

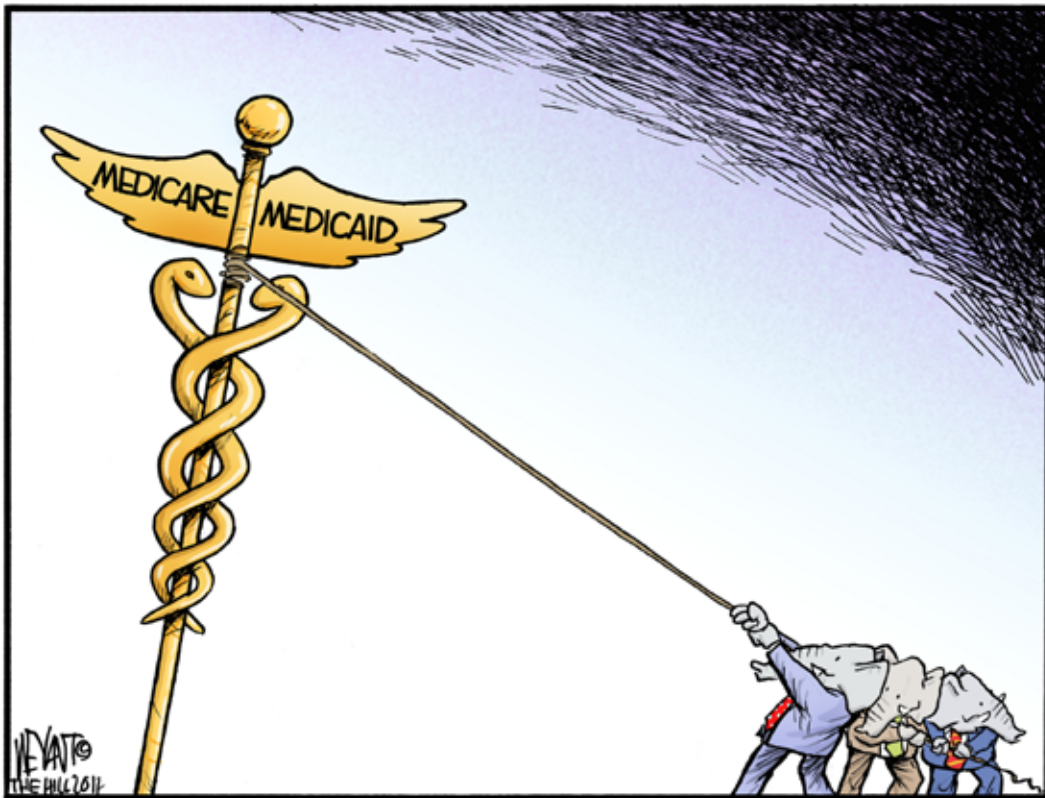
# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

• AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF COMMENTARY •

JULY 2013 • VOLUME 45 NUMBER 7 • \$2.50

## POLITICAL PAWNS

*Working Poor Caught In GOP's  
Tea Party-Corporatist Civil War*



**BY ARNOLD HAMILTON**

The decision to hire Leavitt Partners to develop a Medicaid alternative for Oklahoma's working poor did two things for Gov. Mary Fallin.

It bought her time to figure out how to solve a crisis that not only threatened health care for

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To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

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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

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# Observations Failure

How much longer will America tolerate the so-called War on Drugs?

The four-decade strategy is an abysmal failure: It hasn't solved the problems surrounding illicit drug use. It's turned the U.S. into the world's incarceration leader. And worst of all, it's become the hammer of the new Jim Crow.

A new American Civil Liberties Union study found blacks were arrested for marijuana possession in 2010 at nearly three times the rate of whites – racial disparity that has grown worse in the last decade.

In Oklahoma, 52.4% of all drug arrests [10,478] in 2010 were for possession, a decline of 7.9% from 10 years ago. At the same time, however, the disparity between blacks and whites arrested for pot jumped nearly 30%.

As one of the authors of the report, Ezekiel Edwards, put it, "The War on Marijuana has disproportionately been a war on people of color."

"State and local governments have aggressively enforced marijuana laws selectively against black people and communities, needlessly ensnaring hundreds of thousands of people in the criminal justice system at tremendous human and financial cost."

The strategy helps feed America's burgeoning prison industrial complex – particularly a private prison industry that lavishes campaign contributions and gifts on the state's elected leaders to ensure tax dollars keep flowing their way.

A Tulsa World analysis earlier this year found private prison interests gave nearly \$200,000 in campaign contributions and gifts to 79 of the state's 149 legislative members since 2004. Over roughly the same period, state spending on private prisons increased from \$57 million annually to \$73 million.

House Speaker T.W. Shannon was the largest single recipient of private prison-related support: \$34,950. Gov. Mary Fallin was second: \$33,608.

