnouts will continue into this year's congressional midterms.

That could prove tragic for Democrats. Some 65% of registered Latino voters back their Democratic candidate for Congress, according to the Pew study. Only 22% prefer the Republican. But a mere 51% of registered Latinos actually plan to vote, compared with 70% of all registered Americans.

Hispanics are the group most likely to lack health insurance. Republicans are vowing to repeal the reforms

that will soon guarantee them medical coverage. Wouldn't that be worth a trip to the polls on Nov. 2?

Bob Stein, a professor of politics at Rice University in Houston, understands Democratic suffering over this apparent lack of interest in defending that hard-won reform. "I just got you this thing," he said rhetorically. "I bled for you. Don't abandon us."

What's happening, he explains, is that Hispanics are focused on the pocketbook issues, such as jobs and income. But isn't health care about economic security?!?

Again, Latinos – and many other Americans – have yet to grasp that they have something to lose. After all, those lacking health coverage won't see the key benefits arrive for another 14 months.

This fits into classic voter behavior theory, according to Stein. "What the Republicans understand," he told me, "is that you can talk to people about a benefit that's promised [guaranteed health coverage] and a benefit that's been received [Medicare], and people will come out to protect only what they have."

That the reforms would actually strengthen Medicare's financing, and even add some new benefits, is beside the point. We're talking about perception here, not reality.

It happens that immigration is not the obsession for Hispanics that cable television ringmasters make it out to be. Latinos are all over the map on the issue. In the Pew survey, Latinos ranked immigration fifth on their list of concerns – one rung below the federal budget deficit.

Barack Obama was a big draw for Latino voters in 2008, and he's not running this time. Preserving what he has accomplished should be a motivating factor. Why is it not? This question is directed at everyone who dreads a return to the economic chaos of the George W. Bush era.

Diving into the Pew numbers, one finds other reasons why Latinos might fail to exercise the electoral power they have. As noted, they are overwhelmingly Democratic, and Democrats are generally less enthused this year. [See above paragraph.]

Older registered voters tend to

participate in midterm elections at higher rates than their juniors, and Hispanics skew toward younger people. This speaks to Camarillo's claim that, adjusting for demographics, Latino participation in elections is not all that far from the general public's.

Sure enough, the Pew numbers have 62% of registered Latinos age 50 to 64 saying that they plan to vote next month. More than half of those 49 and under, meanwhile, intend to stay home.

What applies to apathetic Latino voters should apply to all listless Democrats. You may not be awed by what Obama and his party have done. You will be less pleased by what will happen if Republicans start undoing it.

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ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

Growth Of Rightwing Extremist Women

By Sarah Jaffe

It all started with Sarah Palin. Or did it? By "it," of course I mean the rise of the Tea Party movement and other so-called patriot groups, and with them a new group of women on the right in the United States.

They're no longer content to pay lip service to male leadership, but they've got an ambivalent, vexed relationship to feminism as well. But one thing is uncontested: With mainstream media captivated by their fringe appeal, they're having a definite moment.

There's Debra Medina, who failed to win the Republican nomination for governor of Texas but nevertheless managed to energize both her state's disgruntled patriots and 9/11 "truthers." Medina made headlines when she attended a "Sovereignty or Secession" rally, where she called for the "tree of freedom" to be "watered with the blood of tyrants and patriots."

MARY FALLIN CITED

The post-Palin surge of conservative female pols like Oklahoma's Mary Fallin and Washington's Cathy McMorris Rodgers are now united under the media handle "Mama Grizzlies," joining the idea of mother-as-protector to patriot-group undercurrents of by-any-means-necessary violence.

There's Keli Carender, a 30-year-old Seattle improv performer credited in a February New York Times profile with being one of the first Tea Party leaders. The nose ring on this free market-loving Ayn Rand acolyte got almost as much play in the Times piece as her politics.

Then there's Michele Bachmann, the pro-life, pro-creationism Minnesota congresswoman best known for her vocal opposition to the U.S. Census. Bachmann made headlines in 2008 when she told Hardball's Chris Matthews that she believed Barack Obama held "anti-American" views and should be "investigated;" more recently, she's been a trusty fueler of rumors that Obama's healthcare plan would lead to state-funded euthanasia.

ARIZONA IMMIGRATION LAW

In Arizona, GOP governor Jan Brewer signed the country's harshest immigration bill this past April, codifying into law a Minutemen-friendly nativism that permits law-enforcement officials to harass at any time anyone they believe might not be "American."

She then promptly took another step toward state-sanctioned racism by signing a ban on ethnic-studies courses in public schools.

The Tea Party-backed South Carolina state Rep. Nikki Haley could become the first female governor of South Carolina – and the second Republican South Asian governor in the South, after Louisiana's Bobby Jindal.

And Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid faces a Republican challenger, Nevada's Sharron Angle, who, as The Nation's Betsy Reed notes, "makes Sarah Palin look like Eleanor Roosevelt." Angle joined the GOP as a political stepping-stone; as part of her former affiliation with Nevada's Independent American party, she logged far-out views on both economic and social policy.

GAY BASHING

In addition to advocating against Social Security and the IRS, the party in 1994 advocated for an amendment to the state constitution that would, according to Talking Points Memo, "explicitly permit discrimination against LGBT people by businesses and government."

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups, recently released a report titled "Rage on the Right," looking at the rise of right-wing radicalization – not just the Tea Party, but more extreme patriot and militia groups, which the report notes have seen a 244% increase since Obama's election.

"The anger seething across the American political landscape – over racial changes in the population, soaring public debt and the terrible economy, the bailouts of bankers and other elites, and an array of initiatives by the relatively liberal Obama Administration that are seen as 'socialist' or even fascist" – goes beyond the radical right," wrote Mark Potok.

RACISM, RADICALISM

He added that while the many Tea Party organizations "cannot fairly be consid-

25th Annual OKC Peace Festival Set Nov. 14

The 25th annual Peace Festival will be a holiday shopping bazaar, featuring tables of more than 50 social justice groups and local crafts vendors. It is set for Nov. 14 from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Civic Center Hall of Mirrors in Oklahoma City. Admission is free.

"Live entertainment by local musicians and colorful fair trade goods on sale make this a popular event for supporters of human rights, social justice, environmental sustainability, and peace," said Conna Wilkinson, Director of the Peace Education Institute, co-sponsor of the event.

All groups provide informative materials, in addition to crafts and goods for sale. Food items at many tables and refreshments will also be available for visitors.

A Children's Activity Room will be supervised by adults during the event.

Background music will be performed by musicians Steve McLinn and Jahruha during the day. Student and faculty dancers from the Aalim School in Oklahoma City will once again present their popular art. Drums hand-made by Jahruha will be available.

Fair trade goods available will include coffee, pottery, carving and weaving from Central America, Africa, and Asia, fabrics and clothing items. The Sierra Club



ered extremist groups ... they are shot through with rich veins of radical ideas, conspiracy theories, and racism."

Right-wing extremists are nothing new, of course. What is new is that, increasingly, the face of these groups is a female one. Statistics are tough to find – the more militant groups are notoriously press-shy – but Quinnipiac found more women than men in its poll of self-identified Tea Partiers.

Gallup poll found 55% male to 45% female. They come from all over, from Alaska to Alabama, Massachusetts to Montana. And while "Tea Party" has become a convenient catchall, the groups' concerns go well beyond taxation.

