

25,000
Blue Chip
Readers

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

\$2.50



VOL. 44, NO. 9

An Independent Journal of Commentary

MAY 10, 2012

Criminal Justice Reform Missed Opportunity?

By Arnold Hamilton

In January, state leaders unveiled a blueprint for criminal justice reform, heralding it as a “smart on crime” approach that could save Oklahoma taxpayers \$249 million over the next decade.

“Oklahoma has just been given a blueprint for a surgical strike against crime based on comprehensive facts, data analysis and proven strategies,” House Speaker Kris Steele, the driving force behind the Justice Reinvestment initiative, said at the time. “The policy proposals are tough, smart, strategic and fiscally sustainable.”

No one doubted Steele’s resolve: his six-term legislative career – coming to a term-limited close at year’s end – has reflected a compassion and common sense all-too-often missing in the state’s legislative halls.

Nor was there any doubt that his goals were laudable: Oklahoma’s overwrought lock-‘em-up and throw-away-the-key approach to criminal justice is slowly but surely bankrupting the state.

Moreover, it is destroying thousands of lives, creating a permanent underclass of convicted felons – many non-violent offenders punished for repeat drug possession offenses.

The numbers don’t lie: Oklahoma locks up more women per capita than any state and its overall incarceration rate is No. 3 nationally – nearly 26,000 now in state custody. The result is that Oklahoma spends nearly a half-billion-dollars annually on corrections – up 30% over the last decade.

Alas, Steele’s ambitious agenda slammed head-on into the demagoguery that drives the Oklahoma Legis-



DARYL CASLE SLATE.COM

lature’s criminal justice policy, a punitive streak fueled by officeholder’s fears they could be tarred as “soft on crime.”

Charitably, Steele’s reform package – which headed to the governor’s desk

on May 3 – exited the legislative sausage-making as a decent first step toward addressing Oklahoma’s fiscally unsustainable approach to crime and punishment.

But more accurately, it wasn’t nearly the real, comprehensive reform the speaker and other “smart on crime” supporters envisioned. Even worse, the new laws could end up costing the state even more short-term, if some experts are correct in their assessments.

As former state Rep. Ryan Kiesel, now executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma, put it, “When HB 3052 was introduced ... it was far from perfect. However, as it moved through the po-

litical process, even the modest reforms it offered to our broken criminal justice and over-incarceration crisis were turned on their head by the same political mindset that has stood in the way of true criminal justice reform for decades.”

For example, the legislation as originally proposed would have modified the state’s so-called truth-in-sentencing law that requires prisoners to serve 85% of their sentences – one of the primary reasons state prisons are dangerously close to capacity.

The idea was to create an incentive for good behavior by allowing inmates to bank credits that could help accelerate their release once they had served 85% of their sentence. It was approved by the House, but stripped out of the bill by the Senate.

Other Senate changes that could end up worsening Oklahoma’s corrections crisis in the short-term:

- Nine months of mandatory probation would not count towards the convict’s sentence and would apply only to sentences handed down after the bill’s effective date.

- The Department of Corrections would have the authority to send offenders to an Intermediate Revocation Facility for *any* probation violation – not just if it warranted revoking the probation.

- Probation or parole officers would be required to notify DOC if an inmate is charged with *any* misdemeanor – not just a *violent* misdemeanor.

- Only those convicted of a felony now would be required to undergo a mental health evaluation, rather than anyone arrested on a felony complaint.

Even though the Senate watered down his proposals, Steele urged his House colleagues to accept the Senate changes, knowing full well that even the modest package probably wouldn’t survive a joint House-Senate conference committee filled with lawmakers afraid of appearing “soft on crime.”

The House supported its leader, and Gov. Mary Fallin is expected to sign

See REFORM Page 19

Observations

The Catholic Vote

President Obama has seen his standing among Catholic voters, a crucial segment of the electorate, slip in recent weeks, and a looming confrontation with Catholic activists could make it worse.

Democrats want voters this year to focus on what they have branded a War on Women, but the flip side of the debate – the so-called War on Religion – is not going away anytime soon.

Catholic bishops are urging two weeks of public protest in June and July against what they see as growing government encroachment on religious freedom.

The protests are expected to include priests and nuns and thousands of Catholic parishioners. Some activists expect civil disobedience, which could lead to powerful images of priests and nuns being led away in hand restraints.

“This is the most dynamic situation I’ve ever seen since I’ve been involved in Catholics and politics,” said Deal Hudson, president of Catholic Advocate, who also headed Catholic outreach for the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign in 2000 and 2004. “I think civil disobedience is almost inevitable. I think that kind of protest is on the way.”

“These would be devastating images for the Obama Administration,” said Ron Bonjean, a Republican strategist. “You have a very important religious demographic coming out in protest of Obama’s policies and being arrested for their expression. These images would be politically damaging for the president’s campaign.”

And the campaign could go beyond protests – perhaps working with evangelical Christian groups on a broader public relations campaign that could include television and radio ads.

Steven Wagner, the president of QEV Analytics, a polling firm that recently conducted a survey for The Catholic Association, said religion could emerge as a sleeper issue in the election: “Everyone says this election is about the economy. I can see the issue of religious liberty being what de-

cides the race. If Obama continues to lose Catholics by the margin the Pew poll suggests, that means he could lose the key swing states of Florida, Ohio, Colorado and Iowa.”

Losses in those states could cost Obama the White House, and the states are likely aware of that fact. Wagner noted the administration would likely try to be careful and avoid provoking Catholic activists before the election.

Obama has lost support among Catholic voters since the beginning of his term. A March 21 poll by the Pew Research Center found a “noticeable shift in opinions” among white Catholics in their views of the administration.

Thirty-one percent of white Catholics now describe it as unfriendly to religion, compared to 17% in August 2009.

Blockbuster

Journalist Greg Palast, writing for Ecowatch.org, has turned up evidence that “implicates top BP executives as well as its partners Chevron and Exxon and the Bush Administration in a deadly cover-up – which included falsifying a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission.”

The investigation discovered that nearly two years before the Deepwater Horizon explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, another BP rig blew out in the Caspian Sea – a fact BP hid from U.S. regulators and Congress.

Writes Palast: “Had BP, Chevron, Exxon or the Bush State Department revealed the facts of the earlier blowout, it is likely that the Deepwater Horizon disaster would have been prevented.

“Days after the Deepwater Horizon blowout, a message came in to Ecowatch’s offices in New York from an industry insider floating on a ship in the Caspian Sea. He stated there had been a blowout, just like the one in the Gulf, and BP had covered it up.

“To confirm this shocking accusa-



tion, I flew with my team to the Islamic republic of Azerbaijan. Outside the capital, Baku, near the giant BP terminal, we found workers, though too frightened to give their names, who did confirm that they were evacuated from the BP offshore platform as it filled with explosive methane gas.

“Before we could get them on camera, the crew was arrested and the witnesses disappeared.

“Expelled from Azerbaijan, we obtained the ultimate corroboration: a secret cable from the U.S. Embassy to the State Department in Washington laying out the whole story of the 2008 Caspian blowout.”

Of course, drill-baby-drill Republicans, owned body and soul by oil and gas interests, fight around-the-clock to loosen regulations and oversight of an industry whose disasters often not only claim lives, but also wreak unimaginable environmental damage.

How many Oklahomans know about the BP-Big Oil-Bush Administration cover-up? Not many, since the state’s mainstream media are loath to report anything negative about an industry that is among its largest advertisers.

Abortion Politics

The Oklahoma Legislature took its lumps on national TV when it passed a bill providing women the opportunity to hear the fetal heartbeat prior to an abortion.

SB 1274, by state Sen. Dan Newberry and state Rep. Pam Peterson, creates the Heartbeat Informed Consent Act.

“Thanks to advances in modern medicine, we’ve gone from the days when people claimed a baby was just a clump of cells to being able to see the truly astounding process of development in the womb,” said Peterson, R-Tulsa.

“This legislation simply ensures that a woman is given the opportunity to assess that information. Our laws should not be stuck in the 1950s when it comes to medical issues.”

SB 1274 would apply to situations where the unborn baby is eight weeks or older, and the woman would have

the choice of whether or not to hear the heartbeat during a standard pre-procedure exam.

Can you spell s-t-u-p-i-d?

This has nothing do with a woman’s rights but is furthering the War on Women.

SB 1274 passed the Oklahoma House on a bipartisan 75-12 vote, meaning some gutless Democrats voted for it.

This legislation is one more example of the Republican fixation on abortion. They’ve passed seven anti-abortion bills but at least Sen. Brian Crain’s Personhood Act was too much for the House so it decided not to hear it.

Laying a guilt trip on a woman seeking an abortion is an invasion of privacy. What if the baby has no brain? What if the baby is malformed?

Would some generous Republican, such as Rep. Peterson, take it home? Don’t hold your breath.

Aubrey Again

Between 2007 and 2010 the Sierra Club accepted more than \$25 million from Aubrey McClendon and Chesapeake. When the Sierra Club got wind the news media was asking questions, it hastily retreated.

Chesapeake is the natural gas industry leader and is heavily involved in fracking. McClendon didn’t support the Sierra Club out of the goodness of his heart – he was backing the environmental group’s anti-coal campaign.

The Sierra said it was promised an additional \$30 million but media attention forced them to back off. The backing from Chesapeake calls into question the independence of the Sierra Club.

The news couldn’t have come at a worse time for CEO McClendon and his board of directors, sued by stockholders for events surrounding a billion-dollar loan he arranged for himself.

This comes on the heels of a Forbes magazine cover story calling him “America’s Most Reckless Billionaire.”

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

www.okobserver.net

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

[ISSN 0030-1795]

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

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

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

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

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

SPEAKERS BUREAU: To book Founding Editor Frosty Troy for your Chamber banquet, convention or other gathering, and for rates and availability, call 405.760.1843. You also may submit your request via e-mail to frosty.troy@gmail.com or by U.S. mail to P.O. Box 53371, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3371.

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

PUBLISHER

Beverly Hamilton

bhamilton@okobserver.net

405.478.8700

EDITOR

Arnold Hamilton

ahamilton@okobserver.net

405.478.8700

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy

frosty.troy@gmail.com

405.760.1843

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

Laurel: To Hobby Lobby for increasing the full-time employee minimum wage to \$13 per hour. Part time workers will earn \$9 an hour. The national minimum wage is \$7.25.

The condition of the State Capitol is a disgrace, ignored for years by both Republicans and Democrats. Some estimate it would take \$150 million to repair. Yet the GOP in charge would rather cut taxes \$43 million.

Dart: To the state House. On the same day Speaker Kris Steele announced the Personhood bill would not be heard, they passed 75-12 an anti-abortion bill "allowing" a woman to listen to the heartbeat of an eight-week-old inside her.

Before Republicans cut taxes, how about the waiting list of 6,000 people with development disabilities or the more than 100,000 waiting for help with their alcohol, or drug addictions? What about the mentally ill?

Laurel: To Republican state Rep. Gary Banz, R-Midwest City, for ripping his colleagues when they failed to support a proposed Ethics Committee for the Oklahoma House. Writing in *Eastward*, he said "action – or inaction in this case – speaks so loudly I can hardly hear the words being offered as excuses."

More than 34,000 state employees have gone six years without a pay raise. The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs [sic] says that state workers earn an average of more than \$47,000 a year. The Tax Commission says that isn't true – not by a long shot.

Dart: To Wayne LaPierre Jr., head of the NRA which is pushing "open-carry" across America, including Oklahoma. He had better pray that he doesn't cut off in traffic a hot-tempered fella with his gun on his hip.

Nearly 6,000 Oklahomans died last year from smoking. A bill to let local communities handle smoking failed when Sen. Brian Crain, R-Tulsa, refused to let it out of the committee he chairs. Gee, we thought Republicans favored local control.

Laurel: To The Tulsa World for giving page one play to a Republican tax cut of \$43 million authored by Sen. Clark Jolley, R-Edmond, while the Daily Disappointment put it on page 13. Jolley arrogantly told Democrats to come with tax hikes if they wanted to help the poor.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case involving vouchers for private schools coming out of public school funding. Oklahoma's Constitution strictly prohibits it but our gutless state Supreme Court looks the other way.

Dart: To Republican majorities in the Legislature, determined to destroy public education. The late Gov. Henry Bellmon moved heaven and earth to pull public education out of the mud but his HB 1017 has all but disappeared.

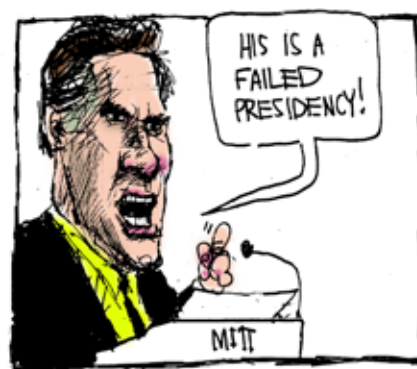
Senate Republicans wanted destroy Workers Compensation, providing for an opt-out plan that would let private entities set up their own system. The House wisely killed it.

Laurel: To State Architect Duane Mass for insisting that a Ten Commandments monument be on the north side of the Capitol. State Rep. Mike Ritze was author of the legislation but no public money will be used. He says he will pay for it.

If 2,100 workers are laid off by American Airlines it would cost the Tulsa metro gross product \$372 million. An additional 3,581 job would be lost from support services.

Dart: To the Catholic hierarchy for continually bashing President Obama whose health law provides for contraception. It was amended to exclude those for whom it is a violation of their faith. Where were they when priests, even some bishops, were molesting children?

We wish U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn and U.S. Rep. James Lankford good luck with their bipartisan bills aimed at preventing Congress from creating more federal programs that duplicate ones already in existence.



Laurel: To Republican state Rep. Earl Sears, named the Outstanding Elected Official Award by the State Child Abuse Prevention task force. He is a superb legislator, always voting his conscience.

Oklahoma City University has promoted Susan Barber to provost and vice president for academic affairs. She has been at OCU for 29 years.

Dart: To the Tulsa World for blowing out of proportion a story concerning ex-Gov. David Walters's dealing with Pakistan where he operates power plants. Walters is taking his case to the London Court of International Arbitration and promises a defamation suit.

Beware of the movie "October Baby" – it's promoting Personhood and its owners have directed a portion of the profits to the anti-choice movement.

Laurel: To Oklahoma County DA David Prater, firing two deputies for ethical lapses. We've said it before, but Prather ought to run for governor – an office that needs that kind of ethics.

We hold parades for our military, waving the flag and showering them with praise, but when veterans return to civilian life 30% can't find jobs.

Tulsa Democratic Sens. Judy Eason-McIntyre and Tom Adelson have announced they're quitting the Legislature although they could run again. She will be missed; he's a worthless legislator who won't be missed.

Laurel: To President Obama, hanging on to the Dream Act as immigration officials have deported more than 46,400 immigrants whose children were born in the U.S.

Facts from the Health Department: In an average week 1,053 babies are born in Oklahoma, 144 are born to teen moms [15-19], 357 are delivered by cesarean section, 141 are born pre-term, 87 are born low birth-weight and nine die before their first birthday.

Dart: To the George W. Bush legacy – one in two college graduates can't find a job and owe thousands. More than 1.5 million hold degrees.

In our years of covering the Capitol and state government, few exemplify honest public service more than Republican Corporation Commissioner Bob Anthony.

Laurel: To the more than 2.3 million who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, more than 300,000 have post-traumatic stress disorder, including Oklahomans who have served with the 45th Brigade.

Businesses are wising up to the American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC] and are quitting in droves. That's the outfit that drafts anti-union legislation and wines and dines legislators on junkets who agree to introduce their bills.

Of course when Mitt Romney came to Oklahoma May 9 he held his fundraiser in Nichols Hills, the 1% of the state. His host was billionaire Continental Resources CEO Harold Hamm.

Laurel: To the state Senate for killing a bill that would have privatized vendors who run snack bars in state and federal buildings. They saved 50 jobs of those who are partially blind.

Gov. Mary Fallin for vice president? Let's hope it happens. We can't think of a more easy victory for President Obama than matching Mitt Romney with our governor. Meld them and you wouldn't have a decent political IQ.

Laurel: To Republican Sen. Harry Coates of Seminole who votes his conscience, not his party. He was the lone Republican vote against gutting the workers comp bill.

The governor signed the bill that creates an appeal process for students denied a diploma because they couldn't pass four out of seven end-of-instruction tests.

We mourn the April 28 passing of Eleanor Edmondson, a staunch Democrat and longtime Observer supporter. She was 92 years young.

The state Supreme Court threw out the House District 71 election results, unable to determine the winner after ballots were lost and found. The Tulsa seat now will not be filled until the November general election.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer



Yes! Please send me a one-year subscription [22 issues] for only \$40. This special offer includes my certificate for a free book courtesy of Full Circle Bookstore [a \$20 value]. See page 10 for details.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please make checks payable to: "The Oklahoma Observer"
Clip and mail to: The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275,
Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. If you prefer to pay using a credit card,
visit us online at www.okobserver.net.