The racial disparity in arrests also has a disgusting political element to it: Felony convictions prevent many persons of color – who tend to

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# THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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# Observerscope



New poll tax? The cost of a state-issued ID card will double in November – to \$20. A standard driver's license renewal jumps, too – from \$21.50 to \$33.50.

Laurel: To Tulsa students Sarah A. Keglovits and Stephen Slater, among only 141 nationwide to be honored as U.S. Presidential Scholars.

Seventy-five percent in recent Sooner Poll favor requiring districts to install storm shelters in schools, but can't agree how to pay for it. Good grief! Lives are at stake. Just do it.

Dart: To House Speaker T.W. Shannon, threatening the state Supreme Court with term limits after it tossed tort reform because of logrolling. Don't blame the court. The ban on multiple subjects in one bill is clear.

We note the passing of Dr. Ramona Paul, former assistant state superintendent and early childhood education expert. During her tenure Oklahoma led nation in early childhood.

Laurel: To Oklahoma State University, among six largest university purchasers of green power, according to EPA. The 26-turbine Cowboy Wind Farm near Blackwell provides nearly 70% of the Stillwater campus' electricity.

The Koch Brothers are gearing up for 2014: KOCHPAC donated \$559,000 to federal-level candidates and committees between January and May – its fastest start ever for a federal election cycle. – Center for Public Integrity

Dart: To Tulsa Tea Party Rep. Jim Bridenstine, taking to U.S. House floor to deliver sophomoric attack on President Obama. He called ObamaCare "the biggest affront to liberty in my lifetime." Is he channeling Sally Kern?

U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess, R-TX, actually said it: "Watch a sonogram of a 15-week baby, and they have movements that are purposeful. They stroke their face. If they're a male baby, they may have their hand between their legs. If they feel pleasure, why is it so hard to believe that they could feel pain?"

Laurel: To state Rep. Brian Renegar, D-McAlester, correctly noting the idea of selling water to Texas is part of a scheme to eliminate the state income tax. The Daily Disappointment, naturally, flipped out – their silk-stocking buddies hope no one catches on before they can cash in.

While wingnuts play politics with the HPC vaccine, lives are being saved. A new study shows a 56.4% decrease in HPC-related cervical cancers in teenage girls inoculated from the virus. – Centers for Disease Control

Dart: To Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, proving yet again it cares not one whit about the working poor in Oklahoma. It ought to be wholesale behind the Leavitt Report – steering more business to high-rolling private insurers.

Another Democrat is taking a serious look at challenging state Superintendent Janet Barresi: Peggs Superintendent John Cox is assembling an exploratory team to evaluate his prospects.

Laurel: To U.S. Conference of Mayors, unanimously endorsing resolution that calls for an end to enforcement of federal marijuana law – urging that states be allowed to "set their own marijuana policies without federal interference."

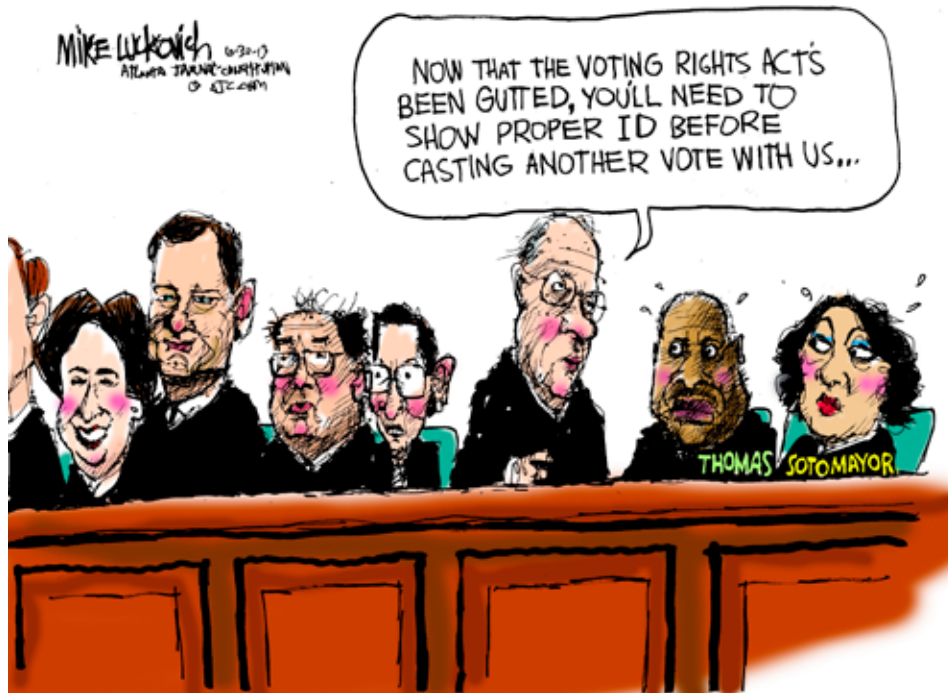
OKC Councilor Ed Shadid makes it official: He's a candidate for mayor in 2014. No word yet on whether incumbent Mick Cornett will seek another term.