There are libertarian followers of Ayn Rand and Ron Paul. There are people who were equally angry under the Bush Administration and have come together around a desire to, say, audit the Federal Reserve.

BECOMING A FEMINIST

Anna Barone, a Tea Party leader from Mount Vernon, NY, interviewed for the piece, corroborates this picture, saying, "The way they treated Hillary is unforgivable, and then they did it to Sarah Palin," and adding, "I've been to 15 Tea Party meetings and never heard a woman called a name just because she's powerful. I guess you could say the Tea Party is where I truly became a feminist."

The idea that the Tea Party and other far-right movements are more welcoming to women than mainstream politics is a troubling one. But what's more troubling is that "feminism" has been so swiftly folded into ideologies that espouse racist rhetoric, anti-choice politics [a Gallup poll found that 65% of self-identified Tea Partiers considered themselves "pro-life"], and me-first libertarian scorn for social services. Is this the equality we wanted?

Though Palin has since vacillated between claiming feminism for the new breed of political woman she's helped to anoint and denying that "this gender thing" is important, the Republican Party has seized on women as the perfect candidates for this particular moment.

LIKENED TO GEORGE WALLACE

They're political outsiders within the party [of 95 female Congress members, only 21 are Republican], but hardly ideological ones. And much like on the McCain-Palin campaign, where Sarah Palin took on the role of attack dog, whipping rally attendees into a partisan frenzy with a fervor that many likened to that of George Wallace in the 1960s, women in the Tea Party movement are often the

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environmental group will offer calendars, books, and other eco-friendly items. The Oklahoma Vegetarian Society will provide homemade snacks, egg rolls and recipes teaching visitors nourishment without meat.

Diverse cultural and spiritual traditions sharing literature and information include Buddhist, Baha'i, Muslim, Quaker, Religions United, Unitarian Universalists.

Information from local houses of worship especially welcoming to gay and lesbian members will be available

"The Peace Festival celebrates and makes visible many nonprofit and volunteer groups working behind the scenes all year on issues concerning human rights, social justice and the environment in Oklahoma," said Peace House Director Nathaniel Batchelder.

The Peace Festival, he said, is a time of public connection and support for these groups.

For more information visit www.peacehouse.org or call 405.524.5577.

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

Government By And For Rich, Corporations

By Robert Reich

Not only is income and wealth in America more concentrated in fewer hands than it's been in 80 years, but those hands are buying our democracy as never before – and they're doing it behind closed doors.

Hundreds of millions of secret dollars are pouring into congressional and state races in this election cycle. The Koch brothers [whose personal fortunes grew by \$5 billion last year] appear to be behind some of it, Karl Rove has rounded up other multimillionaires to fund right-wing candidates, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is funneling corporate dollars from around the world into congressional races, and Rupert Murdoch is evidently spending heavily.

No one knows for sure where this flood of money is coming from because it's all secret.

WHAT ABOUT POOR, MIDDLE CLASS?

But you can safely assume its purpose is not to help America's stranded middle class, working class, and poor. It's to pad the nests of the rich, stop all reform, and deregulate big corporations and Wall Street – already more powerful than since the late 19th Century when the lackeys of robber barons literally deposited sacks of cash on the desks of friendly legislators.

Credit the Supreme Court's grotesque decision in Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission, which opened the floodgates. [Even though eight of nine members of the Court also held disclosure laws constitutional, the decision invited the creation of shadowy "nonprofits" that don't have to reveal anything.]

According to FEC data, only 32% of groups paying for election ads are disclosing the names of their donors. By comparison, in the 2006 midterm, 97% disclosed; in 2008, almost half disclosed.

GOP OPPOSES TRANSPARENCY

Recently, when the Senate considered a bill to force such disclosure, every single Republican voted against it – thereby revealing the GOP's true colors, and presumed benefactors. [To understand how far the GOP has come, nearly 10 years ago campaign disclosure was supported by 48 of 54 Republican senators.]

Maybe the Disclose Bill can get passed in lame-duck session. Maybe the IRS will make sure Karl Rove's and other supposed nonprofits aren't sham political units. Maybe pigs will learn to fly.

In the meantime we face an election that marks an even sharper turn toward plutocratic capitalism than before – a government by and for the rich and big corporations – and away from democratic capitalism.

As income and wealth has moved to the top, so has political power.

That's why, for example, it's been impossible to close the absurd tax loophole that allows hedge-fund and private-equity managers to treat much of their income as capital gains, subject to a 15% tax [even though they're earning tens or hundreds of millions a year, and the top 15 hedge-fund managers earned an average of \$1 billion last year].

AMERICANS BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND

Why it proved impossible to fund expanded health care by limiting the tax deductions of the very rich.

Why it's so difficult even to extend George Bush's tax cuts for the bottom 98% of Americans without also extending them for the top 2% – even though the top won't spend the money and create jobs, but will blow a \$36 billion hole in the federal budget next year.



The good news is average Americans are beginning to understand that when the rich secretly flood our democracy with money, the rest of us drown. Wall Street executives and top CEOs get bailed out while under-water homeowners and jobless workers sink.

A Quinnipiac poll earlier this year found overwhelming support for a millionaire tax. But what the public wants means nothing if our democracy is secretly corrupted by big money.

Right now we're headed for a perfect storm: An unprecedented concentration of income and wealth at the top, a record amount of secret money flooding our democracy, and a public in the aftershock of the Great Recession becoming increasingly angry and cynical about government. The three are obviously related.

TAKING BACK DEMOCRACY

We must act. We need a movement to take back our democracy. [If tea partiers were true to their principles, they'd join it.] As Martin Luther King once said, the greatest tragedy is "not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

What can you do?

1. Read Justice Steven's dissent in the Citizens United case, so you're fully informed about the majority's pernicious illogic.
2. Use every opportunity to speak out against this decision, and embarrass and condemn the right-wing Justices who supported it.
3. In this and subsequent elections, back candidates for Congress and president who vow to put justices on the Court who will reverse it.
4. Demand that the IRS enforce the law and pull the plug on Karl Rove and other sham nonprofits.
5. If you have a Republican senator, insist that he or she support the Disclose Act. If they won't, campaign against them.
6. Support public financing of elections.
7. Join an organization like Common Cause, that's committed to doing all this and getting big money out of politics. [Personal note: I'm so outraged at what's happening that I just became chairman of Common Cause.]
8. Send this post to your friends [including any tea partiers you may know].

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The Ideologies Behind The Ideologues

By Joe Conason

Let nobody accuse the Tea Party enthusiasts of lacking intellectual sophistication, no matter what their favorite candidates might say about evolution, civil rights, masturbation or alcohol prohibition.

According to The New York Times, the movement's reading list includes works of political economy by such right-wing thinkers as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek and Frederic Bastiat. [And never mind that some of them are reading Glenn Beck's favorite crank, the late Cleon Skousen, who doesn't quite belong in the same category.]

What makes this news so bemusing is not that the far right is re-discovering anarcho-capitalism or ultra-libertarianism – an ideology whose potential consequences were observed the other day in Tennessee, where firefighters watched a family's house burn down because

they hadn't paid a fee. Mises, Hayek and their successors have long influenced the American right, from William F. Buckley Jr. to Alan Greenspan.

AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS

What's funny is the sudden reverence among the Tea Party's self-styled super-patriots for a bunch of foreign philosophers whose outlook is known as "Austrian economics," except for Bastiat – whose Frenchness might be expected to arouse even greater suspicion among our nativists. Among the most bitter complaints against President Obama is his supposed penchant for European notions concerning health care reform, climate change and global security. His angriest critics at Tea Party demonstrations maliciously suggest that the president is himself a foreigner who doesn't respect the American way.

So why do those same people now tell us that America should heed the Austrian school of economics, with its strictures against public schooling, public roads and government services of almost any kind?

Why should European ideologies of the far right suddenly become fashionable among citizens who so blithely accuse the White House of importing "socialist" policies from abroad?

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

The Austrian craze is particularly curious because it has displaced a school of economics that ought to be more appealing to the proud and patriotic, especially those who claim to be true to the views of the nation's founders. That would be the school known as "the American system" – which offers the added attraction of a real record of promoting national prosperity.

What is [or was] the American system? As articulated by thinkers from Alexander Hamilton to Henry Clay to Abraham Lincoln, it included protective tariffs to foster industry, national support for scientific research, federal spending [and debt!] to finance public works, regulation of private infrastructure [such as railroads] and universal education. That way of doing things persisted well into the past century, influencing policy in the Progressive Era, the New Deal and the Great Society. It preserved the nation's independence after

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ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

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U.S. Supreme Court Docket

Corporate America's Favorite Jurists Back

Few cases define the Roberts Court like the recent decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. With a wave of their hands, the Court's five conservatives opened the floodgates to allow billions of corporate dollars to spill into American democracy.

As a result, outside interest groups – most of which are aligned with conservatives – have already spent five times as much on this midterm election cycle as they did in 2006.

And *Citizens United* is only the tip of the Court's corporate iceberg. The justices have consistently favored employers over workers and polluters over the environment – and it has gone out of its way to slam the doors of justice shut on ordinary Americans.

With the Court's new term, the justices have a few opportunities to correct past errors. Sadly, the Roberts majority is far more likely to find new ways to declare corporate America to be above the law.

THE SQUEEZE ON WORKERS

In its first full term together, the Roberts majority handed down its infamous *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire* decision, which cut off access to equal pay for equal work for many women.

Moreover, when Congress swiftly overturned this egregious decision, the conservative justices responded – not with the humility Chief Justice Roberts promised in his confirmation hearing – but with an equally indefensible decision limiting the rights of older workers.

This term, the justices have three more opportunities to examine whether corporations can be held accountable when they illegally mistreat their workers.

In *Staub v. Proctor Hospital*, the Court will decide whether the law protects workers who are fired after a junior supervisor convinces a senior manager to fire the worker, not because of any legitimate reason, but because the supervisor objects to the worker's race, gender or service in the military.

This term also presents two important cases on the right of workers to be free from unlawful retaliation in the workplace. In *Thompson v. North American Stainless* the Court will decide whether an employer can strike back at a worker who complains about discrimination by firing the worker's fiancée.

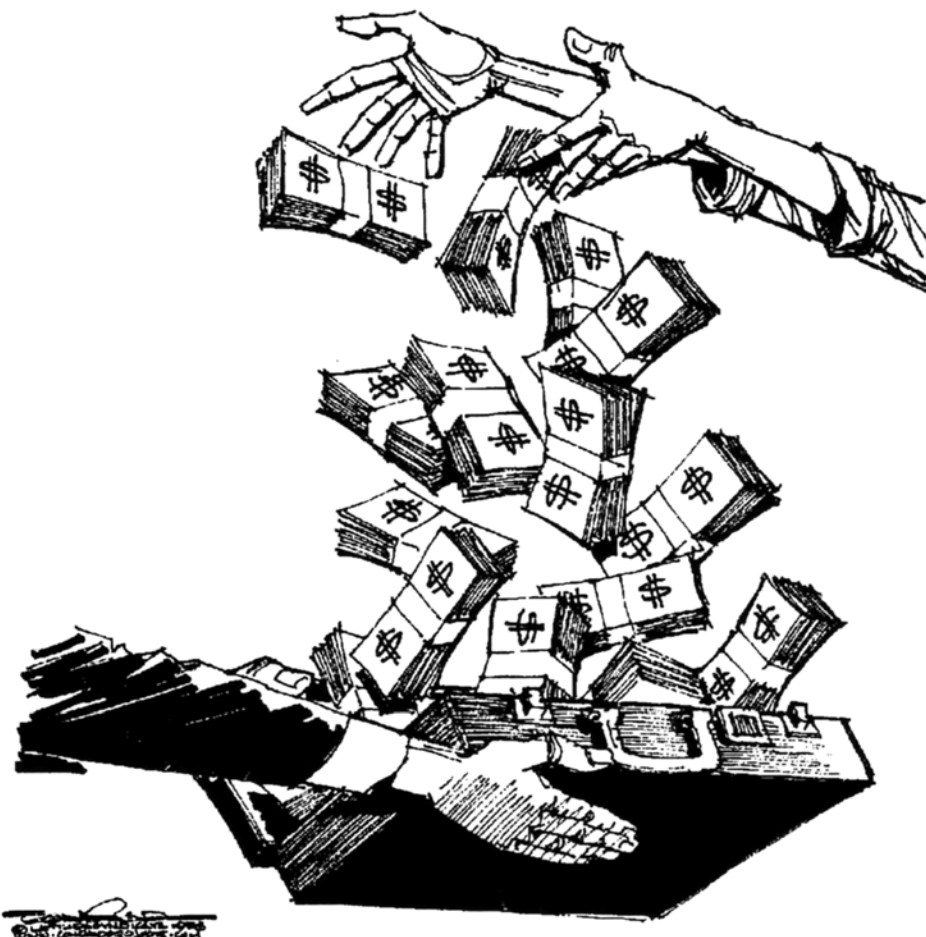
And in *Kasten v. Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp.*, the Court will decide whether employees who verbally complain that their right to a fair wage is being violated are protected against illegal retaliation or whether they must put these complaints into writing.

SIGNING AWAY YOUR RIGHTS

One of corporate America's most common and abusive assaults on workers and consumers is a practice known as "forced arbitration." Before many banks, cell phone companies, employers, or even nursing homes will do business with a consumer, worker, or patient they force that individual to sign away their right to sue the company in a real court.

Instead, they require that any disputes be brought in a secretive, privatized arbitration system that overwhelmingly favors corporate parties.

This privatized justice system exists solely because the Supreme Court allowed it to exist in a series of opinions stretching back into the 1980s, and the Court's conservatives expanded corporate power to force consumers into arbitration as recently as last June.



This term, in a case called *AT&T Mobility v. Concepcion*, the justices will decide whether corporations can also force consumers to sign away their right to bring a class-action lawsuit before the arbitrator in addition to forcing consumers into a privatized justice system.

If the Court sides with the corporate party in this case, it would enable corporations to break the law a few dollars at a time – because class action suits are often the only way to hold a company accountable when it inflicts a small-dollar injury on hundreds or thousands of people.

THE HOT BUTTONS

Although the Court's pro-corporate bent is one of its most defining features, corporate immunity is hardly the only thing on this term's docket.