Letters

Editor, The Observer:

What a hoot – Republicans in Washington are seeking big cuts in food stamps in an attempt to trim \$26.1 billion from the federal budget to forestall major Pentagon cutbacks, but they're leaving alone the billions of dollars a year in farm subsidies, including payments regardless of whether farmers produce a crop. That reminds me how a former Oklahoma Republican senator and governor also "cashed in" for NOT planting crops on his land.

I guess Republican Party friends of Gov. Mary Fallin want to guarantee her husband, already a millionaire rancher, will still be able to draw his "entitlement" million again next year!

Maybe some can assuage their consciences by the gift of the usual turkey dinner for Thanksgiving and a ham for Christmas. After all, the poor only need to eat two holidays a year.

Republican Gov. Frank Keating sold Okies his "economic development Plan" that would make all Oklahomans rich. How's your recall? One half of the public funded Private Business Partnership One was not issued tickets to board the Gravy Train.

It should be derailed unless "profit sharing" becomes a reality. We can say with all validity that business and labor needs one another. Workers don't want business charity, but want respect first and appreciation for their labor that does the production generating profits.

The taxes we pay are collected by the government and become an "entitlement" that subsidizes business incentives. Workers are not inanimate objects to be used and discarded to increase business' bottom lines! Low wages are considered by many to be a good business climate. How conceited and selfish can one get? America has done away with enslaving humans, but the need to end monetary slavery is the agenda we have yet to accomplish.

Carol Sherman
Owasso

Editor, The Observer:

We agree with Barbara Santee's take [4.25.12] on the Personhood debacle in her article "War on Women." A Personhood law might sound good to some, but it could have sweeping unintended, possibly disastrous, consequences. Similar measures have been introduced in several other states already and have failed in each one, even in very conservative Mississippi, as voters realized the true potential of

the proposed law.

If such legislation should pass in Oklahoma, it would make pregnant women a separate class under the law, less protected legally than men or non-pregnant women, since it would threaten severe penalties – possibly including the death penalty – for intentionally harming a zygote, embryo, or fetus.

The law might even be interpreted to include harming a fetus by omission, such as by failing to wear a seat-belt or by undergoing chemotherapy for cancer while pregnant.

Other potential consequences could be quite absurd: For example, would frozen embryos stored in IVD clinics be counted in each 10-year census? Would such "persons" be considered dependents on tax returns? Would embryos gain inheritance rights if a biological parent should die, thus reducing the shares of any born children of that parent?

The history of legislation in this country is riddled with laws that were passed because they "sounded good" to a few people but that turned out to actually cause harm to many. A Personhood law isn't needed in Oklahoma, and Oklahoma's legislators need to hear that from their constituents.

Elbert and Marion Hill
Durant

Editor, The Observer:

One lesson that Barack Obama hasn't learned: The hardest thing to do in politics is nothin'.

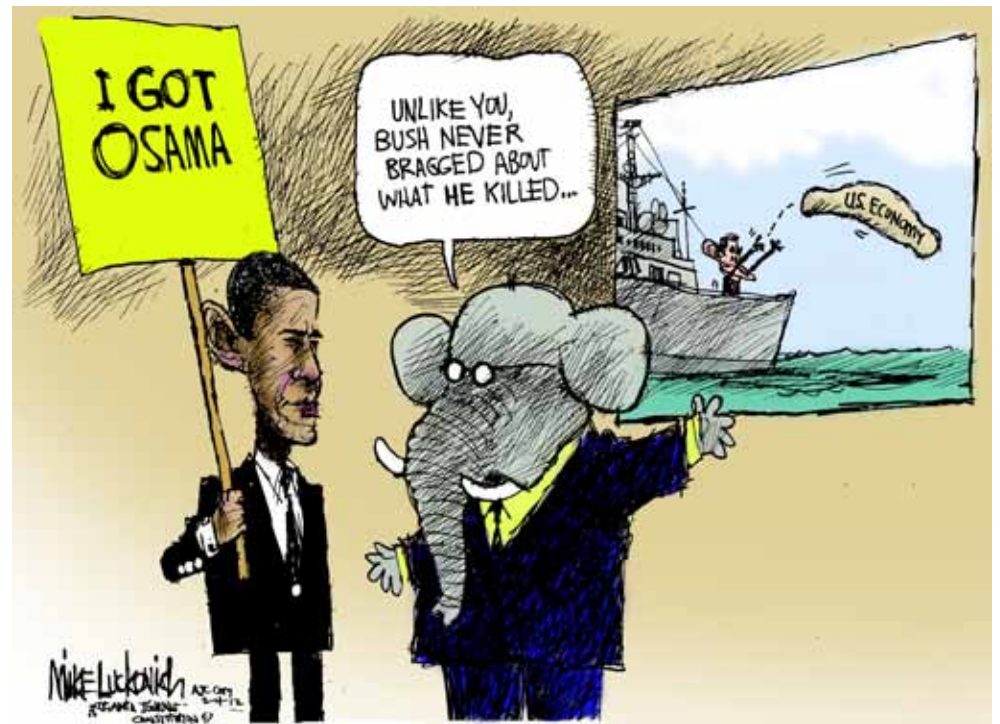
That's what Obama should have done when informed Secret Service Agents paid prostitutes for sex in Colombia.

Instead, the agents were fired or resigned and lost were their experience and training for one of the world's most stressful jobs.

Prostitution is legal in Colombia and should be in the U.S. where police pose as Johns or prostitutes to entrap their prey into committing a crime.

Here's why we need to legalize prostitution:

1. There are four sports in Oklahoma: football, oil, sex and politics.
2. Legislative Romeos demand "Angels of Delight" – presidential candidate John Edwards, New York Gov. Elliot Spitzer, Louisiana's U.S. Sen. David Vitter, and Bill Clinton's brain, Dick Morris.
3. Temple Houston, son of Texas founder Sam Houston, earned an 1889 acquittal for a Woodward County madam by saying, "One of our own sex



was the author of her ruin. The Master, while on earth, never reproached one of these. One, He forgave; another he acquitted. Tell her to go in peace."

4. One of Oklahoma City's most powerful pioneers was a madam, "Big Anne" Wynn, and she was never convicted of anything.

5. "I let my hormones disengage my brain," said former heavyweight boxing champ Tommy Morrison of Jay, OK. Ditto golf great Tiger Woods and basketball star Magic Johnson.

6. Red light districts reduce rape and other violent crimes.

7. Requiring prostitutes to get regular check-ups limits the spread of disease.

8. Until prostitutes are treated like businesswomen, we, girls, will be second-class citizens.

9. Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart mixed prostitution and preaching. When Scribes and Pharisees brought Jesus a woman caught in adultery, the Lord said, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." [John 8:7]

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner

Editor, The Observer:

As I listened to the Oklahoma County Democratic luncheon speaker, Bishop Steven Charleston, discussing the threat we face on water conservation, and his discussion about what is going to happen when the earth starts drying up, I was really impressed.

It immediately brought to mind that just a week earlier, I was privileged to be in the audience at the Oklahoma History Center when Ken Burns showed a short preview of his next documentary series on The Dust Bowl. It is a new format for him, but what I saw was awesome.

I recognized four of the people in the Oklahoma Panhandle in the interviews – the main one being Dr. V. Pauline Hodges, now living at Beaver, who was one of his history consultants. Most important is that she is the co-chairman of the Beaver County Democratic Party.

The part that really stunned me was the part of the film that showed the famous Black Blizzard, April 14, 1935, in the area where we were living that winter. I was still spitting sand out of mouth the next day.

Every person in the U.S. should be required to watch that film and then listen to the Bishop speak.

By the way, when the Bishop was discussing how everyone pitched in and helped everyone around him, I remembered all those years that we shared all we could with others. But remember: we were almost all Democrats then!

Iris Lochner
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

The headline of the MSN news story read... "Florida shooter Zimmerman needs protection while out on bail, lawyer says."

Then they reported, "The defense attorney representing George Zimmerman, the Florida man charged with second degree murder in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, said his client was wearing a bulletproof vest when released on bail Monday morning, due to continued threats to his client in the emotionally charged case."

Mark O'Mara, Zimmerman's attorney, also said he was considering seeking a taxpayer-funded bodyguard for Zimmerman if the threats continue, according to the report.

He may be right. Zimmerman lives in Florida and that's become a very dangerous place. In Florida it's easy to get a gun, easy to get a concealed carry permit, and with their "stand your ground" law you can be shot to death by a gun toting neighborhood watch person creating a confrontation, even if you're a kid, just for walking down a sidewalk with a bag of Skittles.

Of course that's far more likely to happen if you're also guilty of walking while being black.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Being incarcerated is the most humbling of ways to penitence, only death is final. Being black and incarcerated at times is akin to being trapped in a night terror that can last for decades.

Race, the issue, manifested itself when no state elected officials met President Obama when he came to Oklahoma. Whether or not that is a reflection of the man himself, his politics or his race, the fact remains, in my opinion, it was blatant disrespect for the office of the president.

If disrespect is believed justified for President Obama, then where do I fit into the same picture? A senior citizen

See LETTERS Page 6

Frosty Troy's What's Right About Oklahoma

*Want a pungent, humorous speech
from one of America's best speakers?
Frosty covers 50 years of Oklahoma's
crazy political scene.*

Call Frosty at 405.760.1843 to book a speech.

Black Eyes



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

How many black eyes will Oklahoma stand before voters clean up their act? The latest came on CNBC as a result of a bill signed into law that permits a woman seeking an abortion to listen to the heartbeat at eight weeks. While it isn't mandatory the law has unintended consequences.

Rep. Doug Cox, a physician from Grove who has never performed an abortion, was so disgusted by the bill he ripped it in half on the House floor.

Unless I lost count, that's seven anti-abortion bills this session. Combine that with the drive to cut the personal income tax from 5.25% to 4.75% next year and the Republican focus narrows to two issues.

Since 2005, Republicans have introduced 32 anti-abortion bills.

What they don't want to confront are the real issues facing the state, such as 600,000 without health insurance. That figure is cut

by President Obama's Affordable Health Care Act.

Our brainless Republican governor, Mary Fallin, sent back more than \$50 million to help Oklahoma set up a health exchange, declaring that Oklahoma would set up the exchange on its own. It won't go back to Washington, it will go into the health exchange pool created by the law.

Republicans swept the Democratic old guard out, winning the Legislature, governor and 11 statewide audiences. What voters were not prepared for was a war on the poor, women and public education.

Suddenly teachers are at-will employees, with no recourse to the courts. The poor are poorer, with one in five Oklahomans going to bed hungry – and that includes children.

Sadly, 42 children died in 2010 and there were 8,110 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect. Republicans looked away until an outfit out of New York won a federal case against the state and how it treats children.

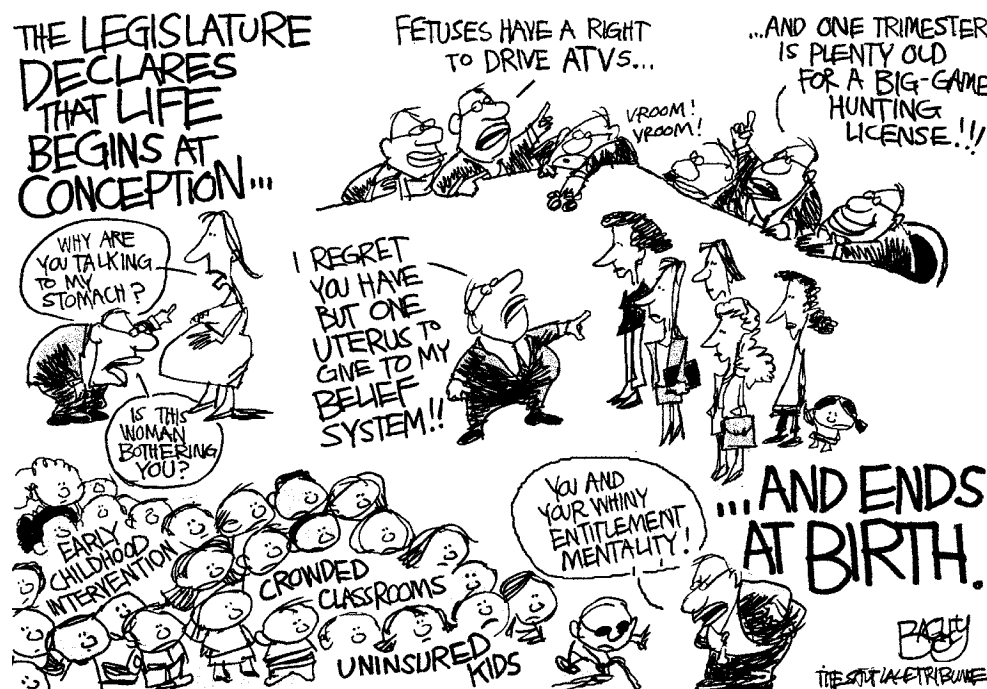
Because of the serious poverty level, the state has reduced its pre-K program from \$4,567 per child to \$3,461.

The Department of Human Services was never fully funded under Democratic control. Child welfare workers average 10 times the national average caseload and the turnover is more than 20% a year.

It could be worse, given our Republican delegation in Congress. Republican U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas voted to cut food stamps \$40 billion. Luckily Democrats control the U.S. Senate whose leaders said the GOP cut would not be heard in the upper chamber.

That was about the time when freshman Republican U.S. Rep. James Lankford supported privatizing Social Security and Medicare. The reaction of Oklahomans was so fierce, he backed off.

Another national embarrassment is the senior senator from Oklahoma, Jim In-



hofe, who claims global warming is a hoax. He's even written a book. Luckily he had enough crayons to finish it.

Anyone who expected real reform from the GOP's Oklahoma sweep were in for a disappointment. Under the Republicans Oklahoma sank to dead last in "wellness" and dead last in this region funding higher education.

Republican Senate Pro Tem Brian Bingman of Sapulpa tried to destroy the Workers Comp Court, allowing any business to set up their own program. Where would the accountability lie? Who would monitor hundreds of businesses?

The only saving grace for CareerTech is that it doesn't rely on the state for all of its income, but gets the lion's share from the property tax and tuition.

Public education has been gutted. Thanks to Republican Sen. John Ford of Bartlesville, teachers are subject to removal by the school board with no avenue of appeal.

When Jesse Jackson hit Tulsa and Oklahoma City, citing chapter and verse of how African Americans and others minorities are treated, Republican were furious. Yet not one of his facts was challenged.

The Legislature continues to enhance sentences for certain crimes. African Americans and other minorities are more likely than whites to go to prison and serve longer sentences. Seldom if ever are African Americans picked as jurors. They also have a much higher school dropout rate.

Those flags planted row on row on the south side of the Capitol prove anew that Republicans don't give a damn about children, only the 1%.

The Senate, under the leadership of Republican Sen. Clark Jolley of Edmond, cut the personal income tax \$43 million. How many kids would that feed? That would help communities hire policemen or firemen.

At one point Jolley – always the most arrogant senator – said Democrats should come with tax increases to meet the needs they were raging about in opposition to a \$43 million tax cut. He usually turns his back on those debating against his bills.

As a result of the prolonged recession, improper unemployment cases have hit 74,000 – highest in five years. Payments between 2007 and 2011 cost \$47.8 million, funded by employers and federal money.

Word Play

I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.
When chemists die, they barium.
Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.
I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.
How does Moses make tea? Hebrews it.
I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.
This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.
I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.
I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.
They told me I had type-A blood, but it was a Type-O.
PMS jokes aren't funny; period.
Why were the Indians here first? They had reservations.
We're going on a class trip to the Coca-Cola factory. I hope there's no pop quiz.
I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
Did you hear about the cross-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?
Broken pencils are pointless.
I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.
What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.
England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.
I dropped out of communism class because of lousy Marx.
All the toilets in New York's police stations have been stolen. The police have nothing to go on.
I got a job at a bakery because I kneaded dough.
Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes.
Velcro – what a rip off!
A cartoonist was found dead in his home. Details are sketchy.
Venison for dinner again? Oh, deer!

The earthquake in Washington obviously was the government's fault.
Be kind to your dentist. He has fillings, too.
– Thanks to Darla Reynolds-Sparks

TRAGEDY OF OUR TIMES

"We will someday view this era as one in which the nation turned its back on its public schools, its children, and its educators. We will wonder why so many journalists and policymakers rejected the nation's obligation to support public education as a social responsibility and accepted the unrealistic, unsustainable promises of entrepreneurs and billionaires. And we will, with sorrow and regret, think of this as an era when an obsession with testing and data obliterated any concept or definition of good education. Some perhaps may recall this as a time when the nation forgot that education has a greater purpose than preparing our children to compete in the global economy.

"Secretary of Education [Arne] Duncan should have fought vigorously against all these pernicious developments. He should have opposed the misuse of test scores. He should have opposed the galloping privatization of public education. He should have demanded the proper funding of public education, instead of tolerating deep budget cuts as 'the new normal.' He should have spoken out against states that passed along the cost of higher education to students, putting it out of reach for many. But he has not. He should have upheld, in word and deed, the dignity of the teaching profession. Unfortunately he has not.