Dart: To the nation's failed Drug War. A new ACLU report finds blacks were arrested for marijuana possession at nearly three times the rate of whites in 2010. In Oklahoma, the three counties with largest racial disparity in pot arrests: Kay, Creek and Pontotoc.

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# Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Greetings from Cynics United. The recent opening of the G. Bush Presidencul Liberry on the campus of Southern Methodist University opened some wounds, new and old. This thing should be labeled a tribute to prevarication, mediocrity, historical revisionism, arrogance ... the list could go on and on.

Apparently, elementary-aged school children are being encouraged to go through the monstrosity to get "Dub's" complete, sanitized version of why we had to invade Iraq. I'm sure there is no mention of the primary reasons, which to me were: Bush – get Saddam; Cheney – get the oil fields for Halliburton.

When Bush threw his little yacht party on one of our aircraft carriers, the mission for him, for all intents and purposes, was accomplished. Saddam was toast or was soon to be. Some 4,000 American lives and uncounted Iraqi lives would be considered collateral damage, I guess.

The oil field matter didn't work out too well, either, as I recall.

There is probably no mention of

the \$9 billion [or whatever billion] that just vanished.

Equally distressing is the fact that the thing was placed on the campus of a Methodist Church operation. As a lifelong Methodist, that was a major disappointment for me. I guess the money-fled aspect of our society has invaded our Christian environs as well as everything else.

It's too late now to even try to do anything about it.

Tom Ellis  
Okeene

Editor, The Observer:

I write with a heavy heart because five men in the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act – thus erasing fundamental protections against racial discrimination in voting.

What the court did takes me back in my mind to the dehumanizing days of segregation in Oklahoma.

In those days, I was a teenager working as a waitress in the bus station in Checotah. When African Americans got off a bus and came up front, to the restaurant section of the bus station, for food, I had to tell them "no." They had to eat

at a counter in back, behind the kitchen, near the toilets.

Incidentally, those toilets were labeled "WHITES" and "COLOREDs."

Because of the Supreme Court's recent action, states legally restricted from doing so in the past are now free to enact stringent voter ID laws, limit polling hours, limit polling places, and purge voter rolls – all in an effort to keep minorities [mainly Democrats] from voting.

Wanda Jo Stapleton  
Oklahoma City

*Editor's Note: Wanda Jo Stapleton represented south Oklahoma City as a Democrat in the state House from 1986-96.*

Editor, The Observer:

I miss Molly [Ivins]. Can you imagine her comments about Governor Good Hair and Wendy Davis?

Kathy Jones  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

When some people criticize Ellen Sturtz for recently interrupting Mrs. First Lady at a Democratic fundraiser, I would like to remind readers that to move the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell Dan Choi and a good many other grass-roots gay/lesbian activists interrupted speakers, traffic, dinners, fundraisers, and stirred up the general complacency that sometimes surrounds the political process in America.

Politicians only respond out of their comfort zone when forced to by public pressure. There is no reason to give Mrs. First Lady any slack; she's a professional woman with administrative experience.

Listening and dealing with political pressure is part of the rent she has to pay if she's going to live in the White House and not an ivory tower.

According to the UK Guard-

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## A Matter Of Priorities

**B**efore late spring's tornado mayhem becomes a distant memory, let us pause to consider an inconvenient truth: Oklahoma's elected elite gives its sugar daddies in the corporate world higher priority than our school children.

Unfair? Too harsh?

Not if you review the spending priorities of the state's political decision-makers.

Only hours after May 20's EF-5 mile-wide monster demolished Moore's Plaza Towers Elementary School and claimed the lives of seven students, lawmakers were urged to approve a bond issue that would have begun outfitting the state's public schools with safe rooms or shelters.

Not gonna happen, the Capitol's Powers-That-Be decreed. The state can't afford it. And we're not going to go into debt to do it.

Eleven days later, exactly one week after the Legislature closed up shop for the year, another EF-5 behemoth – this one 2½ miles wide – dropped from the sky near El Reno and wiped out the Canadian Valley Technology Center.

Gov. Mary Fallin quickly joined the nothing-doing chorus, telling Reuters news agency in an interview: "There will not be a state mandate that individuals or businesses or schools have to put in" shelters or safe rooms.

No one knows for certain what it would cost to outfit each of the state's 1,600 or so schools without such tornado protections – some estimates are as high as \$2 billion. But the notion that Oklahoma can't afford it is laughable.

There is more than enough money pouring into the state treasury to make it happen – even with \$1 billion or so in short-sighted state income tax cuts enacted in the last decade.

It's a question of political will. Of p-r-i-o-r-i-t-i-e-s.

Unfortunately, lawmakers are giving hundreds of millions, if not more, of your tax dollars to private enterprise via tax breaks, credits and other incentives.