In one of the most important cases this term, *Chamber of Commerce v. Whiting*, the justices will decide whether to follow the longstanding rule that policy decisions that are intimately connected to foreign policy – such as immigration – should be made by national leaders and not by 50 different state legislatures.

Two other cases on the Court's docket could provide a window into how the justices will treat the administration's controversial use of the "state secrets" doctrine to get rid of cases challenging U.S. anti-terror policy.

In these two cases, the justices will decide whether the government can sue a military contractor, then invoke state secrets to limit the contractor's ability to defend against the claim.

Finally, another closely watched case could test the limits of how far the First Amendment extends to protect the most hateful and disgusting kinds of protests.

In *Snyder v. Phelps*, the justices will consider whether Fred Phelps' toxic blend of anti-gay hate speech must be tolerated when Phelps and his hate group surround a military funeral with hateful picketers.

Protecting Speech, No Matter How Offensive

By Danny M. Adkison

A speaker on the Washington, DC mall, following the government's announcement of the Vietnam draft, comes to the microphone and passionately states: "I hope the government drafts me; that's because they'll then give me a rifle and the first person I want to get in my gun's sight is the President of the United States."

That's pretty bad.

Just as the Moral Majority was flexing its political muscle [targeting Democratic incumbents in Congress for defeat], a risqué magazine decides to run a fake advertisement which depicts the founder of the association, Rev. Jerry Falwell, as having sex with his mother in an outhouse.

That's pretty bad, too.

Then comes the latest. There is a church in Kansas, led by a pastor who thinks he is doing God's will, showing up at the funerals of American troops and protesting by saying the most hideous and offensive

things.

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral argument in the case of *Snyder v. Phelps*. Matthew Snyder was a Marine lance corporal from Maryland who was killed while serving our country in Iraq. Fred Phelps is the founder of a Baptist church in Topeka, KS. It has about 65 members. About 55 of them are actual members of Phelps' family [the lawyer arguing the case before the Supreme Court was Margie Phelps, the wife of Fred].

Phelps and his family appear at the funerals of American troops where they protest against homosexuality and Catholicism. They contend that American troops not only are being killed in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, but that they should be killed because America and the Catholic Church have sinned.

They showed up at Lance Cpl. Snyder's funeral, traveling all the

way from Kansas to Maryland, and held signs announcing "America is Doomed," "God Hates the USA/Thank God for 9/11," "Pope in Hell," "Don't Pray for the USA," and "God Hates Fags." They also have a website on which they composed and posted a very offensive Epic [that's how the court referred to it] about the deceased soldier.

The Snyder family sued, among other things, for character defamation and won at the trial court. This decision was appealed to the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. The Phelps argued at court that they were merely exercising their First Amendment free speech rights. The Circuit agreed with them. The U.S. Supreme Court will make the final decision in the case.

The newly-appointed Justice Kagan got her chance to speak up in Court. Her comments didn't seem particularly sympathetic to the Snyder

family. Nearly all of the justices who spoke had two things in common. They found the Phelps' actions to be completely distasteful, and secondly, they had presented the lawyers with hypothetical examples [in a very Socratic manner] as a way of "getting at" the issue raised in the case.

How will the Court decide?

For the Court to declare the speech unconstitutional, one of two things would have to happen. One, they would have to be convinced that the speech presented a "clear and present danger." Or, they would have to be convinced that the speech con-

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ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

Patients Rights Are Now American Law

By Tom Harkin

Starting this month, health insurance companies can no longer cancel your policy if you get cancer or refuse to cover your child because of a pre-existing condition.

A key feature of the new health reform law signed by President Barack Obama is a Patient's Bill of Rights.

It cracks down on the worst abuses of health insurance companies and gives Americans important new protections. On Sept. 23, the law's six-month anniversary, six major reforms kicked in.

Now, the law:

WHAT THE LAW PROVIDES

- Bans insurance companies from dropping patients' coverage. Previously, insurers used technicalities to cancel coverage retroactively for patients who contracted serious illnesses. One big insurer specifically targeted women diagnosed with breast cancer.

Many insurers rewarded employees with bonuses based on the number of canceled policies and the money saved. This is now illegal.

- Bans denial of coverage for children with pre-existing conditions. Job-based health plans and new individual plans are no longer allowed to deny or exclude coverage for children younger than 19 based on a pre-existing condition, including a disability.

- Cracks down on benefit payment limits. Insurance companies are prohibited from imposing lifetime dollar limits on essential benefits, such as hospital stays. Restrictions are now imposed on using annual limits.

INSURED CAN NOW APPEAL

- Provides for appeal of insurance company decisions. If you purchase a new policy, you can appeal insurance company decisions to an independent third party.

- Guarantees free preventive care. All new plans must cover certain preventive services, such as mammograms and colonoscopies, without charging a deductible, co-pay or co-insurance.

- Extends coverage for young dependents. Young adults are now allowed to stay on their parents' plan until 26.

These new benefits and protections will have profound benefits for people across America.

I recently learned about the case of a young Iowan. During her first year at college, she had to have multiple surgeries because of Crohn's disease and was forced to draw all savings and ended up filing for bankruptcy, owing \$180,000 she couldn't pay.

ALL THAT CHANGES NOW

This is exactly the kind of heartbreaking, destructive predicament that the Affordable Care Act and its Patient's Bill of Rights are designed to prevent. The new law is ushering in landmark changes in America's health care system.

As many predicted, the law is increasingly popular as Americans get better acquainted with its broad range of benefits and consumer protections.

Forty-nine percent of Americans now view the new law favorably, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's September Health Tracking Poll, versus 40% unfavorably. This positive showing is all the more impressive considering that,



according to that same poll, gross misconceptions sown by the law's opponents still persist.

THERE ARE NO DEATH PANELS

Three in 10 seniors still believe that the law creates government "death panels" to make decisions about end-of-life care for Medicare recipients.

Health reform is off to a strong start – ensuring an array of protections and benefits that put people ahead of profits.

What's more, Americans now realize that they face a stark choice. On the same day that the Patient's Bill of Rights went into effect, Republican members of Congress held a major event promising to repeal it and put health insurance companies back in the driver's seat – free to abuse policyholders and discriminate against the sick.

The Senate defeated a resolution aiming to nullify health reform regulations that preserve stability in insurance markets, give businesses flexibility and ensure consumer protections in health insurance markets. This was the congressional Republicans' second attempt in their campaign to undermine the law. We know there is more to come.

WHAT A SILLY GOP ARGUMENT

During the Senate debate, Republicans claimed that implementing the law will require more pages of regulations than were in the original bill. No sensible person judges a bill's merits by the pages of regulations needed to implement it.

Since the Republicans can't identify a credible source for their claim, one can only assume it was made up – by the health insurance industry.

Congressional Republicans have also threatened to de-fund key provisions in the health reform law. They are going to face stiff resistance from the majority of senators, who support the new law.

Just as important, the Republicans will have to reckon with opposition from their own constituents – and from people across the country already attached to the benefits and consumer protections in this landmark legislation.

Mark my words: Americans will not allow their hard-earned benefits and protections to be taken away. We will stay the course, defending the strong reforms in this new law and creating a reformed insurance and health care system that works not just for the healthy and the wealthy but for all Americans.

– The author, an Iowa Democrat, is chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

Public Education Is Facing More Vitriol

By Diane Ravitch

For weeks the national media have launched an attack on American public education unprecedented in our history.