"Even more unfortunately, it is hard to find any leader of either party who stands forthrightly today as a champion of students, teachers, public schools, and good education. This is a tragedy of our times." – Diane Ravitch, historian of education at New York University and non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. This is an excerpt from an essay she wrote that appeared March 8 in The New York Review of Books.

Tinkle-Down Economics Imperil State's Future



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

"At every turn, opponents have claimed cutting taxes would gut government, cause other taxes to rise and send Oklahoma backward. Time continues to prove those fears false. Today, government stills functions just fine, the Legislature has raised no other taxes and Oklahoma is doing better than ever with a growing economy that boasts some of the best job growth and lowest unemployment in the nation at a time other states continue struggling to recover from the 2008 economic downturn."

Thus sayeth House Speaker Kris Steele, one not normally regarded as a prolific purveyor of political propaganda. Surely he just got carried away with his rhetoric. Or surely he winked to let all know he was being ironic. Surely?

No, he unfortunately followed up that assertion [published in the Daily Disappointment in late April] with the same implausible line in subsequent public remarks.

It is so unlike Steele to declare the sky is red when it is, in fact, blue. He is an honorable man – indeed, a man of the cloth. He typically is a calm voice of reason in a world that thrives on overheated, often demonstrably false rhetoric.

Yet, here we are – with reality that is far different from the picture the speaker paints:

Since the late 1990s, state lawmakers – first under Democratic control, now under Republican dominance – have cut the top state income tax rate from 7% to 5.25%.

That is nearly \$1 billion in annual state revenues ... gone. Nearly 20% – *poof!* – missing from a \$6 billion annual state budget.

With his comments, the speaker implies state government was bloated, sorely in need of belt-tightening. Cut \$1 billion? Nobody even noticed. State government didn't skip a beat.

Maybe not the high-rollers who helped elect the Legislature's GOP majority, the same special interests that successfully fought efforts this year to rein in corporate welfare – euphemistically known as tax credits, breaks or incentives – that costs the state treasury billions more.

But regular Oklahomans are beginning to feel the pinch:

- More than 6,000 of our fellow residents are on waiting lists for mental health assistance. Many of our county jails are overcrowded because they've become the state's de facto mental hospitals [a very expensive way to treat mental illness].

- Between 600 and 900 per day are on waiting lists for substance abuse help, thanks to lost federal block grants and declining state appropriations that combined to slash the state budget for such services from \$87 million in 2008 to \$69 million this year.

- School class sizes are exploding. Thousands of teachers have been laid off; those who remain are America's 49th worst paid. Most state employees haven't had a raise in six years. *Six years!*

- Oklahoma's bridges are consistently ranked the nation's worst. The state Capitol is crumbling [and rather than pay-as-you-go, lawmakers appear poised to borrow \$160 million to repair it]. The state needs \$150 million more to fix its sorely under-funded Department of Human Services, including child welfare.

Yet, the speaker further declareth: "Core services haven't been harmed to pay for tax cuts in the past and they won't be now!"

What?!?

The brutal truth is things would be nearing Third World status in Oklahoma were it not for soaring oil prices that kept our economy in better shape than most states and \$2.6 billion in federal stimulus money.

Yup, the reviled ol' Uncle Sugar has made it possible for Oklahoma's Republi-

LETTERS

From Page 4

zen and convicted felon who at best can be tolerated while being held captive until the very last legal second? Homeless, poor, unskilled, uneducated, alone and black, too? So I can be shot by someone licensed to openly carry a firearm because I may look "menacing"?

I expect no help from the state nor do I believe I am owed anything but an opportunity to excel.

Racism is real. It's woven into the fabric of our great country. There are times, however, we see others grow past their concepts of inequality, and for those we gladly welcome them to the human race.

The hope for us is we can choose. What we choose and the end results of those choices are either going to enrich our way of life or add more rot and decay into our future fabric.

Treyvon Martin can be anyone, regardless of race, age, color, creed or religion, because the one who pulls the trigger also has the choice to see reality clearly or submit to his fears and phobias.

Let's look deep inside ourselves. I see me – not for what I have done, but for what I can and will do. Who do you see?

Ricky O. Williams
Antlers

can-dominated, state Capitol leadership to pander to the masses with tax cuts, the full brunt of which won't be felt until later ... probably when oil, as it inevitably will, joins natural gas at the bottom of commodity barrel pricing.

Even so, Steele, Gov. Mary Fallin, Senate President Pro Tem Brian Bingman and other elected leaders are doubling down on a train wreck of a strategy, either too ignorant to grasp the shortsightedness of the pandering-at-all-cost strategy or praying the worst effects aren't felt until they are forced by term limits to leave office.

For Steele, the six-term limit is in sight at year's end. For Bingman, it's 2016. For Fallin, it's 2018. Assuming both can win re-election.

The GOP policy-makers, of course, will be guiding another tax cut – amount to be determined – through this year's session, yet again slashing millions from essential state services.

And they appear poised to enact a series of triggers that eventually would eliminate the state income tax altogether. One-third of the state budget gone and all but irreplaceable, thanks to constitutional restrictions requiring a three-fourths legislative super-majority or statewide voter approval to raise taxes.

It won't matter, of course, to those steering the Ship of State [Titanic II?] today. They'll be long gone by then – probably raking in much bigger bucks as special interest lobbyists or latching onto the public teat with some higher-paying, cushy state job that boosts their taxpayer-financed pensions into the stratosphere.

Even though history shows it's a fool's errand [see Reagan, Ronald], state elected Republicans embrace trickle-down economics with zest. They know it's a real pleaser for both their big money campaign donors – and for the average taxpayer who somehow forgets taxes and services are directly linked.

Yes, indeed, the average taxpayer loves the thought of a tax cut until you ask them which specific services they'd like to cut.

Starve the local schools? Forget the nearby highway project? Ignore the neighbor's health calamity? Abandon abused or neglected children?

The state's promising future will be threatened if the GOP leadership gets its way – Oklahoma's 1% will be the Big Dog and Oklahoma's 99% the fire hydrant.

There's a term for that: Tinkle-down economics.

The News and Analysis You Want ... When and How You Want It!



For 44 years, The Oklahoma Observer has been the state's most trusted source for progressive news and commentary – an antidote to the lockstep, rightwing, corporatist rantings and spin of the state's mainstream media.

Now – wherever you are – you can access each hard-hitting issue in full color, our daily blog and our columnists from your computer, iPhone, Android or iPad. Or you can order our traditional print version – 22 issues delivered to your mailbox.

Don't miss a single word of our coverage of the 2012 legislative session and elections. Visit www.okobserver.net to SUBSCRIBE now and receive a BONUS – a free book from Full Circle Books [up to \$20 value]!

www.okobserver.net

Who's Behind Assault On State Income Tax?

By Gene Perry

Recently, two rival events on the income tax debate presented an illuminating contrast.

An Oklahoma Policy Institute forum featured economists from Oklahoma public and private universities, as well as economic development experts from the state Department of Commerce and the OKC, Tulsa, and State Chambers of Commerce.

These experts from across Oklahoma's academic and business community shared the message that eliminating the income tax would not live up to the promises of tax cut boosters and could be a disaster for the state.

At the same time, the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs [OCPA] brought speakers from outside of Oklahoma to push for tax cuts. OCPA's event featured an anti-tax activist from Missouri, the Kansas budget director [who is a former OCPA fellow], and a representative from a Washington, DC think tank.

Their blog response to the Oklahoma economists' critique was done by an economist from the Show-Me Institute, Missouri's version of OCPA.

POPPING UP IN KANSAS AND MISSOURI, TOO

The contrast raises an important question: who is behind the push to eliminate the income tax?

It's not coming from Oklahoma economists or the state's business community. The state and major metro chambers' reactions have ranged from ambivalence to outright opposition. It's not coming from the grassroots. Multiple lawmakers, Republicans and Democrats alike, have said they are not hearing from constituents that we should do away with the income tax.

So where is it coming from? It's no coincidence that very similar efforts to eliminate the income tax are popping up in Kansas and Missouri.

LAFFER, KOCH BROTHERS AND ALEC

All three campaigns rely heavily on a report by Arthur Laffer, a former Reagan advisor who has dedicated his career to restricting taxes in numerous states.

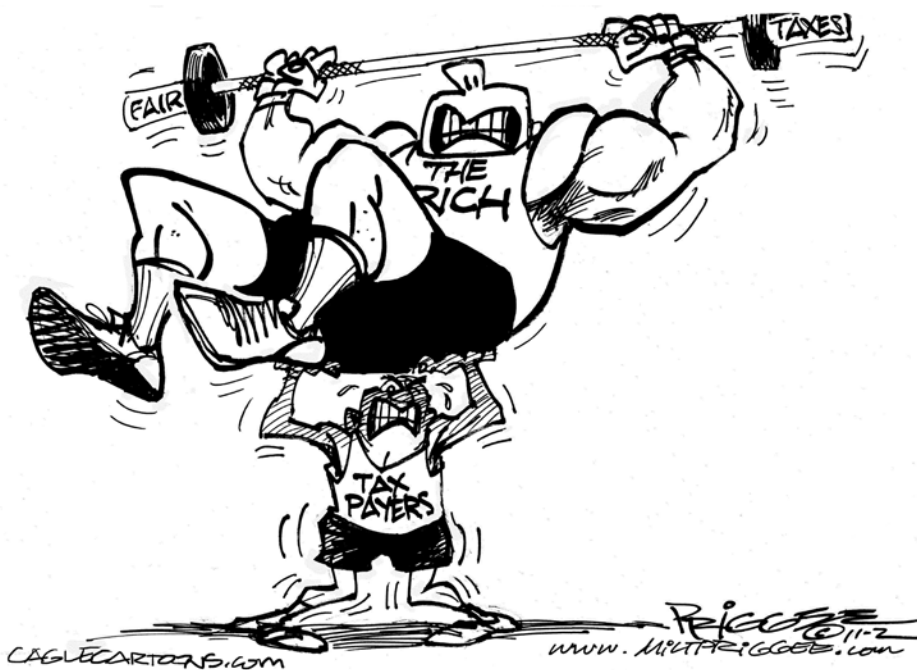
Gov. Mary Fallin mentioned Laffer's numbers in this year's State of the State speech, though she cited them as coming from Americans for Prosperity, a national lobbying group founded by David and Charles Koch.

Most recently, Gov. Fallin wrote the introduction for a report by Laffer and others at the American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC] that ranks states based on how closely they follow ALEC's economic policy agenda. It's clear that these national groups have the governor's ear.

But besides Gov. Fallin and a few state legislators, it seems the only champions of this proposal are on the payroll of OCPA or out-of-state advocacy groups.

HEARTLAND TAX REBELLION?

The Wall Street Journal [where Stephen Moore, a partner in the firm that produced the Laffer report, is an editorial writer] wrote that this multi-state effort represents a "heartland tax rebellion." A better description might be a heartland tax invasion. We've been drafted into a national effort against the income tax, regardless of whether it is the right fit for Oklahoma.



That's troubling, because for several reasons the assault on income tax is clearly the wrong fit here. Property tax is by far the most unpopular tax in our state, and our property taxes are very low. That means local governments must rely heavily on sales tax, and Oklahoma's sales tax rates are comparatively high. Raising taxes on oil and gas extraction is also unlikely.

Meanwhile, underfunded core services are already falling behind our needs in many ways.

That's why those who understand Oklahoma know that we have no good alternative to the income tax. Lawmakers should listen to the Oklahoma experts, not outside groups making big promises.

– The author is a policy analyst for Oklahoma Policy Institute. An earlier version of this essay appeared on the OKPolicy blog. You can sign up for OK Policy's e-mail alerts and daily news digest at <http://okpolicy.org>

Senator Explains Anti-Tax Cut Vote

By Al McAffrey

We voted recently on HB 3038, one of many income-tax-reduction plans being introduced this year. The measure passed 31–15 along party lines.

I voted against this bill because I truly believe that lowering our income tax at this time is fiscally irresponsible. Oklahoma's income tax is the largest source of revenue for our state. This is what supports our state agencies and pays for road repairs, schools, prisons, colleges, and many essential public services.

Of the many tax-reduction plans currently floating around at the Capitol, none comes with a proposed funding source that would replace the millions in revenue that we would lose through the eliminated income taxes.

This concerns me, and it should concern Oklahoma's taxpayers as well.

In the last three years, Oklahoma suffered through the worst economic downturn in its history. It was so bad that the state had to accept over \$2 billion in federal assistance to keep certain crucial agencies like the Department of Transportation and the Department of Education afloat.

The Legislature also was forced

to cut agency budgets, some by as much as nearly 30%.

This year, most state agencies will probably receive the same amount they got last year, which is not good – especially for the Department of Education, where enrollment is always rising and the cost of books, building electricity, and staff health-care increases each year.

Schools around the state are talking about having to possibly lay more teachers off if appropriations to the department cannot be increased this year.

Other agencies are suffering the same fate.

It is not fiscally responsible to borrow billions from the federal government and cut agency budgets to the bone – causing hundreds of state workers to lose their jobs – but then get rid of our largest source of revenue.

Republicans believe that eliminating the income tax will entice businesses to relocate to Oklahoma. They point to the "business climates" of states such as Texas that do not have an income tax, but the Republicans fail to mention that those states have much higher sales

and property taxes, along with other sources of revenue that we do not have in Oklahoma.

Nothing is free, and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Do not be fooled by the smoke and mirrors. Any time taxes are cut, it means that money is being taken away from vital state services like public safety, education, transportation, and health and human services.

Our economy is getting stronger every day, so instead of cutting one of our greatest revenue sources, let's help our state agencies. The governor recently released the Pinnacle Plan, which calls for investing \$150 million in additional funds annually to DHS to improve child-welfare services, but we currently do not have the funds for this, and we certainly will not if we start lowering our income tax.

The Department of Education and other state agencies have requested that their budgets be increased by tens of millions of dollars in order to continue providing citizens with efficient public services.

A majority of state employees, which make up the largest portion of employees in the state, have not had

a raise since 2006, yet milk and gas have nearly doubled in price during that same period, along with other basic necessities.

Indeed, even the State Capitol building – the seat and symbol of Oklahoma government – is crumbling, and it will cost over \$150 million to fix.

The list of needs at our state agencies is not being addressed, yet legislative leaders believe that the money citizens save through reduced income taxes will be spent in their communities, helping to boost sales-tax revenues and support local businesses.

But we are only talking about \$50 to perhaps a couple hundred dollars – definitely not thousands – back in peoples' pockets. The small amount of money citizens will save is not worth our state agencies losing millions in revenue and cutting back on vital public services.

The "savings" realized by cutting the income tax will be more than working and middle-class Oklahoma families can afford.

– The author, an Oklahoma City Democrat, represents District 46 in the state Senate

Lawmakers Poised To Cut Health Mandates

By Kate Richey

While the new federal health law has expanded consumer guarantees for minimum health benefits, Oklahoma is poised to move in the opposite direction.

Embedded in an “interstate compact” bill to allow out-of-state insurers to sell policies in Oklahoma is a provision that could nullify several of the state’s existing consumer protections.

This bill would turn back the clock on our health care system and deprive Oklahomans of essential medical care that they rely on their insurance to provide.

SB 1059 would allow the Oklahoma Insurance Department to enter into agreements with one or more states to allow the sale of insurance across state lines.

The bill also exempts these out-of-state insurers from the minimum benefits that Oklahomans are entitled to under existing state law. Oklahoma requires insurance companies to cover a handful of basic benefits.

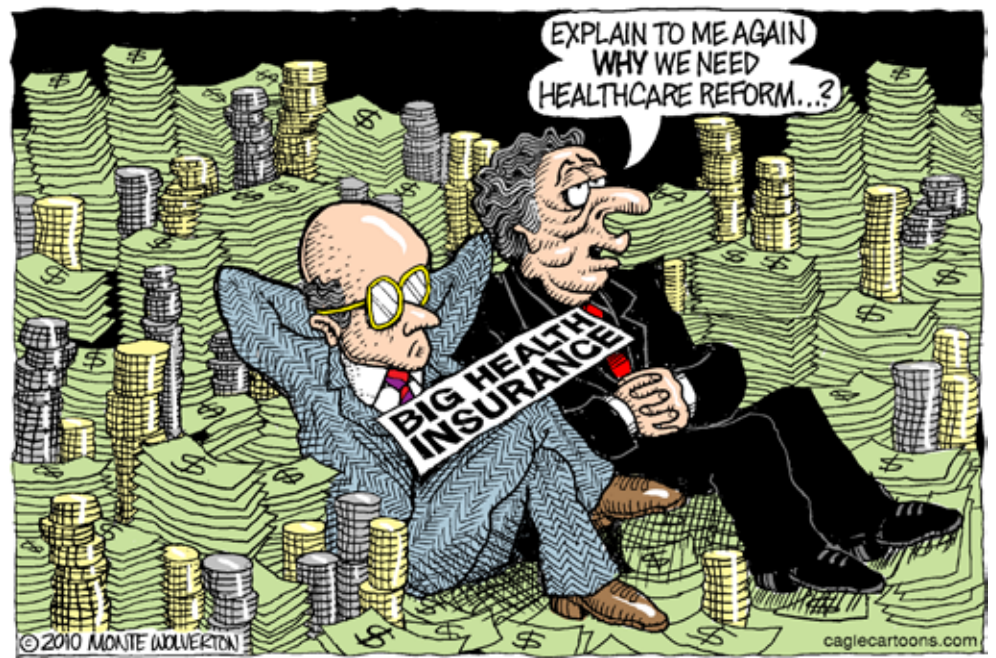
MANDATING ESSENTIAL SERVICES

These benefits, or “mandates,” ensure that health insurance plans cover essential health services. The state’s mandated benefits cover preventive health services for children [immunizations], women [mammography and bone density screenings], maternity care, and annual pelvic exams and cervical cancer screenings], and those with chronic conditions [diabetes supplies, mental health treatment].