Money that could be spent retrofitting schools, or on all manner of vital public services, instead is going to "promote" business and employment opportunities even though there is ample evidence that some of the giveaways aren't necessary or haven't produced a single job.

So why are legislative leaders loath to systematical-

ly review the tax breaks and eliminate those proven to be nothing more than corporate welfare?

The folks feasting at the taxpayers' trough are many of the same folks who write the campaign checks that help keep Republicans in power.

Lest you think this is a partisan screed, be advised: Democrats played the game, too, when they controlled the system for nearly a century.

The real problem: the masses let them get by with it.

There is some good news to report, evidence rank-and-file Oklahomans are catching on to the pay-for-play shenanigans.

A recent statewide survey, commissioned by the Tulsa-based Oklahoma Policy Institute [OKPolicy], found that by a more than 2-1 margin Oklahoma voters oppose tax breaks to oil and gas companies for horizontal drilling.

This isn't a knee-jerk reaction to high prices at the pump or a sudden disgust with the wealth amassed by the state's energy elite.

It's simple logic: When the tax breaks were first enacted, horizontal drilling was a new and risky proposition. Not anymore. In fact, it's increasingly the preferred drilling method, and it's costing the state treasury dearly.

According to OKPolicy, the state paid out or accrued \$537 million in tax rebates and credits for horizontal wells between fiscal years 2010 and 2012. The cost to taxpayers could reach \$400 million a year if the Legislature fails to act – or if it extends the current system set to expire in July 2015.

What will the legislative majority do? The public policy angel on one shoulder urges the tax breaks be eliminated. The devilish political angel on the other warns of dire electoral consequences if campaign donors are scorned.

Alas, there is little reason to believe the Legislature will do the right thing – unless a voting public that clearly opposes such corporate welfare begins to turn up the heat.

Sen. Mike Mazzei of Tulsa and Rep. David Dank of OKC, both members of the Republican majority, have

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## Journalism 101

I have often been asked why I never ran for public office. As early as the '60s, a delegation from the Tulsa Fraternal Order of Police drove to OKC to ask me to run for mayor. I thanked them but declined.

From my childhood forward I wanted to be a reporter. I worked on the school paper, The St. John's Siren. When I mobilized in 1950 with the 45th Division, I saw an opportunity to keep the folks in McAlester informed about what their friends and loved ones were doing.

My company commander, Captain Philip Fultz, said it was OK with him. I fired off a few missives to the McAlester News Capital during basic training at Camp Polk, LA. The editor, Howard Cowan, sent me a note of encouragement and thus was born a foreign correspondent.

My brother Kevin and I both rotated to the regular army, disgusted at being stymied on Hokkaido Island Japan. We wanted action! [Is there anything dumber than a kid who takes his life so lightly?]

The minute I hit Korea I read every word in Stars and Stripes. I was still writing back home but there was little to tell. So I wrote a story on the donation of a Swiss mobile hospital, sent it to Stars and Stripes and they published it!

Thus was the beginning of a friendship with the editor, Sgt. Bill Fitzgerald. He probably published 90% of my articles, and I know why.

During World War II, I devoured every word written by a foreign correspondent named Ernie Pyle, so I told ordinary stories about ordinary soldiers just as he had.

I knew the wire services and the big newspapers with correspondents embedded with the troops were



keeping America and the world informed on the big picture.

Through the years when I talked to journalism classes I encouraged them to individualize their stories – real names of real people. Ernie Pyle had that knack, a column nicknamed GI Joe.

Eating with the troops, sharing a foxhole or going on patrol is what the people back home really wanted to read about.

I only got in trouble one time and it resulted in the only time in my life I was arrested. Two CID agents came to my outfit on Hokkaido and placed me under arrest. I spent that night in a holding cell in a very bleak building.

The next morning I appeared before a major. He had a copy of a story I had written about seeing parachutes flying out of planes on an adjacent island. I assumed it was our side.

Wrong! It was the Russians! I hadn't sent the article through division headquarters before mailing it home. As he lectured me, all I could think about was going to a military prison. Instead, he let me off with a grave warning – do it again and I would be up on charges.

I kept writing home but I made sure they passed inspection at headquarters. I didn't write about my arrest – not because I was ashamed to but I knew it would never pass inspection.

– While Founding Editor Frosty Troy takes some time off, we are reprinting some of his favorite columns. This first appeared in the July 10, 2011 Observer.

## Paralyzing Procedure

Two little boys were going to the hospital the next day for operations.

The older boy leans over and asks, "What are you having done?"

The second boy says, "I'm getting my tonsils out, and I'm afraid."

The first boy says, "You've got nothing to worry about. I had that done when I was four. They put you

to sleep, and when you wake up, they give you lots of Jell-O and ice cream. It's a breeze."

The second boy then asks, "What are you going in for?"

The first boy says, "Circumcision."

"Whoa!" the smaller boy replies. "Good luck, buddy. I had that done when I was born. Couldn't walk for a year."