NBC devoted countless hours to panels stacked with "experts" who believe that public education is horrible because it has so many "bad" teachers and "bad" principals.

The same "experts" appeared again and again to call for privatization, breaking teachers' unions, and mass firings of "bad" educators. Oprah devoted two shows to the same voices.

The movie *Waiting for Superman*, possibly the most ballyhooed documentary of all time, explains patiently that poor test scores are caused by bad teachers, that bad teachers are protected for life by their unions, and that the answer to our terrible test scores is privatization.

IT BEGAN WITH BUSH

If only we fire enough teachers every year, goes the oft-repeated claim,

our national test scores will soar to meet those of Finland, the highest scoring nation.

This narrative began with George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002, which mandated that 100% of all children would be proficient by 2014.

Leaving aside the fact that no nation or state has ever achieved 100% proficiency, this law unleashed a frenzy of testing in American public schools. The results are meager, as judged by the highly respected federal tests.

Instead of changing direction, Barack Obama has tightened the screws on Bush's policies. Now, testing is more important than ever.

MERIT PAY PUSHED

Obama and his Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are pressing states to adopt merit pay, so that teachers will get bonuses if student scores go up, and pressing them to evaluate

teachers by student test scores.

Testing is the key element in this approach. Woe to the teacher who cannot raise test scores on standardized tests that demand only the skill of selecting the right bubble of four possible bubbles.

Arne Duncan's Race to the Top program handed out almost \$5 billion to promote these ideas.

States leapt to be eligible for the money, promising to open more privately managed charter schools, to fire the principal of every low-performing school, to fire most or all of the teachers in schools with low scores, and to close public schools if their scores are low. None of these approaches works.

THEY ARE NO BETTER

Privately managed charter schools do not get better results on average than regular public schools. Some are excellent, some are awful, but most are no better than their public

counterparts.

Even the Superman movie admitted that only one in five [actually, only 17%] of charters get great test scores. Twice as many charters [37%] are even worse than the neighborhood public school.

The claim that "tenure" is a guarantee of lifetime employment is a canard. Professors in higher education get lifetime tenure, but teachers in K-12 schools do not have lifetime employment: they have the right to due process if the principal wants to fire them.

Teachers get due process rights

See EDUCATION Page 16

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

Baptist Leader Warns On Divorce Explosion

While the campaign by social conservatives against gay marriage has grabbed headlines and consumed millions of lobbying dollars from religious groups, the wider crisis of divorce among straight couples – especially evangelicals and often their leaders and political icons – has been largely ignored by Christian conservatives.

That may be changing, however, with the latest evidence coming in a powerful essay published on Sept. 29 titled “Divorce – The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience,” by R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and one of the most prominent conservative Christian voices in America.

In the column on his website, Mohler reiterates that the fight against abortion remains a priority, and that battling same-sex marriage “demands our attention and involvement as well.”

“But,” he continues, “divorce harms many more lives than will be touched by homosexual marriage.”

CREDIBILITY CRISIS

“The real scandal,” Mohler writes, “is the fact that evangelical Protestants divorce at rates at least as high as the rest of the public. Needless to say, this creates a significant credibility crisis when evangelicals then rise to speak in defense of marriage.”

The touchstone for Mohler’s jeremiad is an essay by Mark A. Smith of the University of Washington titled, “Religion, Divorce, and the Missing Culture War in America,” which was published in the Spring edition of *Political Science Quarterly*.

Smith, an associate professor of political science who is completing a book on religion and the culture war in America, writes that in the 1960s evangelicals and social conservatives accepted the reality of divorce like most Americans.

That was well before no-fault divorce laws – usually pinned as the culprit for the rising divorce rate – took effect.

IGNORING THE DIVORCE ISSUE

Moreover, even as the Religious Right organized in the 1970s and began notching political victories in the 1980s, divorce was virtually ignored while issues such as abortion, school prayer, the Equal Rights Amendment and other hot button topics were emphasized as the real threats to society.

This occurred even though, as Smith writes, divorce, which is clearly and strongly condemned in the Bible, was prevalent among conservative Christians.

His findings show that 43% of evangelical Protestants divorce, higher than almost any other religious group and above the national average of 38%. [Other surveys show the divorce rate is highest in Red States and actually lowest in Blue States.]

Smith also notes that “divorce seems to carry a more direct connection to the daily realities of families than do the bellwether culture war issues of abortion and homosexuality.”

THEY KEEP IT QUIET

Smith further argues that when divorce or strengthening marriage were mentioned by organizations associated with the Religious Right, it was in the context of private, spiritual improvement rather than the kind of public policy initiatives that were pushed as solutions to other problems.

Occasional policy proposals to reduce divorce, such as the covenant marriage movement designed to pass laws mandating pre-marital counseling and make it more difficult for couples to divorce, drew little support from church leaders or members.

Smith also argued that excluding divorce as a priority reflected the political reality that to do otherwise would have alienated too many members of the Religious Right’s constituency. All of these are conclusions Mohler does not dispute.

“That logic is an indictment of evangelical failure and a monumental scandal of the evangelical conscience,” Mohler writes.

Mohler’s focus on divorce is important because of his own bona fides as a Christian conservative and because it seems to reflect a debate about the future of evangelicalism and how to move beyond the political agenda of the Religious Right in order to affect society.

GAY BATTLE IS LOSING

Certainly, the fight against gay marriage seems to be a losing battle in the culture wars, given that younger believers are far more gay-friendly than their parents and grandparents, and as pop icons like Christian music artist Jennifer Knapp come out of the closet.

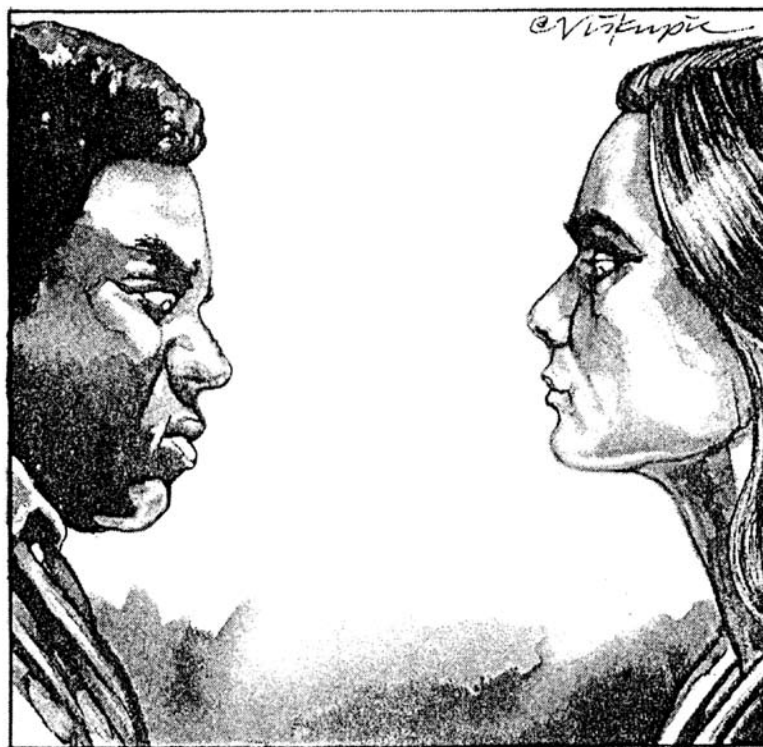
“Ten years from now, the issue of same-sex marriage will probably no longer be on the table,” says sociologist of religion D. Michael Lindsay, author of *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*.