Proponents of the legislation are quick to point out that exempting insurers from minimum coverage requirements is not the intent of the bill; the purpose of exempting in-state insurers from covering basic benefits is to allow them to compete with new out-of-state plans that will flow in after we’ve signed a compact with another state.

For instance, if Texas insurers are allowed to sell so-called “skeleton” coverage in Oklahoma, without including basic benefits like child immunizations or colonoscopies, then Oklahoma insurers should be allowed to offer such plans, too.

Regardless of the intent of the bill, if SB 1059 becomes law it effectively suspends minimum benefit requirements for any insurer in the state that wants to



mimic a “skeleton” plan sold by an out-of-state competitor.

SIGNIFICANT COST BURDEN

For households of modest means, paying out-of-pocket for cancer screenings and immunizations represents a significant cost burden, and many families will have to go without some of these critical services.

Not to mention the symbolic indifference of exempting insurers from covering the costs of, for instance, wigs or hairpieces to extend a little basic human dignity to Oklahomans undergoing radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

Oklahoma insurers cleared \$25 million in after-tax profit in a single year in the individual market alone, which doesn’t even include profits made off the large group market, where most Oklahomans get their health insurance.

This bill has already passed the state House and Senate and will move next to a conference committee. If changes are made in conference, it must be approved by both the House and Senate again before heading to Gov. Mary Fallin for final approval.

– The author is a policy analyst for Oklahoma Policy Institute. An earlier version of this essay appeared on the OKPolicy blog. You can sign up for OK Policy’s e-mail alerts and daily news digest at <http://okpolicy.org>

Fight To Save OETA Far From Over

By Sean Burrage

Education is one of the most important functions of government, yet this legislative session, the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority has been fighting for survival.

Bills introduced before the session even began would have eliminated all state funding. Public outcry stopped those efforts, but in recent weeks, a different approach was quietly attempted that would have had the same effect.

Several state agencies and commissions must be reviewed and reauthorized every few years. If they are not approved, they will simply cease to exist. OETA is the only state-appropriated agency to fall into this category.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Senate Sunset Review Committee killed a bill to reauthorize OETA for another four years. To the credit of the President Pro Tem of the Senate, he ensured that bill got a second

hearing and was ultimately approved.

Unfortunately, when it came to the floor of the full Senate for approval, it was amended so that OETA must undergo this process again in two years, rather than four.

For decades, Oklahomans and their families have relied on OETA for high quality educational programming helping our children master some of the very skills they need for success in school through programming like Sesame Street, WordWorld and Sid The Science Kid to name just a few.

Older students, teens and adults of all ages can expand their knowledge and their horizons with documentaries and in-depth programs on history, science, business, government, agriculture, sports and more.

For many Oklahomans, OETA may be the only opportunity to see a ballet or hear an opera or see a production of Shakespeare. People who never understood the toll the Civil

War took on this nation gained new insight and understanding thanks to Ken Burns’ groundbreaking documentary.

In some remote communities in the state, the Oklahoma News Report is the only state news viewers get, and even that program has been reduced from nightly newscasts to airing just once a week because of deep budget cuts made by the Legislature.

Opponents of OETA argue this simply is not something that government should fund. While OETA does offer entertainment programming, without a doubt it is an incredible delivery system for hundreds of hours of educational material every single week that would not be available anywhere else.

I believe OETA is a part of our education system, which is most assuredly a core function of government. The state’s cost for keeping OETA on the air is \$1.02 per citizen per year.

That’s it.

For those who argue the state should shut down OETA and let it continue as a private entity, they simply don’t know the facts. The FCC broadcast license is specifically for OETA.

If that agency ceases to exist, the license to broadcast will be gone. We will have no delivery system for public television in our state.

Because the OETA bill was amended in the Senate, it must now return to the House for review. I hope between now and the end of the session the amendment that could start this all over again in two years rather than four will be removed.

Not having OETA and the quality program it delivers would be a terrible loss for our state.

– The author, a Claremore Democrat, represents District 2 in the state Senate and is Senate Minority Leader

New Law Assists Blind And Deaf Students

Gov. Mary Fallin recently signed legislation aimed at helping ensure blind and deaf students in Oklahoma have access to information about available programs that could improve their education.

SB 1119 by Sen. Earl Garrison requires school districts to provide parents of students with auditory or visual impairments with written information about programs offered by the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf for which the students might be eligible.

“Many Oklahoma parents of deaf or blind children don’t realize how many resources are at their disposal to help properly educate their children,” said Garrison, a Muskogee Democrat.

“This bill will ensure that these parents know what programs and tools are available and also if their child might possibly qualify for certain programs offered by the two major schools that focus on educating blind and deaf students.”

Under the bill, school districts serving students with such impairments must also be required to make certain that staff assigned to work with those students

have access to resources provided by the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

SB 1119 goes into effect July 1.

Read
THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER ON-LINE
By subscribing
@ WWW.OKOBSERVER.NET

Criminal Justice Reform

Why Does State Lead Nation In Jail Suicides?

By Ron du Bois

To correct the safety and security hazards of the open railing system in city and county jails, I proposed legislation 1½ years ago that open railings be replaced with steel mesh attached to vertical inverted piping as is the case on many public street overpasses.

Steel mesh prevents accidental falling or suicide in overpasses and should be incorporated in jail design as well. The cost of the two systems is probably similar.

As a result of the death of my son, Stillwater state Rep. Cory Williams introduced HB 2112, a bill that read, “An Act which relates to standards for city and county jails; requiring installation of steel mesh screening in city and county jails; and providing an effective date. Stainless steel mesh screening to be installed in any area of a jail facility that would allow access by an inmate to a fall of greater than eight [8] feet.”

This bill, introduced by a Democratic representative in a Republican-dominated Legislature, was rejected by the Health and Human Services Committee but may be reintroduced in 2013.

Steel mesh would prevent desperate inmates in extreme pain from the possibility of sliding over railings and would prevent inmates from pushing any targeted inmate over the railing.

‘DON’T SEE THE NEED’

Payne County Sheriff R.B. Hauf’s statement – “I really don’t see the need of it. It would present a huge expense” – is an expression of denial within the jail culture.

Anyone outside jail culture sees the issue as a “no-brainer” – namely that the open railing system is an open invitation for misdiagnosed, weakened and delusional inmates to harm themselves.

The general public has little sense of the general brutality, inefficiency, and mindlessness of the criminal justice system. It has thought little about the limited – indeed typically counterproductive – social value of the one-size-fits-all response towards an illness that like alcoholism can never be cured but can be managed with treatment and understanding.

‘ALMOST AS THOUGH PRAYING’

After the death of my son, Peter, we [aged parents] went to talk to Payne County Jail officials and to see the open railing on the second tier where our son [in acute pain from methadone withdrawal] moved to the railing on the second floor of the jail.

As described by inmate witnesses, “he was standing at the bars, almost as though he was praying.” Inmates witnessed him as he placed his arms over the top railing then slowly forced his body over, head first.

Inmates claim this was caught on camera, but jail officials denied that. Peter had been an athlete and gifted tennis player, but was now in extreme pain, weakened and emaciated. His dental problems made it virtually impossible to eat.

Like all who contemplate ending it all, he wanted to live, yet the intense pains of withdrawal, punitive laws, and the intention of society to destroy made living more painful than death.

It was preferable to take his life in search of a kinder more enlightened dimension.

HUGE TAXPAYER EXPENSE

He fell some 12 feet to the cement floor below sustaining massive head and body injuries. In a coma he was flown by helicopter [at huge taxpayer expense] to the OU Medical Center in Oklahoma City. Massive medical care [again at huge taxpayer expense] failed to revive him.

He died four days later, his death a tragic illustration of the power of public stigma, fear, bias and ignorance. Stigma, fear, and mythology never let facts trump emotionally based prejudice. Even so, his memorial service was overflowing and over 100 cards of condolence were sent as evidence of his status in the



Payne County Jail where Peter du Bois died.

– Photo courtesy Stillwater Journal



Interior of the new Pawnee County Jail, with floor to ceiling expanded wire mesh on the upper tier.

– Photo courtesy Stillwater News-Press

opposition to mesh screening, while to those outside the jail culture unimpaired by ignorance, fear, and dogmatism, it’s a “no-brainer.”

Open railings are only as good as the proper medical evaluation of each incoming inmate to determine if they are depressed or suicidal. There was no proper medical assessment when my son was processed as an inmate. With only a Licensed Practical Nurse on duty, what guarantee was there of incoming inmates being properly evaluated?

Unfortunately, after calling attention to the dangers of the open railing system and other safety and security issues, the Oklahoma State Department of Health gave it a clean bill of health, claiming “it was designed and constructed consistent with applicable rules and building codes.”

PAWNEE COUNTY REQUESTED IT

In talking to jail architects I was told that the Pawnee County sheriff and County Commissioners specifically asked for floor to ceiling expanded metal mesh on the second tier. I was told architectural firms comply with “what the client wants.”

Unaccountably, Sheriff Waters claimed wire mesh was actually the recommendation of jail architects. The source of the decision remains unclear. It appears jail construction began approximately 1½ years ago, concurrent with my son’s death as the result of the open railing system in the Payne County Jail.

In my view, open railings on the upper tiers of jails are a design flaw for which jail architectural firms appear responsible.

The Payne County sheriff and jail staff argue there is no way to prevent inmates from committing suicide once they have decided to do so. Yet the role of the jail in preventing suicide appears egregiously lacking in view of the [1] open railings on the second floor, [2] lack of suicide watch, [3] ignorance of the dangers of methadone withdrawal, [4] incorrect medication, and [5] lack of complete

See SUICIDE Page 12

community.

When will our culture overcome the bigotry, have the courage to change, to accept the truth that substance use disorder [drug addiction] is an illness as real as diabetes or cancer? When will we learn to help, not hurt those who are already hurting?

All the psycho-social cultural forces were in place to “sweep under the carpet” my son’s wrongful death due to jail safety, security, and medical inadequacies.

INVITATION TO SUICIDE

I thought naively the photo of the open railings of the upper tier of the jail pod would be important. But the system remains blind to open railings as an invitation to suicide. Nor does it care about jail suicide itself.

Oklahoma has the highest rate of prison suicide in the nation. Sheriff Hauf claims that all jails are designed this way. In spite of being a “no-brainer,” none within the jail system admits that open railings are a suicide hazard, nor do they admit that many other jails prefer screen mesh.

When we saw the open railings of the top tier of the Payne County Jail we expressed our concern and dismay. It was obvious to us they were a safety and security hazard – an open invitation for improperly evaluated inmates to harm themselves.

None of this, however, was obvious to jail administrators. In reply to our concerns we were told flatly, “The open railing system is standard and is used in all jails.”

NOT A SAFETY ISSUE?

The implication was they were safe because they were used in the majority of jails. They refused to see it as a safety issue.

One argument against expanded metal mesh is that at a side angle the wires come together to impair visibility, yet Pawnee County Sheriff Mike Waters said, “We have a 24-hour watch on all inmates without any problems.”

Within the jail culture there will be opposition to mesh screening, while to those outside the jail culture unimpaired by ignorance, fear, and dogmatism, it’s a “no-brainer.”

BOOKS

Valuing An Oklahoma-Bred Whistleblower

By David Swanson

THE PASSION OF BRADLEY MANNING

The Story Of The Suspect Behind The Largest Security Breach In U.S. History

By Chase Madar

OR Books

138 pages, \$15 [paperback], \$9.99 [e-book]

Chase Madar's new book, *The Passion of Bradley Manning*, pulls together the essential facts that we should try to somehow deliver to television viewers and victims of our education system. The subtitle is "The Story of the Suspect Behind the Largest Security Breach in U.S. History."

The book looks at Manning's life story, his alleged action [leaking voluminous materials to WikiLeaks], the value of the material he made available to us, the status of whistleblowers in our country, the torture inflicted on Manning during his imprisonment, the similar treatment routinely inflicted on hundreds of thousands of U.S. prisoners without the same scandal resulting, and the value of running a society in accordance with written laws.

The table of contents sounds predictable, but the most valuable parts of Madar's book are the tangents, the riffs, the expansions on questions such as whether knowing the truth does – or does not – tend to set us free.

Does learning what our government is up to help to improve our government's behavior? Has the rule of law become an empty phrase or worse? Who is standing up for Bradley Manning, and who should be?

DESERVES PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL?

Madar does not pretend indifference to the fact that Manning took great risk and has greatly suffered for blowing the whistle on countless criminal and immoral actions. The first sentence of the book is "Bradley Manning deserves the Presidential Medal of Freedom," as of course he does – unless that medal is now too tarnished by its actual recipients, including George Tenet and L. Paul Bremer.

Madar remarks:

"Thanks to Manning's alleged disclosures, we have a sense of what transpired in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have an image of how Washington operates in the world. Thanks to those revelations we now know just how our government leaned on the Vatican to quell opposition to the Iraq War. We now know how Washington pressured the German government to block the prosecution of CIA agents who kidnapped an innocent man, Khaled El-Masri, while he was on vacation. We know how our State Department lobbied hard to prevent a minimum wage increase in Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest nation."

LOUISIANA PURCHASE OF WHISTLEBLOWING

Of course, such examples could be extended for many pages. Manning's is indeed the largest revelation of our government's behavior we have had. His is the Louisiana Purchase of whistleblowing.

And, of course, if you are going to have a government of, by and for the people, then the people have to find out what that government is doing – and stop believing they are better off and more patriotic not knowing.

Madar does not hesitate to point out the situation we are in at the moment in presidential and partisan terms:

"President Obama came into office promising a 'sunshine' policy for his administration while singing praises of whistleblowers. Instead, he has launched the fiercest campaign against whistleblowers the republic has ever seen, and dragged our foreign policy deeper into the shadows. ...

"As soon as he stepped into the Oval Office, the new President pledged never to launch any probe, much less prosecution, to hold these figures responsible [for torture and other war crimes]. 'Look forward, not backward' is the slogan: any rules that threaten the high and mighty can be shrugged off.

PERVERSION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

"Obama loyalists such as Nation magazine columnist Melissa Harris-Perry begged Americans to reconcile with Dick Cheney, as if the power to forgive belonged to Americans, and not to Iraqi victims – a perversion of Christian doctrine that allows the perpetrators to tearfully forgive themselves."

[Just ask Sibel Edmonds how whistleblowers are being treated today. Her new book *Classified Woman* about her days at the FBI has been submitted to the FBI for censorship; the FBI has been unable to find a single word to black out, and yet the FBI is refusing to permit publication of the entire book.]

Manning's contribution has been global. His revelations have benefitted the people of numerous nations with which the State Department communicated in the cables that Manning is said to have leaked. The Arab Spring was not caused by Bradley Manning, but the information he made public has played a major role.

PRINCIPLES AND INDEPENDENCE

Madar does an excellent job of relating what he has been able to learn about Manning's childhood. Here was a young man with principles and independence, who partially believed the hype about wars being good for the world, who was horribly abused by the U.S. military, but whose motivation – even if I suspect as well some retaliation against his abusers – was primarily almost certainly benefitting the public at large, both at home and abroad.

Manning says so quite clearly and repeatedly in as-yet-unverified chat logs. It was when the military forced him to take part in punishing Iraqi whistleblowers that Manning had a major change of perspective.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, MAY 10, 2012, PAGE 10

"I was actively involved in something that I was completely against," he posted in a chat.

Manning is not only the whistleblower who has told us the most, and the whistleblower who may suffer the most for his heroism, but also the whistleblower who revealed crimes and abuses that were also known by or knowable by the greatest number of other people – all of whom chose to remain silent.

NOTHING WAS 'TOP SECRET'

Some three million Americans have a security clearance. Most of what Manning released was "confidential," six percent was "secret," and none of it was "top secret." In the world of whistleblowers, normal is abnormal.

The common sense duty to "say something" is, you see, something that makes you a freak. And never more so than in the heroism and vilification of young Bradley Manning.

One comment in Madar's excellent book strikes me as out of place, as perhaps inserted by an editor: "Few are the American intellectuals who unequivocally defend the leaks: Michael Moore, Jesse Ventura, and CodePink's core of leftwing peace activists – and that's about it."