# *After Talk Of Reining In Tax Breaks, Oklahoma Added More*

BY GENE PERRY

**E**ven as Gov. Mary Fallin and legislative leaders were patting themselves on the back for this year's legislative session, one Republican lawmaker sounded a discordant note. Rep. David Dank, R-OKC, awarded the session a "C-minus at best," saying it was "marked as much or more by what we failed to do than by what we actually achieved."

A large part of Rep. Dank's discontent comes from the Legislature's failure to take meaningful action on the numerous tax credits, deductions, and other loopholes that riddle the tax code.

Dank has long been a champion of reining in tax breaks. He led a task force on the issue in 2011, and he has sponsored several bills over the past couple years to increase oversight and eliminate unnecessary tax credits.

Those efforts have not seen much success. In fact, lawmakers approved several measures this year to extend or create new tax credits. Here's what was done:

SB 343 by Sen. Mike Mazzei and Rep. Elise Hall extended the sunset date to 2021 for payouts going to utilities that burn Oklahoma coal and large renewable energy producers. Previously, the coal credit was

set to expire in 2014 and the renewable energy credit [known as the zero-emission facilities credit] would have expired in 2016.

This bill also changed these credits from being transferrable to being refundable at 85% of their value. Previously, the credits could be sold to other entities for a portion of their value, and the state would deduct the full value from the taxes owed of whoever bought the credit.

It was designed so that the incentive would continue even after the tax liability for the original recipient had gone down to nothing.

After this change, the original recipients [purchasers of Oklahoma coal or generators of renewable energy] can no longer sell credits, but they can receive direct payouts from the state after their tax liability has been reduced to zero.

This change will save some taxpayer money, since the payouts will be at 85% rather than 100% of the credits' starting value.

However, it also pulls the veil off to make it even more clear that these tax breaks are spending programs by another name.

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# *Crony Capitalism Takes Over Oklahoma's Prison System*

BY HARRY COATES

**F**ormer Gov. Frank Keating started a dangerous trend when he allowed Oklahoma Department of Corrections' inmates to be transferred to private prisons.

Today, this trend continues and is being encouraged by the governor and legislative leaders who pass laws continually increasing punishments and sentences, which ensures a growing inmate population.

This trend has allowed Oklahoma to become the top state for women incarceration and No. 4 for men. Our prisons are overflowing and understaffed.

Prison guards are grossly underpaid for their dangerous occupations to the point that they can hardly provide for their families, which leads to a high turnover rate and continued staffing problems.

It's odd that state leaders and lawmakers won't ap-

prove a raise for DOC employees but will pay more per prisoner to send them to a private prison.

I don't blame DOC Director Justin Jones for resigning. He's been fighting a losing battle for years.

I agree with him that the premise behind private prisons is disturbing. He's not alone in his belief that it's ethically and morally wrong to profit from incarceration.

Unfortunately, we're in the minority, and current state leaders want to use these facilities even more.

Where is the incentive to help keep people out of prison or properly reintegrate them back into society so they don't end up back behind bars?

The Legislature continues passing stricter laws causing more people to be locked up and to serve lon-

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# Tax Breaks

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Last fiscal year, the coal credit paid out \$293,000 while the zero-emission facilities credit paid out \$2.9 million.

A new tax exemption was created with SB 645 by Sen. Mike Schulz and Rep. Charles Ortega. It provides an excise tax exemption for helicopters that were “purchased to be used exclusively for training U.S. military personnel or other training authorized by the U.S. Government.”

Ortega said the exemption was designed to support a helicopter training facility in southwest Oklahoma, even though the training facility was already planning to open without the credit.

Besides the fact that the bill’s own author acknowledged that it is unnecessary spending, this tax exemption designed to help out a specific company may qualify as an unconstitutional “gift” that would be thrown out in court if challenged. The exemption is estimated to cost Oklahoma \$1 million in FY 2014 and \$535 thousand in FY 2015.

Lastly, in response to the damaging tornadoes in Moore and other parts of the state, SB 330 by Sen. Anthony Sykes and Rep. Earl Sears created tax credits for owners of vehicles and homes that were destroyed. The bill also exempts from the sales tax goods that were donated for tornado relief.

One measure was approved to remove some tax breaks. HB 2308 by Rep. Scott Martin and Sen. Clark Jolley eliminated 18 tax credits and 3 tax deductions. However, most of those eliminated were already being used very little or not at all.

This bill was estimated to save \$1.874 million in FY

2014, with most savings coming from eliminating the deduction for dividends and interest from Oklahoma-based banks.

That estimate may be high, because it claims small savings from eliminating a tax credit for victims of tornadoes between 1999 and 2003, even as SB 330 recreated this credit for 2012-13 tornadoes. Savings from this bill will not be much greater than the cost of the new helicopter training facility tax credit.

There’s much more that could be done. OK Policy has identified several likely candidates for tax breaks that should be eliminated, including the “double deduction” for state income taxes paid and the out-of-control tax breaks for horizontal drilling.