Moreover, the reality of divorce within conservative Christian communities is the elephant in the room that can no longer be ignored. At their annual meeting in Orlando this year, leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention – the largest Protestant body in the United States with 16 million members – adopted a resolution called, “On the Scandal of Southern Baptist Divorce.”

Indeed, the problem of Christian divorce is growing larger as the evangelical profile against gay marriage gets higher.

DESTABILIZING MARRIAGE

“We cannot very well argue for the sanctity of marriage as a crucial social institution while we blithely go about divorcing and approving of remarriage at a rate



that destabilizes marriage,” Mark Galli, senior managing editor of *Christianity Today*, the flagship evangelical magazine, wrote in August after the court ruling invalidating Proposition 8, the California ballot measure banning gay marriage.

“In short, we have been perfect hypocrites on this issue. Until we admit that, and take steps to amend our ways, our cries of alarm about gay marriage will echo off into oblivion.”

DOWNPLAYING CULTURE WARS

In a roundtable response to the Prop 8 decision at *Christianity Today*’s website, many of the 13 evangelical voices also argued that it was time for Christians to look after their own houses in order to truly change U.S. culture – an argument also set forth in a recent book by sociologist James Davison Hunter, who coined the culture wars name in the early 1990s.

Conservative pundits like Glenn Beck and Ann Coulter are pushing versions of that view as well, while traditional political champions of the Christian Right, like Mississippi’s GOP Gov. Haley Barbour, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, also a Republican, and Texas Sen. John Comyn, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, have said the party should downplay culture war issues.

In his essay, Mohler offered no specific proposals – either in terms of public policy or church-oriented programs – to reverse the trends in divorce nationally or among Christians themselves.

It’s highly unlikely that Christian conservatives are going to wave the white flag on gay marriage, or suddenly retreat into the enclave mentality that characterized fundamentalists after the Scopes “Monkey Trial” of 1925.

But the new focus on getting Christians to practice what they preach marks an important shift in the culture war front, and, if successful, could prove to be the most potent cultural argument evangelicals have ever deployed.

WHO FUMBLLED BALL?

[Numbers rounded]

- Clinton left Bush an \$1800 billion budget.
- Bush left Obama a \$3600 billion budget.
- Clinton left Bush a surplus
- Bush left Obama a \$1400 billion deficit.
- Clinton left Bush \$5700 billion of debt.
- Bush left Obama \$11,800 billion of debt.
- Clinton left Bush a 70% increase in GDP.
- Bush left Obama a 40% increase in GDP.
- Clinton left Bush a 19.8% of GDP in revenues.
- Bush left Obama a 14.8% of GDP in revenues.
- Clinton left Bush an 18.5% of GDP in expenditures.
- Bush left Obama a 24.7% of GDP in expenditures.
- Clinton left Bush 237,000 net new jobs created per month.
- Bush left Obama 31,000 net new jobs created per month, lowest since Hoover.
- Clinton left Bush Peace on Earth.
- Bush left Obama Hell on Earth, two disastrous wars
- Clinton left Bush a presidency most highly rated of any peacetime president in Asia, Africa, Europe.

- Bush left Obama the most hated presidency in history.
- Bush left Obama a housing tsunami and financial volcano.
- Bush left Obama, in 2008, an \$8500 billion bailout commitment.
- Bush left Obama his takeover of Fannie/Freddie, AIG, and first bailout of Chrysler.

– Clarence Swinney

EDUCATION

From Page 15

only after a principal agrees that they have earned it. The reason for due-process rights is that teachers have been fired because of their race, their religion, their sexual orientation, or because a supervisor didn’t like them.

Teachers with due process can be fired, but only after a hearing by an impartial hearing officer.

– The author is a famed historian on education

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

Bleeding In Afghanistan: Time To Get Out

By Jim Hightower

Are you aware that America has now been at war for nearly a decade? We've been fighting, bleeding and dying in two hellacious, multitrillion-dollar conflagrations since 2001 – and our blood continues to flow, with no end in sight.

Well, not *our* blood. Not yours and mine. We continue to go about our daily routines – go to work, go to the mall, go out to eat, go golfing, go to church, go on vacation, go dancing and drinking. War? Americans will pay far more attention to the World Series than they will to the ongoing carnage in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In a little-noticed speech, Pentagon chief Robert Gates recently pointed out, "For most Americans, the wars remain an abstraction – a distant and unpleasant series of news items that do not affect them personally."

"Service in the military," he bluntly said, "has become something for other people to do."

WHO'S AT WAR

He's right. You see, "we" are not at war. We handed off that awful duty a decade ago to the 2.4 million active and reserve soldiers in the armed services, less than 1% of our nation's people. They and their families are the ones "at war," cycled and recycled into debilitating and deadly deployments.

"We the People" are not even making the minimal sacrifice of paying for the burden we've so carelessly stacked on their shoulders. Both the Bush regime and the Obamacans, fully backed by both Republican and Democratic Congresses of the past decade, cravenly put Afghanistan and Iraq on the national credit card, piling up trillions of dollars in debt for future generations to cover.

The widening disconnect between Americans and America's wars is not only dangerous for our democracy, but it's immoral, allowing politicians and corporate profiteers to sink our national soul in the diabolical depths of perpetual war.

CHECK OUR PROGRESS

Speaking of perpetual war, what the hell are we doing in Afghanistan, anyway? Ten years at war there, and what progress have we made?

According to Washington's war hawks, we're there to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. Key to this strategy, we're told, is to establish the legitimacy of the central government, led by the famously incompetent, vain, arrogant, aloof and corrupt President Hamid Karzai. And how's that going?

Well, at least they pulled off a national parliamentary election on Sept. 18. It was meant to show democratic progress, thus bolstering the stability and credibility of the government. Unfortunately, there were some unpleasant incidents during the balloting. Beaucoup unpleasantness. More than 4,000 cases of electioneering fraud have poured into the Election Complaints Commission – with nearly 60% of them considered gross enough to have affected the outcome.

WIDESPREAD FRAUD

"How gross?" you ask? In Kandahar Province, where the president's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, rules as an autocratic strongman, some 50 parliamentary



seats were being contested. Amazingly, the list of winners were all from the Karzai political faction, and – get this – Ahmed Wali had the list of winners in his hands *before* the election!

In a third of the provinces, the fraud was blatant and widespread. A cell phone video, for example, caught officials in one district polling place haggling with a candidate over the price of buying votes. In another district, local police handcuffed and removed three groups of election workers from their polling places, then presented the "results" for them to sign at the end of the day. In a northern province, gunmen slapped, dragged and otherwise coerced people to go to polling places and vote for the gunmen's candidate.

This so-called election shows that there's nothing legitimate about Karzai's government – and nothing legitimate about America's involvement in Afghanistan.

It's time to get out of there!

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Household Income Plunged In 2009

Household incomes shrank for the second year in a row in 2009, as the recession eroded the share of American families earning over \$100,000 and swelled the ranks of people who are poor or just barely making it, according to recently-released census statistics.

The income estimates from the American Community Survey, a wide array of census statistics reported annually, underscore the devastation the recession has caused to millions of American households and families.