Are those all intellectuals? And is that the full list of people who have defend-

See WHISTLEBLOWER Page 16

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND RECEIVE A FREE BOOK!!!
(see restrictions below)

FIND TODAY'S HOTTEST CURRENT AFFAIRS TITLES AT

Full Circle

1900 NW EXPRESSWAY
OKC OK 73118
405/842.2900

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

New subscribers only — Limited time offer
Non-transferable — Must be redeemed in person
Merchandise must not exceed \$20

WHY WAIT?

*Now you can subscribe to The Oklahoma Observer
at the Full Circle Books checkout counter
and receive your free book certificate on the spot!*

IMPORTANT RESTRICTIONS

To take advantage of this offer, visit Full Circle Books, where you can subscribe to The Oklahoma Observer at the checkout counter and receive your free book certificate immediately. You also may subscribe to The Observer using the coupon on page 3 of this issue or by visiting our web site www.okobserver.net. You then will receive via U.S. Mail a certificate from Full Circle Books for a free book (\$20 limit). The certificate is not transferable and must be presented in person at Full Circle Books in order to receive your free book. No facsimiles, printouts or photocopies will be accepted as a substitute for the original Full Circle certificate. This book offer is for new subscribers only. Not valid with any other offer.

The Gospel According To Dr. Tom

By Norm Rourke

I have not always been a fan of Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK. But I ventured forth to read his recent book, *The Debt Bomb: A Bold Plan to Stop Washington from Bankrupting America*.

I didn't approach it with the idea of not agreeing with anything he said or agreeing with everything he said. As an independent, I have that flexibility [some consider it a cop out ... they're welcome to their opinion].

I found it revealing, scary and overall enlightening and worthy of my time.

As an independent, I don't think either party – Republican or Democratic – has *all* the answers to our problems. Nor do I think they are always right or wrong.

As the saying goes: Just because their mouths open and shut doesn't make them prayer books.

What I do think is they have shown a lack of cooperation and compromise in critical times that require more of these qualities than stubborn adherence to their specific philosophies.

Coburn's book is not a treatise on the Republican Way as the only way. He is balanced in his issues taken with both Republicans and Democrats. He bluntly [and accurately!] says the problem lies with “careerists” politicians ... *in both* parties.

These are but a few of the salient points I found refreshing from a politician. [The entire book is loaded with many more and worth reading.] His solutions seem to have merit. But, of course, the “careerists” will take pot shots at them as being simplistic, or pie-in-the-sky. Could it be they say these things because they don't want to shake up their *careerist* positions?

I am truly concerned about our great country and its people. I am tired of it and they being bamboozled, I am tired of hearing of continued lack of concern about our people and their needs, I am tired of handouts for every domestic problem instead of helping people help themselves and I am really tired of giving billions to places like Afghanistan and Pakistan and all the other Third World countries when we are having to borrow the money from Communist China.

OK, you've read enough and are probably tired of my ranting. But remember: We can sit back and complain and continue the way we've been going and *nothing will change*. [And that, my friends, is what the careerist politicians are counting on in November!]

If you don't like the way things have been going, then vote the bums out ... regardless of party. And when you do, tell the new bums you expect more from them or they will be thrown out as well. That's one form of term limiting until we get an amendment that will enforce it.

From Tom Coburn book, *The Debt Bomb*:

“Virtually all members of Congress come to Washington with noble and pure intentions. Over time, however, a subtle shift occurs. The desire to do the right thing is supplanted by the desire to hang on to power so the politicians can do the right thing at some point in the future, when it is safer or when success seems more likely. Yet, the moment to do what is right is never today. It is always a mirage just beyond the horizon of the next election. Consequently, the perfect political moment to fix the nation's problems never arrives.”

“I have no doubt we could defuse the debt bomb within a matter of days. The fact that we haven't passed such a bill has much more to do with careerism than ideology. Bridging the gap between conservatives and liberals is easy compared to bridging the gap between courage and cowardice.”

“...politicians in both parties try to score points by promoting their refusal to compromise with the other side. In most cases, this posturing has nothing to do with principle and everything to do with careerism – pandering to one side's respective political base in order to gain popularity and win reelection.”

“...Free people armed with the facts can demand that both parties put aside careerism and save the country. Free people do have the power to replace career politicians who have long since passed their expiration date....”

“Behind our greatest national security threat is an axis of excuses – careerist Republicans, Democrats, staff, and special interest groups who reward one another for doing nothing.”

“Congress today is a stagnant pond that needs to be drained and refilled with a steady stream of new public servants. ...fire 90% of [the] members every election and only keep the 10% who were productive.”

“The federal government borrows more money in two days than Oklahoma spends in a year.”

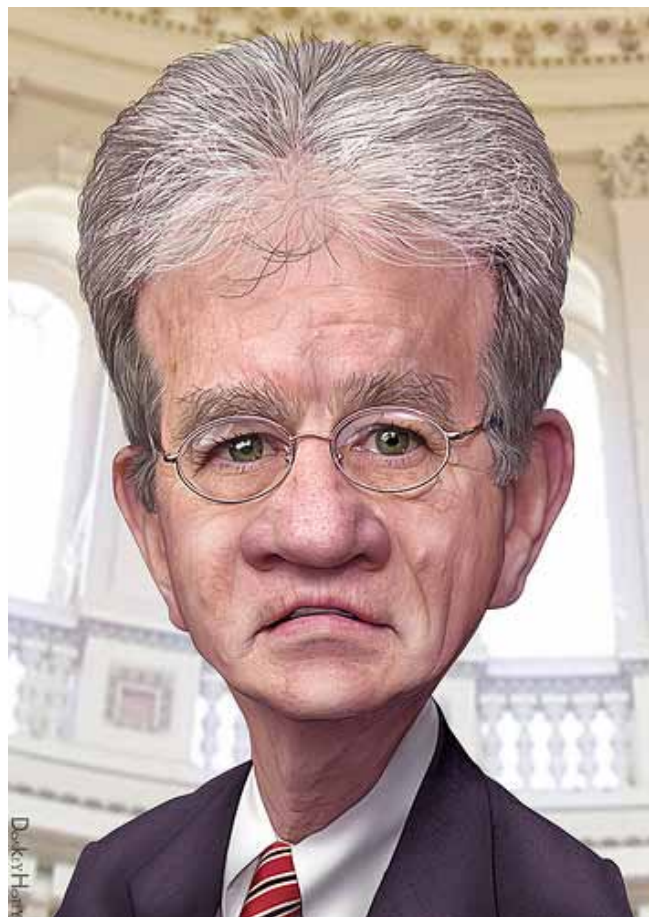
“Every citizen must ask politicians hard questions and then hold them accountable.”

“Many problems in Washington can be solved by changing who is in Washington.”

“We must have an energy policy that immediately causes us to explore and consume our own energy resources.”

“The problem in Washington is careerism – the philosophy of governing to win the next election above all else – is the root of almost all that ails Washington.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, MAY 10, 2012, PAGE 11



Careerism trumps ideology.”

“A commission is the perfect solution for career politicians. It gives them all the benefits of appearing responsible without actually having to take responsibility for any decision.”

“There is a culture of careerism in Washington.”

“Duplication of services – some unnecessary – is rampant in Washington. \$34.4 million could be saved in 10 years by eliminating Hollywood related funding. Government agencies have 14 employees with combined sales of \$1.2 million that handling various government funding for Hollywood.”

“Eliminating duplication will save \$3 trillion in 10 years.”

“Unfortunately many politicians in Washington have little real world experience and, therefore, do not even have the frame of reference to understand why most government spending doesn't work very well and is rarely efficient.”

“For career politicians, there is no greater pleasure in life than spending someone else's money to promote their own re-election campaigns.”

“Despite a federal budget crisis, taxpayers will spend \$35 million this year for the Democratic and Republican conventions. These funds will ‘help pay for the stages, confetti, balloons, food, and booze’ at the convention. In Roman times, before their fall, Roman leaders used bread and circuses to try to pacify the public with spending. Today, we use booze and conventions”

“Taxpayers have been forced to spend \$65 million to study how to resurrect a Bridge to Nowhere in Alaska [the Knik Arm crossing] that could cost up to \$4 billion to build.”

“The University of Kentucky will spend \$175,000 in federal funds studying the connection between cocaine and the sex habits of quail.”

“The free market is not perfect but it is far better than any other option and vastly better than allowing elites in Washington to make our choices for us.”
– *The author lives in Beggs*

WISDOM

An old Cherokee told his grandson, “My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all.

“One is Evil. It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies and ego.

“The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy and truth.”

The boy thought about it and asked, “Grandfather, which wolf wins?”

The old man quietly replied, “The one you feed.”

– *Thanks to Frank Silovsky for this gem*

Sadly, Grand Lake Is Classic ‘Eco-Disaster’

By Robert Jackman

I can’t help but reflect on the 1950s, growing up in Miami, OK with clear, clean Grand Lake water, fishing on moon-lit nights, mixing bootlegger-bought Jim Beam bourbon with lake water, swimming Blue-Green Algae-free without any eco-cares.

By the 1970s the lake’s condition began to change – ecosystems and environmental changes came slowly, then accelerated from pollution storms in all directions.

Above and below the ground and down the lake’s feeder streams came tons of agriculture nutrients and upstream cities’ sewage – they had a water philosophy of “dump it in the Neosho, Spring and Elk Rivers.”

Now all Grand Lake feeder rivers dump increasing daily loads in Grand Lake. Plus today’s rains bring invisible airborne toxic mercury from six coal power plants within 60 miles of “Grand Lake O’ The Cherokees,” its official 1930s name.

Stir in the witches’ industrial-age brew of lead, cadmium, zinc and iron, oxidized to day-glow orange and other metal contaminates from abandoned mines via polluted Tar Creek – it runs through Miami’s [great] junior college to Grand Lake.

Don’t leave out the chicken growers’ infamous contributions of nutrients – nitrogen and phosphorus.

STENCH ON HOT DAYS

I recall open-car-window tours of the Ozarks in spring, blossoming dogwood trees and being jolted by the smell of pungent odorous chickens---

Some living in Ottawa County claim on hot days you can actually smell and see chicken feathers floating down Spring River heading to Grand Lake.

Using scientific descriptive terms and PowerPoint’s sharp visuals, Grand Lake and its main watershed basins of Neosho, Spring and Elk Rivers were subjects of the recent GRDA Ecosystems Management Department’s Watershed Conference at Langley, OK.

To their credit, GRDA admits their lake is sick [correct term – “impaired”] and that they are working on it. Evidence: they measured metal concentrations from mine drainage, harmful Blue Green Algae, and in southern Oklahoma a toxic Golden Algae invasion, and human hair samples with mercury from the Grand Lake area.

The GRDA also recently assembled 20 natural and water science speakers for a large audience of stakeholders, explaining Grand Lake’s issues and causes. The speakers were from Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma, Kansas’ Pittsburg State, Harvard University, the GRDA, and Kansas and Missouri watershed officials.

Kansas and Missouri state officials concede that they are joined at the hip legally to Grand Lake’s problems, due to excess pollution originating from their states’ feeder rivers – they are working with GRDA.

HUMAN HAIR SAMPLES

“Grand Lake has not yet reached critical human mercury contamination status,” said Dr. Robert Lynch, a toxicologist with OU’s Department of Public Health. “However, don’t eat large amounts of its flathead catfish and drum.”

He also warned that higher percentages of mercury in certain fish are now a potential health problem in southeastern Oklahoma lakes, including Coalgate, Sardis and Broken Bow lakes, as well as the area’s private ponds and lakes.

Obvious conclusion: Kiamichi and Boggy Basin citizens should immediately demand state officials start human hair sampling studies to detect the levels of accumulations of mercury.

Such studies are being preformed and expanded at Grand Lake for public health protection.

It was clear at GRDA’s Watershed Conference that Kansas and Missouri – unlike Oklahoma Legislators – do consider water and watershed management a critical government core service. They fund numerous qualified watershed managers at their state’s major watershed basins – managers that guide local groups on conservation, remediation and restoration of watershed ecosystems to lower nutrient loads. This includes training, for example, on condemnation or remediation of failed obsolete septic systems in Missouri’s Elk River Watershed Management areas.

The consensus at the conference: blue-green algae blooms will more than likely reoccur at Grand Lake and GRDA will continue to inform lake users of the true situation of any future similar eco-event, including how harmful the conditions are and to whom [including children, who are more susceptible to algae toxicity than adults].

A conference attention-getter: Pittsburg State’s Dr. Alicia Mason reported that “during Grand Lake’s July 4 algal toxic bloom crisis last year, statements to media by the lake’s business stakeholders and elected officials minimized the reality of public exposures to algae bloom’s health hazards.”

An OSU researcher explained reactions of increasing lake nutrient loads of dissolved [eutrophication] nutrients and how such nutrients also settle out, accumulating in lake’s sediments. Both reactions increased oxygen depletion.

Last summer’s drought and below normal in-flows also resulted in seasonal variations of anoxic or hypoxic areas of no-to-low dissolved oxygen in Grand Lake. Add to that rising regional summer temperatures that warmed water to the point that it crashed oxygen levels in shallow and deep waters.

These factors have produced one or more areas with depleted-to-no oxygen at Grand Lake, areas where fish and other marine life cannot survive. Plus, blue-green algae growth is promoted.

DEAD ZONE PHENOMENA

Combining conference reports with interviews with other eco-experts confirms that Grand Lake is a micro-model of the huge, notorious 3,300-square-mile “Dead Zone” in the Gulf of Mexico.

The gulf’s Dead Zone is caused by heavy nutrient loads of agri-fertilizer nitrates, animal waste and industrial metal pollutants carried by Mississippi River to Gulf of Mexico. It’s the same phenomena as the Neosho, Spring and Elk rivers and Tar Creek’s excess nutrients and metals pouring into Grand Lake.

Indicators of Grand Lake’s dead zone[s] are algal blooms, and its monitors recording lack of dissolved oxygen. Such zones are located in the lake’s waters below thermoclines [20-25 feet deep]. These no-or-low oxygen areas could range from 30% to 60% of total water volume in Grand Lake.

Other impaired freshwater lakes with recognized dead zones are Lake Tahoe and Lake Erie.

The GRDA, an agency of state government by 1930s law, has legal responsibility for conservation and reclamation in its 24-county area, as well as water quality standards at Grand and Hudson Lakes. It can set policies protecting the ecosystem with the exception of Ottawa County’s Tar Creek Super Fund site, which is under EPA control.

OU’s expert estimated it will take 200 years for Tar Creek to clean up – in other words, to flush out all of the pollution caused by the Tri-State area’s underground mines.

Media in recent years focused on lead-impacted communities’ – i.e. the buyout of Picher – rather than the continuous flow of the mines’ contaminates from Tar Creek into Grand Lake.

Tar Creek is fed by its watershed, plus artesian waters flowing up to the surface through old mine shafts, vents and boreholes – plug one, another one opens up.

WORST ECO-IMPAIRED COUNTY

No one at the conference disagreed with Earl Hatley’s assessment that Ottawa County is Oklahoma’s worst eco-impaired county. Hatley, representing the Grand River Keeper group, said Ottawa County’s dubious distinction is due to its old lead and zinc mining areas, Miami’s increasingly frequent flooding from Grand Lake’s backwater, as well as the known pollutants from Tar Creek and the Spring and Neosho rivers.

Representatives of numerous northeastern Oklahoma Native American tribes attended GRDA’s conference, since they share lands and waters with the agency.

The “Public Trust Doctrine” is a legal principle that holds the government is responsible for protecting resources – like water and watersheds – in trust for the public and future generations.

Thanks to GRDA, the status – and causes – of Grand Lake’s serious impairments are available to general public.

But who will put the bells on these nasty eco-cats – and when?

– *The author is a geologist and water expert living in Tulsa*

SUICIDE

From Page 9

camera surveillance.

OPPOSITION TO MESH SCREENING

The photo of the Payne County Jail says it all. The open railing system works only if there is proper medical screening of each incoming inmate to determine if they are depressed or suicidal.

Tragically, when my son was evaluated only an LPN [18 months of training] was on duty. She failed to place him on suicide watch and prescribed a medication whose known side effects were thoughts of suicide.

As Peter Bouma, director of Crimsafe North America, manufacturer of steel mesh screening, recently wrote: “I was shocked to see the picture you sent and the manner in which this railing system is used and to be very honest, if Crimsafe was too expensive for this application, regardless of cost there should be as an absolute minimum, screening of some sort from floor to ceiling.

“Screening certainly could save lives and I believe that’s a good reason not to

maintain the status quo. We should be thinking of principle, not cost. I would certainly be an advocate for prison change and wish you all the best.”

TOPS IN JAIL, PRISON SUICIDE

Is there any question that my son would be alive had mesh screening been in place on the second tier of the Payne County Jail?

Sheriff Hauf, jail administrators, the Department of Health, and all Oklahoman residents should surely ponder the question, Why does Oklahoma rank first in the nation in jail/prison suicide?

Certainly expanded metal mesh would help reduce that embarrassment.

The inability of society to distinguish between an organic brain disorder and a crime is another part of the problem. Any rational solution must incorporate the science of substance use disorder rather than bigotry, bias, and mythology.