The cost of the latter tax break could balloon to as high as \$400 million per year without legislative action, and polling shows that it is strongly opposed by Oklahoma voters.

Senate Pro Tem Brian Bingman has said that reforming tax credits will be on the agenda for next year. He told the Associated Press, “All those tax credits have sunset dates on them, and I think it’s our responsibility to look at them and make sure they’re bringing economic benefit to Oklahoma. We will continue looking at them.”

We can only hope that, unlike this year, they do more than look.

– *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>*

# Crony

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

ger sentences.

Therefore, it appears that lawmakers want our state-run prisons overflowing so they can send more people to private prisons – all at a high cost to taxpayers.

This isn’t surprising, however, given the generous financial contributions the private prison operators give to political campaigns. The Legislature has now even abandoned the recent efforts of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative Working Group that laid the foundation for legislation to improve the state’s criminal justice system.

It defies logic that we would choose to rely on the more expensive private prisons rather than passing legislation to help lower the population within our own corrections system.

For instance, addressing the strict and excessive sentences for nonviolent offenders most of which are

drug addicts or alcoholics and need drug and alcohol counseling, not to be locked up the rest of their lives.

They have an illness that’s treatable but Oklahoma isn’t providing them much help because then legislative leaders would appear “weak” on crime.

Oklahoma’s policymakers need to get serious about corrections reform and address the issues that contribute to incarceration including high poverty, substance abuse and lack of education.

By addressing the social problems that lead to a life of crime and helping people before they get arrested, we could drastically lower Oklahoma’s incarceration rate.

We wouldn’t need private prisons in Oklahoma but, unfortunately, I don’t see that happening in the near future.

– *The author, a Seminole Republican, represents District 28 in the Oklahoma Senate*



# Speaker Tries To Bully Supreme Court

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

**D**idn't state lawmakers just approve a new anti-bullying statute?

Yes, they did. But apparently what is deemed necessary and prudent when it comes to Oklahoma's public school children doesn't apply when you're an adult who wields the biggest gavel on the west side of the state Capitol.

House Speaker T.W. Shannon's suggestion that legislators take a good, hard look at extending term limits to appellate judges – including the Supreme Court – is state government's equivalent of schoolyard bullying.

He delivered an unmistakable warning that high court jurists better shape up and bend to the Legislature's will or lawmakers will find ways to torpedo the jurists' careers.

So much for the notion of separation of powers – or of checks and balances.

Shannon's knickers are in a knot because the state Supreme Court recently tossed the Republican majority's pet 2009 lawsuit reform package, declaring it violated the state Constitution's ban on "logrolling" – multiple subjects rolled into a single piece of legislation.

This, of course, is not the first time the high court has been forced to remind legislators of the single-subject rule.

Yet our elected senators and representatives persist in disregarding the Oklahoma Constitution's clear language, displaying either breathtaking hubris or willful ignorance.

The casual observer of state politics may be tempted to dismiss this as just so much inside baseball. But actually, this is a showdown that warrants your undivided attention.

It's a nothing less than a showdown over the future of a fair and independent judiciary.

Across America, corporate interests have begun pouring huge sums of money into appellate court races, hoping to tip the scales of justice permanently in their favor.

Many states, including Oklahoma, require their appellate jurists to appear on the ballot periodically so voters can decide whether to retain them. Unlike partisan races for other offices – say, governor or attorney general or a seat in the Legislature – there is little electioneering and thus little need for jurists to raise



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money for campaign advertising.

Barring obvious corruption or unseemly personal conduct, most appellate judges are retained without much discussion.