The census said almost 58% of a county's households earned \$100,000 or more, up from 53% in a continuous upswing during each of the past four years.

Nationally, the median income of \$50,221 is down about 4% from its peak since the recession began in December of 2007.

OFFENSIVE

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stituted defamation of the Synder family name.

The former is all but out of the question, which is why, no doubt, the Synder family lawyer relied on the defamation argument in the lower court trial.

The main problem with the defamation argument is that the protesters were not focused specifically on Lance Cpl. Synder [they knew he was not gay]. The signs were of a general nature [against the government's or Catholic Church's actions]. The fact that the family goes all over the country protesting such funerals is clear evidence that they were not focusing on one family.

Furthermore, Maryland [like many states] has laws about protesting in

particular places and the Phelps abided by Maryland law. They protested at least 1,000 feet from the funeral and there was no disorderly behavior. Mr. Synder admitted that he didn't notice the protesters until after the funeral [seeing them on television].

The Supreme Court Justices would seem to agree with a conclusion reached by the judges in the lower court ruling: the kind of protesting highlighted in such cases often involves not very nice people. In all likelihood, the Court will condemn the message, but note that the Constitution protects the messengers, however offensive they may be.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

That year, median household income was \$52,384. Last year alone was responsible for about \$1,500 of that loss.

Almost one in five households had an income of \$100,000 or more in 2009, the census reported. That was down almost a full percentage point from 2008.

In contrast, almost one in four families earned less than \$25,000, an increase of one percentage point.

IDEOLOGUES

From Page 13

the Revolution and built the United States into the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world.

But Austrian economics – which the Austrians themselves have wisely rejected, by the way, in favor of a more democratic and egalitarian style – had precisely nothing to do with that historic process.

So why would the Tea Party movement, so prone to bouts of jingoism and xenophobia, embrace an untried foreign ideology?

Why would they ignore the traditional, native-grown concepts that bear the stamp of Hamilton and Lincoln?

It is hard not to suspect that the Washington-based exponents of Austrian economics, at corporate-funded outfits like Americans for Prosperity, are promoting their own familiar agenda.

If the "Austrian" ideology pre-

ailed in tearing down government, extirpating regulation and destroying public institutions, what would be left standing? Not much except giant corporations, mammoth banks and hedge funds, whose proprietors would then be able to completely dominate an increasingly impoverished, uneducated and undefended people. Not every aspect of the old American system could or should have been preserved – but it is much preferable to the corporate oligarchy that can be glimpsed behind the Tea Party.

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ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

72K Stimulus Checks Went To Dead People

More than 89,000 stimulus payments of \$250 each went to people who were either dead or in prison, a government investigator says in a new report quoted by the Associated Press.

The payments, which were part of last year's massive economic recovery package, were meant to increase consumer spending to help stimulate the economy.

But about \$18 million went to nearly 72,000 people who were dead, according to the report by the Social Security Administration's inspector general. The report estimates that a little more than half of those payments were returned.

An additional \$4.3 million went to more than 17,000 prison inmates, the report said. Most of the inmates, it turns out, were eligible to get the payments because they were newly incarcerated and had been receiving Social Security before they were locked up.

52 MILLION CHECKS

In all, the \$250 payments were sent to about 52 million people who receive either Social Security or Supplemental Security Income, at a cost of about \$13 billion. Other federal retirees also received the payments, but they were not part of the inspector general's review.

The inspector general for the Social Security Administration has been performing an audit to make sure no checks went to ineligible recipients. The latest report was dated Sept. 24 but was just recently posted to the agency's website.

People were eligible for payments if they were getting benefits during any one of the three months before the law was passed in February 2009.

Dead people were ineligible to get the payments. But, the report said, there is no provision in the law to recover payments incorrectly sent to dead people.

NEAR PERFECT RECORD

The Social Security Administration said that despite tight deadlines, workers accurately processed more than 99.8% of the 52 million stimulus payments.

"We worked with Treasury, developed new processes, and began issuing [payments] about 30 days earlier than the legislatively mandated deadline," the agency said in a written response included in the inspector general's report.

"This was a major accomplishment for our agency."

The inspector general's report said that if similar payments are authorized in the future, prison inmates should be ineligible and the government should be



able to recover payments made to dead people.

The Social Security Administration agreed with the recommendations.

LETTERS

From Page 4

our natural resources and how these activities may be contributing to the increased earthquake activity in the area. We are also concerned about the increased traffic on an already perilous Highway 102, the size of the loads being transported, and how the damage to Highway 102 as a result of this increased heavy traffic will be addressed.

The numerous documented instances across the country of contamination to water and air has resulted in reviewing these extraction methods in various states, and the halting of these activities in the state of New York until further studies are completed. The documentary Gasland provides an in-depth review of how this is affecting people in other areas of the country. Many other sources are available, and can be found on the Oklahoma Citizens for Responsible Oil and Gas Production Facebook page.

If you, too, are concerned about how these oil and gas extraction processes may affect you and your family, email us at OK4RespDrlg@gmail.com.

Greg and Susan Nedrow
Wellston

Editor, The Observer:

I empathize with Ray Payn's experience at the OU Medical Center in Oklahoma City [9.10.10 Observer] but don't feel I can let it go by without mentioning my own contrary experiences.

Four years ago I had triple bypass heart surgery at St. John Medical Center here in Tulsa. I cannot say enough

or express sufficient gratitude for the treatment I received. I never felt like I was unattended or uncared for prior to the surgery, through the surgery, in the recovery room, in the intensive care unit, and finally in the cardiac recovery unit.

My wife insisted on spending nights with me and the staff made sure that she had blankets, pillows, or anything else to make her comfortable.

Prior to the heart surgery I have had outpatient surgery, two shoulder surgeries, and my wife and I have undergone many kinds of diagnostic testing at St. John's. My late wife, who died from cancer and congestive heart failure several years ago, spent many days in treatment and as a resident patient at St. John's. In every instance we have been treated with utmost compassion and professionalism.

I sincerely hope that St. John's is not an exception and that the OU Medical Center is not the norm.

John A. Osborne
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Do You Remember The American Dream?

I am 66 years old, growing up in the 50's and 60's. One of my memories is how my parents hoped that I would be able to have it easier than they did. They hoped I would be able to graduate from college. Their dream came true and I was the beneficiary of their hard work and great parenting. I have lived the American dream.

Boy have things changed. As we have moved into a corporatocracy,

it is becoming more and more likely that coming from the lower or middle classes means you will find it very, very difficult to achieve wealth. The best way to be wealthy is to be born wealthy. With almost all politicians being controlled by corporate wealth and greed the deck is stacked against those who start life with little and who are likely to end it with little.

It is important that we find a way to return to "fair" elections, elections not determined by who has the most money. The only way I see that this can possibly be accomplished is through public financing of elections. If we continue on the path set before us by the Supreme Court's idiotic decision that corporations are people and can give unlimited amounts of money to elections, we are truly doomed to become a Banana Republic.

We must have legislators whose dominant interest is for the betterment of the American public as a whole. We need men and women who are more interested in what is right than they are in being re-elected. We need men and women legislators who have the courage to stand up to corporations and the wealthy and refuse to let them continue to trample the poor under their corporate feet.

It would be nice if the poor had an equal chance at a world-class education and the chance to improve their condition. It would be nice if we returned to the idea that all people should have a chance at the American Dream.