– *The author, a professor emeritus at Oklahoma State University, lives in Stillwater*

Including T. Boone Pickens

Corporate Water Barons Pose Danger

By Sarka-Jonae Miller

Four dollars for a gallon of gas is ridiculous enough, but \$4 for a gallon of water could someday become a reality, that is if oil tycoons like T. Boone Pickens and water bottling companies have their way.

Privatization of water in which companies control the public's water sources and free water is a thing of the past appears to be what Pickens and corporations such as Monsanto, Royal Dutch Shell, and Nestle are banking on to increase their vast fortunes.

Companies, brokers and billionaires are buying up groundwater rights and aquifers. Groundwater is necessary for agriculture and more water is needed to meet a growing demand for food. Many countries have already over-pumped their groundwater to feed increasing local populations.

Combine this with climate changes and an ever-increasing strain on water resources due to a rapidly growing world population and you have got a future where water is called "blue gold" because of its scarcity and high cost.

BLEAK FUTURE

The Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development estimates that half the world's population will reside in areas with significant water stress by 2030.

According to a government report entitled Global Water Security, the demand for water will be 40 percent above sustainable water supplies with needs around 6,900 billion cubic meters due to population growth. By 2025, the world's population will likely exceed eight billion people.

Private corporations already own 5% of the world's fresh water. Australia is an excellent example of a country already suffering from multiple water droughts. Farmers are selling water rights to brokers, unaware of the long-term effects.

The United States is by no means immune to these plots. Royal Dutch Shell owns groundwater rights in Colorado and oil tycoon Pickens is buying up all he can in Texas. He owns more water than any other person in the U.S. His plan is to sell the water he owns, around 65 billion gallons annually, to Dallas and other major cities affected by droughts.

Pickens hopes to profit off of desperation, saying "There are people who will buy the water when they need it. And the people who have the water want to sell it. That's the blood, guts, and feathers of the thing."

He also owns a massive wind farm in the area and natural gas resources, but



has admitted that he is no environmentalist, only an entrepreneur who goes where the money is.

COUNTING ON GOVERNMENT?

The public might not even be able to rely on the government to do the right thing and protect everyone from private water owners buying up all the water and then selling it for as much as people are able to pay. Lawmakers in most states did not foresee water privatization because water was once plentiful.

As such, in some cases the only people who legally have a right to stop water privatization plans are the people who reside on the water property. For Pickens and his land near the Ogallala Aquifer this means that he, his wife and three of his employees are the only people who have a say in his privatization plans, according to EarthFirst.com.

The only way people can fight this despicable process is to refuse to support it. Water districts across the U.S. are refusing to purchase water from private companies.

If Pickens, Monsanto and others have no one to sell the water to then they will give up. They are only in it for the money. No buyers means no profit.

© Natural News Network

Stench Spreads To Mexico – And Back

By Jim Hightower

WalMart has long boasted of its "Always Low Prices," but now it has confirmed that it also has "Always low morals."

The bottom line has always been THE line for WalMart executives, and sinking to the ethical bottom to enhance that line has not only been tolerated, but legitimized as a proven path to executive promotion and riches. Squeezing suppliers, crushing competitors, exploiting employees, using enslaved workers in foreign factories and resorting to other brutish tactics to pound out another dollar in profit are central components of WalMart's management ethos and business plan.

Now, we can add bribery to the list of accepted practices – so accepted that even getting caught at it doesn't mean you get fired.

WalMart de Mexico is now the largest retailer and employer in that country, an exalted status that it gained the old-fashioned way: by doling out millions of dollars in corporate bribes. With sluggish sales and a tarnished brand in the U.S., the retailing giant has been pushing hard to expand internationally, and in amazingly short time, its Mexican branch became huge, with one out of five WalMart stores presently located there.

All it took, we now learn from an

excellent investigative report by The New York Times, was the systematic spreading of *muchos, muchos pesos* to government officials across the country to gain needed permits quickly, dodge environmental restrictions and generally have the company's path cleared for market domination.

Not only is this wrong, it is seriously criminal – a blatant violation of our Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. And, lest you think the corruption was the work of some lower-level manager gone rogue, the knowledge of this wholesale bribery scheme goes all the way to the top, including the current and one former CEO.

David Tovar, a WalMart PR agent, was rushed out as the scandal was gaining media coverage to assert, disingenuously, "We are committed to getting to the bottom of this matter." Too late, sir. WalMart already reached bottom.

Apparently, though, a skunk doesn't smell its own stink – or at least it's not offended by it.

Thus WalMart honchos are addressing the nauseating stench of this still-evolving bribery scandal as though it's coming from somewhere else.

"We are deeply concerned by these allegations," declared PR man Tovar, "and are working aggressively to

determine what happened."

Well, gosh, you could just walk aggressively over to the executive suite and ask CEO Mike Duke, board member Lee Scott and vice chairman Eduardo Castro-Wright. All three have first-hand knowledge of what happened, for they were butt-deep in it. You see, while WalMart's massive bribery payments took place in Mexico, the corruption emanated from the very top of corporate headquarters in Bentonville, AR.

It stems directly from WalMart's ruling ethic of grabbing market share and profits at all costs, pressuring managers to achieve "very aggressive growth goals" by doing "whatever was necessary." A decade ago, when Castro-Wright became head of WalMart operations in Mexico, he decided that "necessary" included unbridled bribery. As early as 2005, this was known by the corporate chieftains in Bentonville, including then-CEO Scott. Also, Duke, who

oversaw all international divisions at the time, was told in 2005 about corrupt payouts, which eventually totaled some \$24 million.

So, did Scott and Duke rebuke the perpetrator? No. Instead, Scott rebuked those who'd brought the illegalities to his attention, chiding them for being too aggressive.

Fearing that exposure could hurt WalMart's stock price, he killed the internal investigation by turning it over to – guess who? – Castro-Wright. Yes, the very same man pushing the bribery scheme! The bribes continued, and in 2008, Castro-Wright was promoted to vice chairman of the corporation. Scott has since retired with a golden pension and a multi-million-dollar fortune, and Duke was elevated to CEO, now drawing \$18 million in pay.

It's all part of WalMart's business model – and it's stinkier than a whole den of skunks could possibly be.

© Creators Syndicate

Read
THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER ON-LINE
By subscribing
@ WWW.OKOBSERVER.NET

Only Four-Fifths Of Men's Pay For Women

By Charundi Panagoda

Forty-seven years after the Equal Pay Act was signed into law, women in the United States are still struggling against wage discrimination in the workplace.

Women full-time workers earn only 77% for each dollar earned annually by men, a 23% wage gap. It is even greater for minority women, with African American women earning 64 cents and Hispanic women earning 56 cents for every dollar earned by a white man.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the gender wage gap costs a woman about 380,000 dollars over her career.

According to a recent report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], women not only earn less than men in almost all of the most common occupations for men, such as cooks and carpenters, they earn less in almost all of the most common occupations for women as well, such as registered nurses and teachers.

Women are more than twice as likely as men to work in occupations with median earnings for full-time work below the federal poverty level for a family of four.

IT WAS A CORRECT MEASURE

"These gender wage gaps are not about women choosing to work less than men – the analysis is comparing apples to apples, men and women who all work full time – and we see that across these 40 common occupations, men nearly always earn more than women," Ariane Hegewisch, IWPR study director, said at an event marking Equal Pay Day, a symbolic date in the current year through which women must work to match what men earned in the previous year.

"Discrimination law cases provide us with some insights on the reasons that the wage gap persists: women are less likely to be hired into the most lucrative jobs, and - when they work side by side with men – they may get hired at a lower rate, and receive lower pay increases over the years," she said. "Discrimination in who gets hired for the best jobs hits all women but particularly black and Hispanic women."

The gender wage gap affects women as soon as they enter the job market out of college and only increases over time.

"American Association of University Women's 2007 report, 'Behind the Pay Gap', showed, however, that the pay gap among college graduates specifically was not all about men's and women's choices. Overall, women one year after college graduation earned 80% of what their male peers earned and 10 years after college graduation, just 69% of what their male peers earned," Christianne Corbett, senior researcher at AAUW, told IPS in an e-mail.

THEY BLAME THE WOMEN

Critics of the gender wage disparity continue to say the wage gap is about choice, and argue that women lose money when they take time out of the labor market to raise children. Some say the problem will resolve naturally.



"There might be an element of choice but there are constraints that limit the choices. If you have a low-wage job, then you might not be able to afford child-care and rather do it yourself. If you are in a couple, if the father makes more money, then it makes sense for the mother to take time out. And, basically, later the mother gets penalized for taking time out and compounds to low wages," Hegewisch told IPS.

In recent years, progress in narrowing the gender wage gap has stalled. In the 1960s and '70s, when legislation was just starting to take effect, the gap narrowed slowly, and in the 1980s and '90s, it narrowed quite a lot, particularly due to the rise in women's educational achievements. But since the late 1990s, it has significantly slowed down, Hegewisch said.

Earlier this year, Scott Walker, the governor of Wisconsin, repealed the state's

See EQUAL PAY Page 17

The Inequity Of Private-Equity Hustlers

By Jim Hightower

What are these phantasmagoric money machines that they call "private-equity firms?" They're much in the news these days, because a fellow who was a private-equity magnate is presently running for president. Mitt Romney piled up a quarter-billion-dollar personal fortune through his Wall Street equity outfit, Bain Capital, and he now claims that, because of his success in that business, he knows how to "fix" our economy.

Before you cheer that, note that private equity whizzes are all about The Fix – not necessarily a good thing. They operate by borrowing big piles of cash at high interest rates from rich speculators to buy out XYZ Corp. Then, to meet the interest payments owed to the speculators [and to siphon off a financial killing for themselves], the fixers do two things: One, they plunder XYZ's assets, selling the profitable chunks of the corporation; and two, they severely downsize the XYZ workforce, firing as many workers as possible and demanding deep wage cuts and benefit givebacks from the employees they keep.

It's a raw redistribution-of-wealth

scheme, shifting XYZ's wage payments from its many workers to a handful of wealthy high-rollers. The process downsizes America's middle class, while creating no real economic value. Nothing equitable about it.

But the fix also includes a set of very special partners, few of whom are even aware that they're in on the deal: taxpayers. The private-equity business model is not structured on old-fashioned, free-enterprise principles, but on a skewed system of tax loopholes punched into federal law by these financiers' lobbyists and the lawmakers who do Wall Street's bidding.

For example, the equity funds are able to load up on such heavy debt to finance their corporate takeovers only because all of the interest they must pay to speculators for that borrowed money is tax-deductible. In other words, our government directly subsidizes private-equity plundering by covering their huge interest payments.

To add to their fun, many of these tax-code scammers grab such big debt deductions each year that they end up paying zero corporate income taxes, even though they rake in mil-

lions in profit.

To put a name to this financial flimflammy, let me tell you a corporate morality tale that I call "The Shame of Shamu."

Actually, Shamu is not the cause of the shame. After all, that's just the generic name given to the killer whales kept in captivity as the star attraction at all three theme parks operated by SeaWorld Inc. The shame belongs to the corporation, which not only profits from its exploitation of the whales, but also manages to dodge paying even a penny in national or state income taxes. Based in Orlando, FL, this sprawling entertainment conglomerate pocketed record profits of \$380 million last year but paid zero taxes on it.

This is because SeaWorld is owned by Blackstone Group, a multibillion-dollar private equity giant that specializes in acrobatic accounting and spectacular twistings of our tax laws.

For example, Blackstone structured its 2009 takeover of SeaWorld so that it could immediately begin grabbing tax deductions under the law's convoluted depreciation rules. Also, the Wall Street group paid 60% of the \$2.5 billion purchase

price with high-level-interest loans from wealthy speculators – yes, that makes the huge interest payments on that debt totally deductible from Blackstone's tax bill.

Thus – Shazam Shamu! – this bit of Wall Street hocus-pocus let's SeaWorld pull big profits out of its hat, while the taxes owed by SeaWorld's private equity owner – Poof! – disappear. Well, admitted a corporate spokesman, that's true, but the group "operates entirely within the letter and spirit" of the law.

Of course they do! That's an easy trick for them.

Blackstone is a whale in America's political pool, funneling millions of dollars a year into lobbyists and politicians to rig the law. It has already spent \$7.3 million lobbying the current Congress and another \$1.3 million [so far] on campaign donations for this year's elections.

Those donations include \$173,000 to back Mitt Romney – who promises if elected to make tax laws even more favorable to money manipulators like Blackstone. The moral is that you don't need magic if you're wired to power.

© Creators Syndicate

Social Security: Facts Vs. Myths

By Richard Eskow

In the coming days and weeks we'll be hearing a lot of misinformation about the Trustees Report from the Social Security Administration. It's time to separate the myths from the realities:

1. Myth: "Social Security and Medicare have a cost problem."

Fact: Medicare has a financial problem. The cost of providing Social Security benefits is not out of control or skyrocketing.

Social Security is on an even keel for the foreseeable future. Twenty years from now it's projected to be in a position to pay only 75% of benefits – but that's easily fixed by lifting the payroll tax cap.

2. Myth: "Aging workforce strains Social Security, Medicare"

Fact: That's a headline we saw repeated across the country in anticipation of the Trustees Report, but it's wrong. What's "straining" Social Security and Medicare today is the unequal distribution of income and a broken regulatory system for Wall Street that has put the entire economy under stress.

Social Security was actuarially stable after it was overhauled by the Greenspan Commission in the 1980s. The baby boomers were all alive and [mostly] working by then. So what really happened?

First, a radical upward shift in income toward the "1%" – and the "0.0001%" – meant that more and more of the nation's income was above the payroll tax cap threshold. That reduced the revenue for Social Security [and much of Medicare] from a projected 90% of national income to a figure that's closer to 83%.

Secondly, a financial crisis brought on by reckless and under-regulated Wall Street banks crashed the economy in 2008. For millions of Americans it has never come back. Joblessness, along with wage stagnation for the "99%," further depleted the programs' revenues.

3. Myth: We need to place limits on Medicare spending and cut its benefits.

Fact: That's like saying the way to end forest fires is by firing Smokey Bear. Benefit cuts and spending caps won't solve our health cost problem. There has been an explosion of for-profit hospital chains in the last twenty years, along with profit-driven laboratories, imaging centers, and other types of health providers.

In addition, our system of reimbursing physicians provides an incentive for them to treat more and charge more for their services. That's costly -- and it subjects patients to a lot of unnecessary tests. On top of that, the lion's share of our health economy is "managed" by for-profit insurance companies who have little motivation or skill when it comes to prudent fiscal management.

If we expand Medicare to our entire population we'd have a health system like that of all other industrialized countries -- whose health costs are roughly 60% of our own and grow more slowly than our own. Medicare's cost problem would be solved.

By contrast, the solutions being floated in Washington wouldn't fix the problem – they'd just dump it onto the backs of seniors and the disabled.

4. Myth: We can't get our federal deficits under control without cutting Social Security benefits – either by raising the eligibility age, placing gimmicky limits on cost-of-living adjustments, or all of the above.

Fact: Social Security is forbidden by law from contributing to the federal defi-



cit. It's an entirely self-sustaining program. If the day comes when it can't pay its full scheduled benefits, those benefits must and will be cut. This is a phony argument.

5. Myth: Too many millionaires are collecting Social Security and Medicare, so we should means-test and deny them these benefits.

Fact: The number of actual "millionaires" on Social Security and Medicare is tiny, by any objective measure. It wouldn't have any significant impact on their budgets to exclude them – although it would help a lot to tax them.

[Oh, we can't do that! say the "centrists."]

What's more, Medicare and Social Security are social insurance programs. By definition, insurance shouldn't be means-testing like welfare and other aid programs, because you've already paid your premiums. The "means-testing" argument is often used to mischaracterize these programs as "welfare," instead of what they really are: Something people have paid into through the payroll tax throughout their working lives, and [in Medicare's case] which they've also supported through their taxes.

6. Myth: Social Security benefits are too generous. They need to be cut because we can't afford them.

Fact: Our Social Security benefits are lower than those of nations that are economically similar to the US. As we said, the current reductions in revenue were caused by 1) an upward distribution of wealth to the "1%" and 2) a financial crisis brought about by Wall Street greed and speculation.

That suggests two possible solutions to Social Security's 20-year-from-now problem: 1) Lift the payroll tax cap, and/or 2) impose a small financial transactions tax on Wall Street and use it to make up the Social Security shortfall. Either of these approaches would solve the problem.

– The author, a consultant and writer [and former insurance/finance executive], is a Senior Fellow with the Campaign for America's Future and the host of *The Breakdown*, broadcast Saturday nights from 7-9 p.m. on WeAct Radio, AM 1480 in Washington, DC.

Gannett Newspapers Lose \$1.7 Billion

When Craig Dubow resigned as CEO of the nation's largest newspaper conglomerate amid health problems last year, he ended a six-year stint that "was, by most accounts, a disaster."

Gannett, the parent company of the USA Today and 80 other American newspapers, had seen its revenue plummet \$1.7 billion and its stock price fall 86 percent, from \$72 a share to just over \$10.