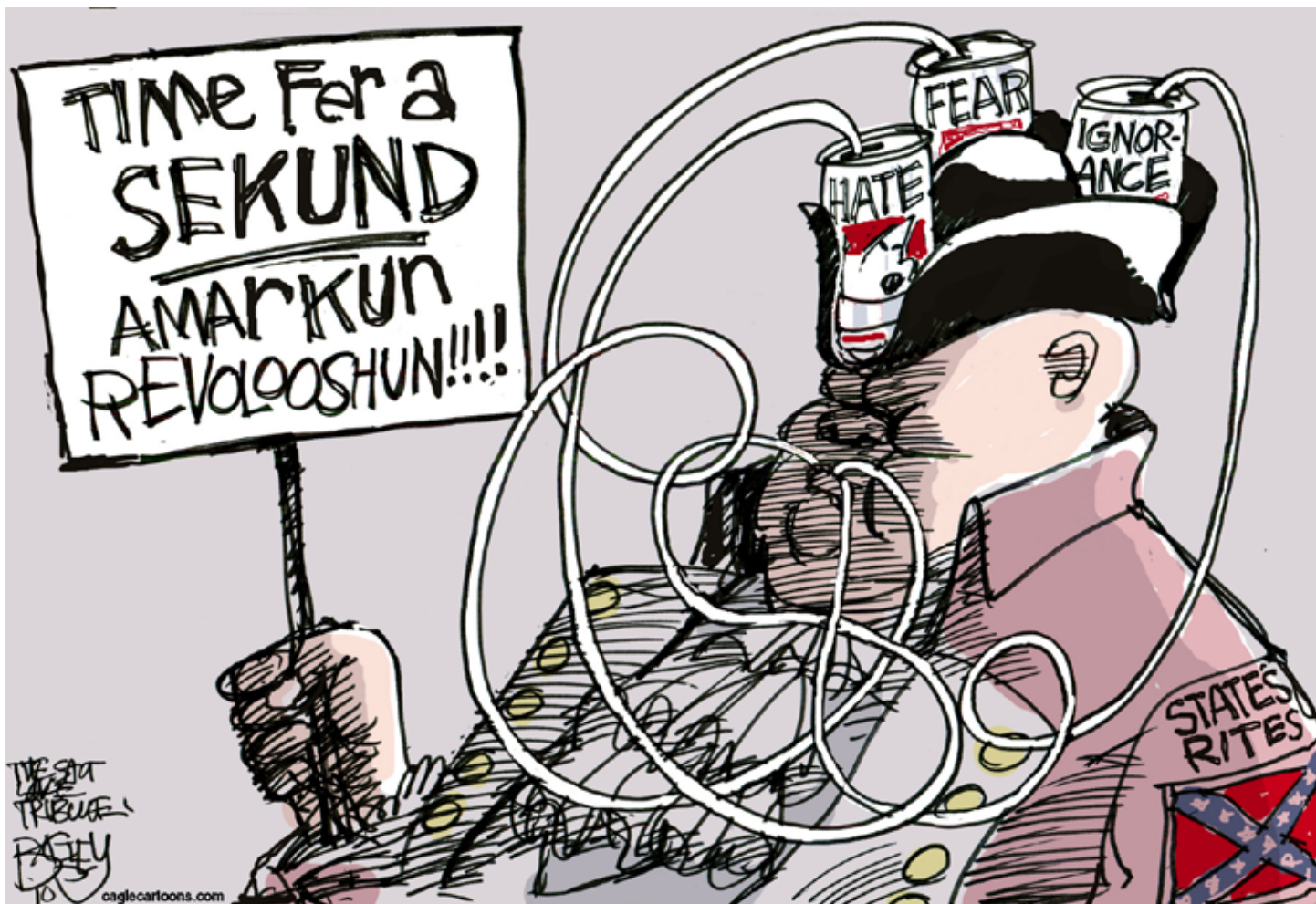
But in another sign of big money's corrupting influence in the American political and judicial systems, corporate interests now are taking dead aim at jurists whose rulings displease them.

Take a look at what happened last year in Iowa, Florida, Michigan and North Carolina, where big money rolled into judicial races. Or read Laurence Leamer's chilling new book *The Price of Justice* which details how Don Blankenship, the head of Massey Energy, sought to control the West Virginia Supreme Court.

Even if the vested interests aren't able to unseat any incumbent judges, the mere threat posed by such deep pockets is surely enough to affect some jurists' decision-making.

Let's say an oil or gas outfit is careless with the

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# WINGNUT WORLD

## *What Uber-Right Extremists Really Want*

BY CAL HOBSON

**F**irst things first. This article is not about the majority of Republicans currently serving in our Legislature. For the most part they are hard working and sincere public servants.

However, too often they remain silent when it comes to stupid and damaging decisions foisted on them by what passes as their leadership. Others comply because they don't know any better while a few won't risk speaking up simply because they covet so much their titles, committee assignments, office space and other perks.

Some such behavior is understandable in a term-limited Legislature.

However, the crew I'll describe, led by reactionary first-term House Speaker T.W. Shannon, R-Lawton, is an entirely different lot. Their political pirouettes, orchestrated by Tea Party zealots, are often driven by

anger, arrogance, fear, intimidation and, of course, the pursuit of unfettered power.

They are also hypocrites, one of the most damning descriptors of a public servant. They tell their constituents of one set of public priorities then do the opposite.

This duplicity is primarily peddled around the two major planks anchoring for what passes as Republican dogma. The two are, first, an obsession with smaller government and, second, a genetically driven need to cut taxes – any size, any kind and at any-time, regardless of whether it serves any worthwhile endeavor or not.

Before revealing why what they say about public policy is not what they mean, a quick examination of the motivators that guide their behavior may be helpful.

This delegation of demagogues, above all else, fears those different from themselves with special targets being gays, Muslims and Hispanics. Entities such as the United Nations and Sharia law also attract their twisted logic.

**H**aving learned nothing from the 2012 national elections, their assault through bigoted legislation continued unabated during the 2013 session, led, of course, by the biggest scaredy cat of all, Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC.