Rex Ackerson
Tonkawa

Editor, The Observer:

There is a lot of confusion regarding the new portion of the health care law regarding pre-existing conditions for children and also children to be covered by parent's policies up to the age of 26.

To the best of the policy experts, in Oklahoma, autism treatments and therapies will not be covered because autism is not recognized as a covered medical condition for most private health insurance policies. To be classified as a pre-existing condition, autism would have to be a covered medical condition. And it is not for private, fully-funded insurance plans.

For anyone that wants to see a great example of what is covered, check out the PBS NOW episode from last summer. The PBS crew came to Tulsa to film a family with a daughter who suffered from acute asthma. She was not covered because of a lapse in the parents' insurance policy. But the story only gets better as they are "coached" by a DHS case worker on how to game the system in Oklahoma in order to have their daughter covered by Soonercare.

This new law will prevent families from having to quit their jobs in order to have their kids covered.

Wayne Rohde
Minneapolis, MN

ON 11/2 STATE QUESTIONS

NIX UM ALL

Paid for by Ben Blackstock

I Am A Muslim, American Woman

By Theresa McCune

I have been quietly watching all the media coverage of recent events involving Muslims in America, and I have tolerated the ignorance for far too long. I have many things I'd like the American public to know about me, as an American Muslim, and I think it would help non-Muslim Americans to put into perspective their misguided hate and suspicions.

I tend to get a great deal of positive feedback from people, once they get to know me, and that's what I want to do, is get America to know this American Muslim for what I am, not what they think I am. So here goes:

I am a 44-year-old mother and wife.

I am French on my mother's side. I am Scotch/Irish on my father's side.

I live in Dallas, TX.

I am a board member of the local PTA.

I am college educated.

I am a union-trained full Journeyman Carpenter.

I have worked in construction, demolition, and exhibit shops.

I make more money than my husband.

I am a professional member of both the Knitter's Guild of America, and the Crochet Guild of America.

I am a hand knitwear designer. I am a crochet wear designer.

I am currently working on my teaching certification for both knit and crochet instructor through the Craft Yarn Council of America.

I try to commit random acts of kindness every chance I get.

I am an Army veteran. I grew up an Army brat.

I was born in a military hospital, as well as my two siblings.

My mother served in both the Air Force and Army Reserve.

My father was an Army lifer.

I actually had to fight to serve in the Army National Guard/Reserve, only to be rejected because of my hijab. This was prior to 9/11.

My family, on my mother's side, was here before 1776.

My great, great, very great grandfather fought in the American Revolution. My grandfather, and all five of my uncles, on my mother's side, served in every branch of the military. I am the daughter of a father who sacrificed his sanity serving as a medic in Vietnam.

I am an avid recycler.

I participate in the Fourth of July parade in Arlington every year.

WOMEN

From Page 12

ones making the most outrageous statements.

Sarah Palin's coinage of the phrase "death panels" in opposing Obama's health-care reform proposal might be the most famous; Michele Bachmann's slew of bombastic, factually shaky assertions on everything from financial reform [she compared it to Mussolini-style Fascism] to net neutrality are so numerous that her re-election opponent has collected them on a blog called Michele Bachmann Said WHAT?!

Sarah Posner, a reporter for the online magazine Religion Dispatches who has covered the religious right for years, sees direct connections between women in the religious right and those who have come to define the Tea Party and other patriot movements.

Many female Tea Party organizers, she points out, got their training with Concerned Women for America and other religious-right groups. Women like Phyllis Schlafly have always been leaders in those movements, she notes, but were able to justify their role with religious rhetoric – they were "called" by a higher power to lead.

The protests themselves are often family affairs: A piece on Politico quotes Lu Ann Busse, head of the Colorado coalition of the Beck-inspired 9/12 Project, saying, "How do you justify figuratively or literally beating up on grandmas and moms with children in tow? It just does not look good."

And escalating violent rhetoric is perhaps the most notable hallmark of the Tea Party with regard to its female leadership. Again, Palin is the pacesetter here, telling Twitter followers "Don't retreat, instead – RELOAD!" and posting a map with targets on it where Democrats held seats in districts that she and McCain carried in 2008.

If there is anything to celebrate about the rise of right-wing women and their attendant violent rhetoric, maybe it's that politics and even "fighting back" on a primal level are no longer cast as the province of men. But it's also proved that equal representation alone won't be enough to create real feminist politics.

I have never committed a crime, save for traffic tickets.

I was a Muslim for a few years before I got married. I married a Muslim, because I am a Muslim. I wore hijab when I was single, and it has nothing to do with my husband.

I grew up eating Cheerios and watching Brady Bunch just like everybody else.

I have experienced better treatment by strangers after 9/11, because they both to stop and ask me questions; and I answer them.

I own my condo, so I pay my taxes.

I have worked at both McDonalds and Walmart at some point in my life.

When I was a kid, I took ballet, tap, gymnastics, and ice skating.

I pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America so many times I can't count. When I say the pledge of allegiance, I don't put my hand on my heart. I salute.

I was shocked and appalled at the events on 9/11 ... because I am American ... and because I am Muslim.

I don't burn Bibles ... or any books. That was something Hitler did.

The events of 9/11 were attacks on me for being American, and a betrayal on me by the individuals who claim to be Muslims.

They were not any Muslims I know, and I can't imagine what type of hatred would bring a person to commit such acts of total destruction. I did not "come here" to take over America. My family has been here since before America. I will not leave. I have nowhere else to go. The only people who can legitimately tell me I don't belong here are the native peoples of this continent, but not because I am Muslim, but because I am not native.

I could go on and on, but this is probably more than enough. If my fellow Americans are against me for being Muslim, then they are against everything that I am, because I am a free American in the land of religious freedoms.

Editor's Note: This is an abbreviated version of a longer essay. To read it in its entirety, visit <http://www.groverreport.org/2010/09/22/this-is-what-i-am/>

NIGHTMARE

From Page One

Even the once centrist Tulsa World has shifted rightward.

Most readers don't know it, but the Gaylord Oklahoman and the Tulsa World have combined news coverage. There is zero competition. In fact, both have three Capitol reporters *combined* where there once were three for *each* paper.

OETA has only one fulltime TV reporter at the Capitol as a result of a 6% budget cut.

The AP is understaffed.

The Journal Record, a business publication, does a superb job on the state's business side and during the session has interns at virtually every major committee meeting.

What sort of agenda will Fallin follow?

Most will come from the Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce, which has already announced it will have 10 lobbyists covering the Legislature.

Wow! They are popping their buttons on the eve of a predicted Republican takeover.

Texas, once one of the most Democratic states, does not have a single statewide elected official today – and Oklahoma is trending in that path.

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Tulsa (Sunday afternoon) 918-743-6827
Norman (Sunday morning) 405-321-7971

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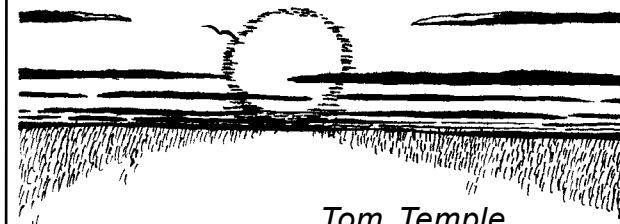
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