To counter those losses, Gannett shed jobs, and a lot of them. Industry estimates say the company has laid off at least 20,000 workers since 2005, reducing its workforce from 52,000 to roughly 32,000. Despite those losses, Gannett awarded Dubow a severance package worth \$32 million, NPR reports:

Dubow's final compensation package includes \$12.8 million in retirement benefits, \$6.2 million in disability benefits and a \$5.9 million severance payment, according to the filing. Gannett stock options and restricted stock, which Dubow had accrued during his years of employment with the company, were also part of the package. Those stock awards are valued at nearly \$7 million.

Separately, Gannett will pay \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually for a \$6.2 million life insurance policy covering Dubow and another \$70,000 annually for benefits such as health insurance, home computer and secretarial assistance and financial counseling. He will receive most of these benefits for three years unless he goes to work for a competitor, according to the filing.

The lavish severance package Gannett is giving Dubow stands in stark contrast with how it treated many of the 20,000 employees it let go. After giving severance packages to employees during early rounds of layoffs [a common industry practice], Gannett decided in 2009 that it would no longer offer such packages, instead paying supplemental unemployment benefits that shifted most of the costs to states.

At the time, Gannett claimed the decision would help many employees get more than they would from severance. But for those who worked or freelanced at

other jobs, that meant they'd get much less – and perhaps nothing at all.

"Craig championed our consumers and their ever-changing needs for news and information," the chair of Gannett's board of directors said when his retirement was announced in October.

The question, as former reporter Peter Lewis asked at the time, is how exactly Dubow served consumers or his employees. "They laid off journalists. They cut the pay of those who remained, while demanding that they work longer hours. They closed news bureaus. They slashed newsroom budgets," Lewis wrote on his blog.

"As revenue fell, and stock prices tanked, and product quality deteriorated, they rewarded themselves huge pay raises and bonuses."

© ThinkProgress

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER

*Your Passport To Oklahoma's Most
Progressive, Socially Responsible
And Intellectual Audience*

*Advertising rates start as low
as \$20 per issue.*

Call 405.478.8700 for details.

Education Replaces Housing Bubble Machine

By Froma Harrop

A modern knowledge economy thrives on highly trained workers. The way to get them, obviously, is through education – from basic reading skills for some, to mastery of algorithms for others. It thus would seem a basic public good to provide that learning at little or no cost to students, which most advanced countries do. But America has turned post-high-school education into a taxpayer-subsidized business – a business not unlike real estate at the height of the housing bubble.

Think Americans owe a bundle on their credit card balances? They have \$693 billion on their plastic, while they owe over \$1 trillion on student loans, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Think health costs are out of control? They rose *only* 150% from 1990 through 2011. During that period, the cost of attending a four-year college [not including room and board] soared 300%.

There is clearly a disconnect between Americans' stagnating incomes and the rising costs of educating their children. The education bubble will have to burst. Online courses may supply the hatpin.

For example, venture capitalists are putting millions into Coursera, a company that provides online college courses for free. Founded by two Stanford University professors, Coursera offers classes taught by professors from Stanford, University of California, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania and Princeton. Other startups, such as Minerva and Udemy, are offering similar



high-quality education experiences, though generally not for college credit.

Where is the payoff for investors? Through extras that the students may want to buy.

As in the music business, we see an unbundling of product. Rather than buy an entire CD, fans can download this song from artist A and that song from artist B. Likewise, students wanting a solid college education could take this course given at MIT and that course at UMich. Best

of all, they wouldn't have to cough up the average \$119,400 for tuition and fees [many are way higher] needed to spend four years at a private university that sinks millions into presidents' salaries, profs who don't teach and charming retreats abroad.

Could this model of learning work for high-school grads wanting a trade? Many for-profit technical schools aggressively advertise to suck high-school grads into questionable courses for which the students take on unconscionable debt.

Up to half of all student loans that go under are held by their dropouts and graduates. [The big players include ITT Educational Services and the University of Phoenix.]

But from the Ivy League on down, postsecondary education feeds off government grants and taxpayer-backed loans. Economists point to these subsidies as an excuse to raise prices. Meanwhile, the lenders, whether government or private student-loan companies, employ famously brutal techniques to collect.

And what's this doing to our economy? It's creating a mass of young people sagging under monstrous debt burdens. They are unable to buy a house, much less start a business. If failure to pay back student loans ruins their credit rating, they can't borrow for anything.

As Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics put, "We are creating a zombie generation of young people larded with debt, and, in many cases, dropouts without any diploma."

This should sound familiar: Like risky mortgages, risky private student loans have been packaged into securities that are sold to the public. Concerns are growing that a pileup of student-loan defaults could imperil these investments.

Yes, it's like the housing bubble all over again. And in its quest to help students obtain education from private sellers, the government has helped spike their price. Either the federal government will change the game or online educators will. Both should be giving it a try.

© Creators Syndicate

WHISTLEBLOWER

From Page 10

ed the leaks? Much later in the book, Glenn Greenwald – who really deserves great credit for advancing this issue – gets a mention. So does Coleen Rowley, with whom I recall protesting Manning's treatment at Quantico, along with hundreds of others.

Then Daniel Ellsberg, Roseanne Barr, Jack Shafer and Dennis Kucinich get a nod. Ray McGovern receives a lengthy and well-deserved discussion. We also learn that Manning receives hundreds of letters of support every week from all over the world [some of them are from this country]. We find out that "Free Bradley" signs dot this country's Occupy encampments.

SUPPORT NETWORK

And after the book is over, in the "Further Reading" section at the back, we discover that there is a Bradley Manning Support Network, Kevin Gosztoła's blog at FireDogLake, Marcy Wheeler, Jane Hamsher, and others who indeed have supported what Manning has been accused of doing.

Not what it should be, of course, but not so terribly few of us after all.

I wonder also about Madar's take on whether knowing the truth is helpful in politics. Ultimately, of course, Madar is in favor of public knowledge of government's behavior. But I think he undervalues it a bit at times.

"When does war end?" he quotes Alexander Cockburn asking himself. "One side is annihilated, the money runs out, the troops mutiny, the government falls, or fears it will. With the U.S. war in Afghanistan none of these conditions has been met." Nor with the U.S. war on Iraq, which has virtually ended nonetheless.

IMMORAL, BUT LEGAL

I also would modify slightly Madar's take on the rule of law. As Madar sees it, many of the outrages that Manning revealed, even the killings in the "Collateral Murder" video, even the handing over of prisoners to the Iraqi government to torture, were immoral but legal, because the laws of war allow them.

Madar is dealing with *jus in bello*, laws on the conduct of war, not *jus ad bellum*, laws on what makes a war or an occupation just to begin with. In fact there is no just war. There is no legal war. Every single war has been illegal since the Kellogg Briand Pact of 1928.

The U.N. Charter seeks to legalize wars that are either labeled "defensive" or authorized by the United Nations. The U.S. wars on Iraq and Afghanistan are nei-

ther defensive nor authorized by the United Nations.

The U.S. Constitution forbids wars not declared by Congress. Congress has not declared a war since 1941.

GOOD LEGAL ARGUMENTS

Certainly the law is often unjust and must be nonviolently resisted. But when we have good legal arguments on our side, we shouldn't always be so reluctant to use them.

If torture can be "legalized" by the vacuous ramblings of John Yoo, if bribery can be "legalized" through the human rights of corporations established by a court reporter's marginalia, why shouldn't we legalize peace by reviving awareness of actual laws actually on the books?

As with most books I review, so must I comment on this one that I wish people would stop low-balling the death count in Iraq by almost an order of magnitude.

I must also strongly encourage you to buy a copy of this book for everyone you know.

© Reader Supported News

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN ...

This may come as a surprise to those of you not living in Las Vegas, but there are more Catholic churches than casinos.

Not surprisingly, some worshipers at Sunday services will give casino chips rather than cash when the basket is passed.

Since they get chips from many different casinos, the churches have devised a method to collect the offerings: They send all their collected chips to a nearby Franciscan monastery for sorting and then the chips are taken to the casinos of origin and cashed in.

This is done by the chip monks.

ALEC Launches Assault On Renewables

By Steve Horn

The American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC], as covered previously by DeSmogBlog, is the “Trojan Horse” behind mandating that climate change denial [“skepticism,” or “balance,” in its words] be taught in K-12 classrooms.

Well, ALEC is at it again, it appears. Facing an IRS complaint filed by Common Cause, one of the leading advocacy groups working to expose the corporate-funded bill mill, ALEC has also launched an assault on renewable energy legislation, according to a well-documented report written by Bloomberg News.

The two developments are worth unpacking.

The Washington Post reported that on April 23, Common Cause “had filed an IRS complaint accusing ALEC of masquerading as a public charity...while doing widespread lobbying.”

ALEC is trying to brush aside this complaint, but Common Cause presents a compelling case.

“It tells the IRS in its tax returns that it does no lobbying, yet it exists to pass profit-driven legislation in statehouses all over the country that benefits its corporate members,” said Bob Edgar, president of Common Cause, in a statement. “ALEC is not entitled to abuse its charitable tax status to lobby for private corporate interests, and stick the bill to the American taxpayer.”

Common Cause wants the IRS to complete a no-holds-barred audit of ALEC’s work and to examine whether it violated IRS laws.

The complaint doesn’t come out of thin air. Quite to the contrary, actually.

“Common Cause said its complaint was based on more than 4,000 pages of ALEC records, including talking points that ALEC workers provided to lawmakers in order to better argue on behalf of the legislation the group develops,” explained The Post.

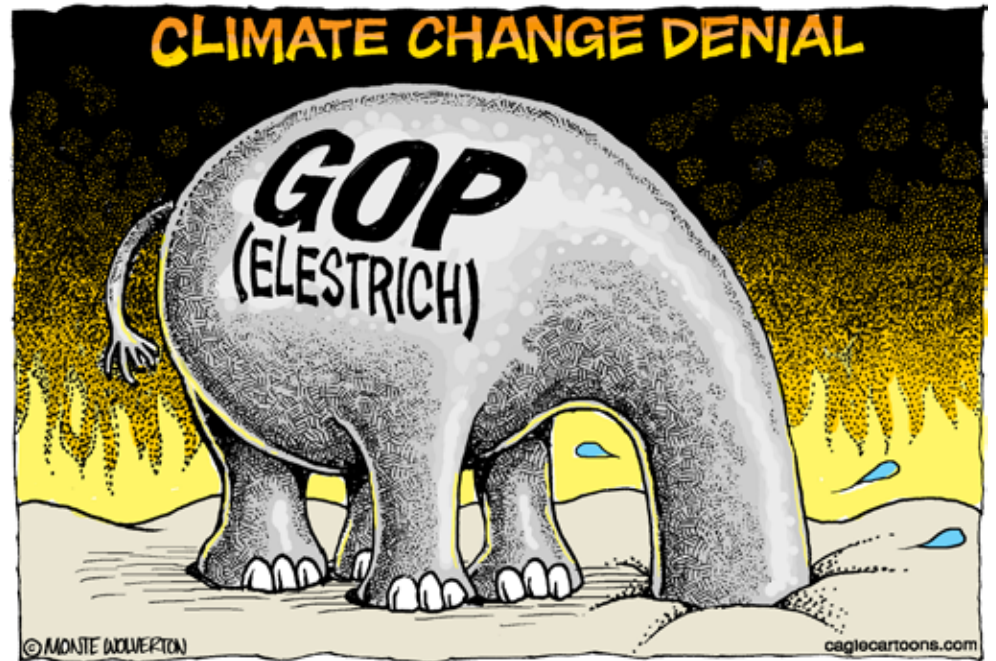
ALEC is also head-deep in promulgating fossil fuel industry-authored model legislation to dismantle, with one fell swoop, legislation promoting clean energy development.

“Nowhere else can you get a return that high,” ALEC has said on one occasion of the structure it has created to influence statehouses nationwide, referring to it as “a good investment.” A good investment indeed, particularly for fossil fuel corporations trying to take down a clean energy industry poised for rapid growth.

Bloomberg explains that dozens of states already have renewable energy mandate legislation: “Twenty-nine states and Washington, DC, now have mandates, which, by requiring utilities to purchase energy derived from renewable sources, have helped provide a market for clean-energy technologies.”

Those programs, though, are now under severe attack by ALEC and the Grover Norquist-run Americans for Tax Reform.

“Opposition to the mandates coincides with the expiration of some federal incentives for renewables – many contained in the 2009 stimulus legislation. The



repeal or weakening of state standards puts at risk an industry still dependent on government aid to compete with dirtier but cheaper fossil fuels ...,” wrote Bloomberg.

Todd Wynn, meanwhile, head of ALEC’s Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force said that the corporate patrons of the task force have “expressed concern on the cost of renewable energy,” a statement steeped in irony, given the amount of subsidies that flows to fossil fuel corporations on an annual basis, drastically trumping the amount of money renewable energy resources receive.

Corporate lobbyist members of the Task Force include the likes of representatives from Peabody Energy, American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity [ACC-CE] and BP America, according to SourceWatch. No surprises here, of course: King Coal and Big Oil would like to see nothing less than a vibrant renewable energy sector.

© desmogblog

VA Plans To Add 1,900 Mental Health Workers

The Department of Veterans Affairs is boosting its mental health staff by 1,900 to help the growing number of soldiers returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

A number of returning veterans are homeless in Oklahoma. Oklahoma City is opening a shelter to get them off the streets.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki recently announced the new hires, which include 1,600 mental health clinicians and 300 support staff.

“As the tide of war recedes, we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to anticipate the needs of returning veterans,” Shinseki said in a statement.

The hires come amid reports of long wait times for veterans at VA facilities for mental health care, which Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chair Patty Mur-

ray, D-WA, says will be documented in an upcoming Inspector General’s report.

“I am pleased that the VA has taken this desperately needed step toward providing timely access to mental health care,” Murray said. “Too often we have seen staff vacancies, scheduling delays and red tape leave those veterans who have been brave enough to seek help in the first place left with nowhere to turn.”

House Veterans Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller, R-FL, said Shinseki’s announcement was “a start,” but added, “There is much more, however, that VA needs to do to address gaps in services and ensure veterans undergoing treatment are not lost in the system.”

The VA said it will use funds from its current budget to begin hiring for the new positions immediately.

EQUAL PAY

From Page 14

Equal Pay Enforcement Act, much to the outrage of feminists. Supporters have been pushing harder to protect equal pay in the wake of the “War on Women,” a term used by most liberal feminists following Republican-led attacks on reproductive rights and economic security.

COMBATING WAGE SECRECY

Advocates have been supporting legislation such as the Paycheck Fairness Act to combat wage secrecy in companies and to expand on previous wage discrimination laws. In 2009, Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the first bill he signed as president, to “empower women to recover wages lost to discrimination by extending the time period in which an employee can file a claim.”

“The Paycheck Fairness Act is important because under that employers will not be able to retaliate against their employees for sharing their wage information. We know that wage secrecy really tends to make wage discrimination really hard to fight,” Terry O’Neill, president of the National Organization for Women, which has been fighting wage discrimination since the 1960s, told IPS.

Other than legislation, companies could become more transparent to fight wage discrimination, Hegewisch recommends.

“If you have a system of some monetary appraisal, you can make sure somebody, apart from the person who has prices, double check. If you translate that into pay, you check whether there’s a gender bias in it and whether that’s justified. You might have a lot of men performing better one year and you can docu-

ment it, but you might not. So, I think monitoring what you do and being transparent makes a big difference.”

© Inter Press Service News Agency

JOHNNY STRIKES AGAIN

The teacher asked the class to use the word “fascinate” in a sentence.

Molly put up her hand and said, “My family went to my granddad’s farm, and we all saw his pet sheep. It was fascinating.” The teacher said, “That was good, but I wanted you to use the word ‘fascinate,’ not ‘fascinating.’”

Sally raised her hand. She said, “My family went to see RockCity and I was ‘fascinated.’” The teacher said, “Well, that was good Sally, but I wanted you to use the word ‘fascinate.’”

Little Johnny raised his hand. The teacher hesitated because she had been burned by Little Johnny before. She finally decided there was no way he could damage the word “fascinate” so she called on him.

Johnny said, “My Aunt Gina has a sweater with 10 buttons, but her boobs are so big she can only fasten eight.”

The teacher sat down and cried.

How To Properly Spank A Nun

By Mark Morford

Funny how no one ever talks about the nuns.

I suppose it makes sense. After all, Catholic nuns are so rarely embroiled in sex scandals. They are never caught pants down in the rectory with a 10-year-old altar boy, teaching him of the “mystical secretions” of the Lord. They never cost the church billions in litigious payouts for rape, abuse, millennia of pedophilic atrocity and shame. For that, you gotta look to the priests.

The nuns, they keep to themselves. They work quietly, faithfully in the background, the humble and resolute handmaidens to the patriarchy.

If we imagine them at all, we imagine them smacking schoolchildren's wrists with rulers. We imagine them as the Mother Theresa types, ministering to the sick and the infirm, changing the bloody bandages on the soldiers in WWII. We imagine them helping out the Von Trapps.

But until recently, I had not the slightest clue as to what American nuns did all day. Delivering meals to the poor. Knitting giant crucifix cozies. Cleaning up after sloppy priests. Feeding hungry squirrels. Facebooking with angels. No idea.

Until now. Until I discovered that a great many American nuns, some 57,000 of them to be exact, they've been actively and frequently pissing off the Vatican, nearly every single day, in all sorts of delightful ways, for years. Isn't that grand?

How are they doing it? Why, the very same way the tastier gender has always annoyed the sour patriarchy: by daring to think for themselves [just a little], by following their own code of conduct, by asking humble but firm questions of the orthodoxy, by pushing back ever-so-slightly against the dogma the Vatican likes to throw down like stale oatmeal made of concrete and death.

Damn fine work, really. I wholly endorse it.

Have you heard? The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the umbrella group representing those 57K American nuns, they've been



accused of having “serious doctrinal issues” and promoting nothing short of “radical feminist themes” [!] which apparently consist of gently supporting ObamaCare [free health care for the poor? Nuns are all over it], endorsing the idea of female priests, ministering to the underprivileged and being way too nice to gay people.

Horrible! You can see why the pope is furious. Some nuns are even accused of spending so much time working in local politics to help the needy, they leave themselves no room to bash gay marriage, wail about abortion, attack humanity for enjoying sex, or scold their own gender for having vaginas in the first place.

I know! Those wenches.

So now, it's come to this: The men are taking over. The ever-unhappy pope reportedly assigned Seattle archbishop Peter Sartain to whip the LCWR back into shape, reform the entire organization and slap that “radical” feminist agenda right out of their presumptuous little habits. Because that's what the Vatican does.

Which is another way of saying: womenfolk getting uppity again? Females starting to think for themselves? Showing a modicum of spirit, fire, individuality? This will not do.

This way anarchy lies.

What's next, lesbianism? Birth control? Acknowledging the Virgin Mary was a nasty myth designed to suppress 10,000 years of hotly fertile, goddess-based pagan belief? Oh wait.

Time for some changes. Time for the angry manhammer of fear to come down. The Vatican has given the LCWR five years to shape up, and it put a man in charge of the process. Because, being mere women, they obviously cannot think, act, or figure it out by themselves. And God simply does not abide uppity females. Just ask Eve.

Is it not sort of amazing? Is it not all flavors of classic and timeless in its barely veiled misogyny? It's like 1884 all over again. Or was that 1484? 484? When were the witch trials? When was Hypatia beaten to death for liking math? I get confused.

To be perfectly honest, I can sympathize with the Vatican. Women are dangerous things. Unnerving. They can mess with your head, overwhelm the body, make you feel all sticky and tingly inside, like you just ate a giant chocolate cake made of lightning and orchids and Ecstasy. They throw you for a loop and take you for a ride and confuse all reality,

so much so you can't help but see something as inane as organized religion as completely idiotic and small. It's something about their smell.

No wonder the Vatican is nervous. I imagine if they don't take action soon, they'll have to admit the nuns have gone AWOL, have become crazy with power, have become wild, feral, hysterical. And you know what they do with hysterical women, don't you? Oh, I bet you do.

Let us not go too far. Let us not get overly carried away. The pope may call the LCWR “radical,” but that's a bit like the NRA calling a guy with only nine shotguns a liberal. It's a relative scale, to be sure. They are still wildly devout Catholics; their radicalism, in the larger view, is about as extreme as ordering a glass of wine at a NASCAR rally.

But if you're like me – and I know you are – the question often gnaws like a squirrel in the rafters: In an age of bitter corruption, suspicious sources and ersatz meanings, where do you go to find true integrity of mission?

Where do you go to find a quietly intentional upsetting of the long-established doctrine of idiocy and belligerence, patriarchy and hoary dogma?

Now we know. Now we can look to the Catholic nuns, those fierce n' fiery wenches of God, those cool goth cheerleaders of Jesus, for a hint of inspiration and temerity, just a tiny taste of delicious insurrection right when we need it most.

Sure, they're not exactly sex-positive lefty feminists. Sure, you can't see their ankles. Sure, they work for an institution that openly fears and humiliates them, treats them as an afterthought, as lesser, as unruly children – and yet still they stick around.

Sure, they're being spanked and silenced by a gaggle of angry and confused old men who barely go outside and never have sex.

Hell, that just means they're doing something right, no?

© sfgate

‘My Money Is On The Nuns’

The Vatican has investigated the state of nuns in America and has decided that they care too much about the poor.

I checked my Bible and found over 100 injunctions to take care of the poor and oppressed, around 50 on adultery and, at most, five [I would say none for consenting, nurturing] on same-sex relations. The most powerful is Matthew 25, the great Judgment Day, when the only questions asked are how you treat the poor and oppressed.

I can somewhat excuse Benedict because the history of the church in Europe may be different, certainly farther in the past, than ours.

Today's church owes its very existence to the religious, nuns, brothers, and priests, who came to

this continent and worked and died in nameless obscurity, leaving great educational and charitable institutions in this country. They are the heroes of American Catholic Church history.

Missionary bishops and priests with many missions did amazing work as well, but in latter days, have had to worry with bills; that's not necessarily a bad thing but no cause for bullying those in the church, clerical and lay, who take care of the poor as the center of their attention.

Bullying, as Garry Wills calls it, is exactly what the Vatican is trying to do with these women. Yes, you may be able to criticize this statement or that position, but so what? It is the genius of America that we encourage a diversity of views – a quality

that I'm not sure Rome has ever fully understood.

The lay people have done exactly what they were told to do.

We asked them to listen to the principles of the gospel and church social teaching, and take it to the world. They have done that wondrously well.

If progressive Catholics can be taken to task for applying those principles in different conclusions, conservative Catholics can rightly be charged with ignoring that teaching.

I can predict the political opinion of a Catholic most accurately by looking at their income and their education, not their church attendance. It is in fact the more faithful Catholics who strongly support marriage equality. They have listened.

I understand; the bishops want a united force behind them, and many times, their positions are exactly what one could wish. Their criticism of the Ryan [U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin] budget is right on.

They have to maintain a structure when people protest the closing of parishes and schools because there simply is not the money to keep them open.

They are more to be pitied for the impossible task they have, but that is no reason to attack men and women, religious and lay, who are about the task of helping the poor.

My money, and thanks, is on the nuns.

– The author, an ordained priest, asks to remain anonymous for obvious reasons

REFORM

From Page One

the measure into law.

Not surprisingly, Steele heralded HB 3052 – widely regarded as the speaker's signature achievement – as a “bold statement that the Legislature fully intends to end the status quo and increase public safety by making better use of state resources.”

Steele stresses that mandating nine months of post-incarceration supervision is vital, given that this is the period when ex-inmates are most likely to reoffend.

He also argues that creation of the Intermediate Revocation Facilities for those who violate the terms of their probation will be a more effective and less costly alternative to sending them back to prison.

Further, the speaker trumpets a 10-year, \$40 million grant program aimed at helping local law enforcement prevent crime.

All told, Steele believes the criminal justice overhaul can save the state \$200 million over the next decade,

enabling it to re-invest \$110 million in crime-fighting programs.

“These reforms give police more resources, hold offenders more accountable and ensure prisons have the space to incapacitate dangerous criminals,” the speaker said. “The result will be a more effective criminal justice system and a much safer state.”

At first blush, the Intermediate Revocation Facilities [IFR] and the grant program to be administered by the attorney general's office seem reasonable enough. But they are not without their own potential problems.

First, if other states are any indication, the IFR facilities are likely to be privately owned and operated, giving Oklahoma less long-term certainty over the costs of such treatments. It would be bad news, indeed, if the IFRs turned out to be nothing more than a vehicle for state lawmakers to steer tax dollars into the pockets of key campaign contributors from the

private prison industry.

In addition, a reliance on IFRs may not help slow the state's incarceration rate or reduce its penal costs – both goals of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. It simply would move the costs to a different category.

And consider this: The bill was altered to make it easier to send probation violators to an IFR – which would likely slow, if not torpedo altogether, efforts by ex-inmates to re-establish ties to their communities and families, keep jobs or complete school.

Second, the grant program primarily could become an incentive for cash-strapped local law enforcement to make even more arrests, worsening an already overcrowded criminal justice system.

What's needed now, more than ever, is for state leaders to deal with the 85% rule – telling Oklahomans the truth that all repeat offenders are not created equal and shouldn't be treated the same. Those with men-

tal health or substance abuse issues should not be automatically lumped in with violent, career criminals.

It is worth noting that not even Steele was willing to assert that HB 3052 was the silver-bullet solution to Oklahoma's corrections crisis.

The state, he said, is “on the cusp of beginning a smarter, tougher fight against crime” – a clear warning that much work remains, long after he leaves office later this year.

It's a sentiment the ACLU's Kiesel shares: “Perhaps the greatest danger as we move forward is if future policymakers look at HB 3052 as having addressed the serious problems with our criminal justice system. It has not.

“We call on the policymakers of today to send a clear message to future legislatures that the work towards real criminal justice reform remains unfinished.”

With Steele's exit, who will pick up the baton?

It's Time To Abolish The Death Penalty

By Jimmy Carter

For many reasons, it is time for Georgia and other states to abolish the death penalty. A recent poll showed that 61% of Americans would choose a punishment other than the death penalty for murder.

Also, just 1% percent of police chiefs think that expanding the death penalty would reduce violent crime. This change in public opinion is steadily restricting capital punishment, both in state legislatures and in the federal courts.

As Georgia's chief executive, I competed with other governors to reduce our prison populations. We classified all new inmates to prepare them for a productive time in prison, followed by carefully monitored early-release and work-release programs. We recruited volunteers from service clubs who acted as probation officers and “adopted” one prospective parolee for whom they found a job when parole was granted. At that time, in the 1970s, only one in 1,000 Americans was in prison.

Our nation's focus is now on punishment, not rehabilitation. Although violent crimes have not increased, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with more than 7.43 per 1,000 adults imprisoned at the end of 2010.

Our country is almost alone in our fascination with the death penalty.

Ninety percent of all executions are carried out in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

One argument for the death penalty is that it is a strong deterrent to murder and other violent crimes. In fact, evidence shows just the opposite. The homicide rate is at least five times greater in the United States than in any Western European country, all without the death penalty.

Southern states carry out more than 80% of the executions but have a higher murder rate than any other region. Texas has by far the most executions, but its homicide rate is twice that of Wisconsin, the first state to abolish the death penalty. Look at similar adjacent states: There are more capital crimes in South Dakota, Connecticut and Virginia [with death sentences] than neighboring North Dakota, Massachusetts and West Virginia [without death penalties].

Furthermore, there has never been any evidence that the death penalty reduces capital crimes or that crimes increased when executions stopped. Tragic mistakes are prevalent. DNA testing and other factors have caused 138 death sentences to be reversed since I left the governor's office.

The cost for prosecuting executed criminals is astronomical. Since 1973, California has spent roughly

\$4 billion in capital cases leading to only 13 executions, amounting to about \$307 million each.

Some devout Christians are among the most fervent advocates of the death penalty, contradicting Jesus Christ and misinterpreting Holy Scriptures and numerous examples of mercy. We remember God's forgiveness of Cain, who killed Abel, and the adulterer King David, who had Bathsheba's husband killed. Jesus forgave an adulterous woman sentenced to be stoned to death and explained away the “eye for an eye” scripture.

There is a stark difference between Protestant and Catholic believers. Many Protestant leaders are in the forefront of demanding ultimate punishment. Official Catholic policy condemns the death penalty.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the death penalty is extreme bias against the poor, minorities or those with diminished mental capacity. Although homicide victims are six times more likely to be black rather than white, 77% of death penalty cases involve white victims.

Also, it is hard to imagine a rich white person going to the death chamber after being defended by expensive lawyers. This demonstrates a higher value placed on the lives of white Americans.

It is clear that there are overwhelming ethical, financial, and religious reasons to abolish the death penalty.

– *The former president is founder of the not-for-profit Carter Center in Atlanta, advancing peace and health worldwide.*

© Associated Baptist Press

SECOND OPINION ON DENTAL TREATMENT

Consultation Only - \$75, with Examination \$50 additional

DR. DONALD SMITH

Member, American Dental Association

405.751.4500

Near Mercy Health Center

4204 Coletta Drive, Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Friends Meetings (Quakers)

Friends believe there is that of God in everyone. They cannot prove this, but when they act as if it were true, their trust is justified.

- Author unknown

MEETING FOR WORSHIP SCHEDULE AND CONTACTS

OKLAHOMA CITY: Wesley Methodist Church, 1401 NW 25 (at Classen), west entry. Worship Sunday evening at 7pm. FMI 405.632.7574)

STILLWATER: Sunday morning. Call 405.372.4839

TULSA: Sunday afternoon. Call 918.743.6827

NORMAN: Sunday morning. Call 405.321.7971

KAIAMICHI WORSHIP GROUP (SE OK): Monthly. Call 918.569.4803.

THE DRUG WAR IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DESTROYER. IT MORE EQUALLY DESTROYS BLACK AND LATINO COMMUNITIES.

REGULATE THE DRUGS
<http://home.dprnok.net>



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first[®]

okea.org

BEN F. SANDERS
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

5700 N. Portland, Suite 304
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405/843-0037

Income Tax Preparation * Accounting * Consulting

Oklahoma Retired Educators' Association



The only organization
that works for
Retired Educators

405.525.2230
800.310.2230
www.orea.org

International Brotherhood of
Electrical Workers Local Union 1141
405/670-4777



WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

*Only a fool would try to deprive working
men and women of the right to join the union
of their choice. —Dwight D. Eisenhower*



Auto Service Technology
Metro Technology Centers
Preparing for Life
[405] 424-TECH
www.metrotech.org

WORSHIP AT MAYFLOWER CHURCH

For religion that is biblically responsible,
intellectually honest, emotionally satisfying,
and socially significant. Services at 9 and 11 a.m.
Full church school.

Broadcast 9:30 a.m. on KOKC AM 1520
Located on NW 63rd Street,
one block west of Portland, 405/842-8897.

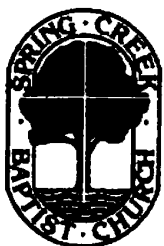
Dr. Robin Meyers, Minister
Rev. Chris Moore, Associate Pastor
Mayflower Congregational Church
3901 NW 63 Street, Okla. City, OK 73116

Spring Creek Baptist Church

A Place Of Grace....
A Place Of Healing....

11701 N. MacArthur Blvd.
Oklahoma City, Ok. 73162

[405] 721-3252
springcreekbc.com



*Embracing the Fatherhood of God
and the Brotherhood of Man*

**THE URANTIA
BOOK SOCIETY**

405-722-0866

www.okub.org

Study groups held on Sunday, Tuesday
or Wednesday at 8 p.m.



Support the candidate that
will Protect Social Security &
Medicare.
Support Tom Guild at
guildforcongress.com
paid for by Guild for Congress



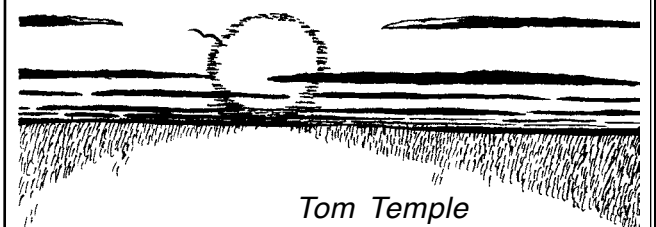
Mark Mills
Acupuncture
Chinese Herbal Medicine

1818 W. Lindsey, Suite C-160
Norman, OK 73069
405.321.5546

National Board
Certified (NCCAOM)



Transforming
People Who
Transform
the World
First Unitarian Church
of Oklahoma City
13th and Dewey ♦ www.uuokc.org



Tom Temple
Sustainable Design

1230 N.E. 70th • Oklahoma City, OK 73111
405/478-4936 • www.TTemple.com



GIVE WISELY. Caring, safe, responsible donor
directed giving to fully vetted grassroots charities
in developing countries. www.wideawake.org



Jean's
PLUMBING
HEAT & AIR
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL
FOR ALL YOUR PLUMBING, GAS & AIR WORK
WE WORK BY THE JOB... NOT BY THE HOUR
BEST FLAT RATE PRICE
www.jeans-plumbing.com
OKC & Surrounding Areas **844-1951**

REX FRIEND
Attorney at Law

Immigration
General Practice of Law
3801 N. Classen Blvd., Suite 8
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

(405) 557-1277
Reasonable Fees — Terms Available

Johnston & Associates
Landowner Environmental and Pollution Law
Free Consultation
Ken Johnston - Wes Johnston
405-224-4000
118 North Fourth St
Chickasha, Oklahoma 73018
Johnstonlawfirm@SBCCGlobal.net

Better Information, Better Policy

Oklahoma Policy Institute provides timely and credible
information, analysis and commentary on state policy issues.
See our latest issue briefs, fact sheets and blog posts at:

OKPOLICY.ORG

David Blatt, Director ■ 918.794.3944 ■ dblatt@okpolicy.org

**TOM AND SHERRI
GOODWIN**
Cheyenne, OK

Readers and supporters of *The Observer*
for over 20 years and counting.