However, she's not alone. Even Sen. Ralph Shortey, a Republican representing Oklahoma and Canadian counties, declared he would love to go door-to-door campaigning with an assault rifle on his back. Of course, he was probably just wanting attention but "the goofy one" only came off as being foolish.

Speaking of foolish, this south OKC Republican filed a bill, SB 1418, in 2012 that would "prohibit the sale or manufacture of food or products which contain aborted human fetuses." As Dave Barry would say, I'm not making this up. Shortey says he got the idea from an article he read on the Internet ... or more likely someone read to him.

Let's turn now to anger, arrogance, and intimidation, traits that are so often displayed by many of these self-appointed moralists. Such instincts seem to be especially prevalent in a couple of Cleveland County legislators, my home for 55 years.

Sen. Anthony Sykes, R-Moore, has the demeanor and personality of a mongoose. For no good reason, except to throw his weight around, he single handedly held up a much needed and authorized judgeship for his home county – which has by far the highest caseload in the state.

Silly Sykes apparently never learned in law school that justice delayed is justice denied and his childish behavior wreaked havoc at the courthouse for years. Of course he refuses to speak with the press to justify his antics because he can't.

Over in the state House lurks my new representative, Republican Bobby Cleveland of Slaughterville, who managed, in his first year, to display both legislative ignorance and personal arrogance.

For example, HB 1525, a bill he authored and brags about, would have – if it had been law when we were scrambling in 2002 to fund the National Weather Center in Norman – stopped this world-class research and life-saving facility from being built.

Either Cleveland doesn't know this or doesn't care, but either possibility is reprehensible. As to his personal arrogance, the newly minted lawmaker recently told our local pharmacist to take down his sign banning guns from being brought into the pharmacy. Into a pharmacy!

Of course, our police chief, one tough lady, put an end to Cleveland's shenanigans.

Arrogance, anger, fear and intimidation are hardly personal characteristics one would put on campaign material. But there is something even more dangerous: Ignorance.

These folks seem to pride themselves in knowing less about our state, its history, needs, strengths and weaknesses than any other group that has ever served at the Capitol. If you think I exaggerate, please speak privately with any long serving agency head, lobbyist, or senior staff person.

In my nearly 30 years in the Legislature I learned there are only two things of value at the Capitol: knowledge and one's word. They are of equal importance and the lack of one erodes the value of the other. Currently both are in very short supply at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

To judge for yourself the insanity going on within our Legislature, just respond to the following questions.

Would you vote to:

- Abolish the Oklahoma Education Television Authority?
- Take money from child nutrition programs to fund TV advertising/
- Reduce food stamps in a state that ranks fourth in hunger?
- Slash injured workers benefits by 30%?
- Use operating dollars to pay for Capitol construction?
- Pass a 35-cents-a-day tax cut that takes effect in 36 months?
- Raise the cost of renewing a drivers license by 55% immediately?
- Cut funding for education and health care by 20%?
- Lose our world-class School of Science and Mathematics?
- Turn down billions of dollars for health care in the third most medically challenged state?

And then brag about it?

The current crowd in charge, led by Speaker Shannon but including Gov. Mary Fallin and Senate President Pro Tem Brian Bingman, did or attempted to do all these things and so many more lunacies.

**F**ocusing now on the alleged Republican goals of smaller government and lower taxes, neither is a reality now nor likely in the future because the Tea Party mouthpieces running the Capitol don't want them to be.

Four-hundred forty-one new bills became law this year, a number of which invade the most private activities in our lives. Some were unconstitutional on their face, cost millions to defend, and have been struck down by various courts.

Power-crazed Speaker Shannon's response to these expensive embarrassments is to consider the imposition of term limits on judges, proving he is not only vindictive but has little regard for or understanding of the constitutional mandate of separation of powers.

His power grab is only a somewhat less grandiose initiative compared to last year's proposals that sought to abolish the Court of Criminal Appeals and remove the Supreme Court's ability to review legislation for constitutionality.



## *Fight Over Oklahoma Water Far From Over*

**O**klahoma won a major battle recently when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Texas does not have authority to harvest water from the Kiamichi River.

It would be a mistake, however, to think the Great 21st Century Water War is over.

Now that the Red River Rivalry has been decided, at least for the moment, it's Bedlam time, an intra-Oklahoma showdown over who controls water – and who gets to cash in on that control.

Oklahoma could generate billions of dollars for under-financed schools, roads and other essential state services if it ever decided to sell water to over-populated, seriously thirsty North Texas.

The problem is, there is so much money at stake that it's nearly impossible to strike a deal that would please a majority of the groups claiming rights to the

water.

The state has a clear interest. So do southern Oklahoma cities and counties that depend on water for such things as tourism, recreation and economic development.

Tribes have treaty rights with the federal government that remain in effect. Private landowners, too, have claims.

Every past attempt to balance Oklahoma's long-term water needs with a desire to monetize surplus water has collapsed because of an all-too-familiar human malady: greed.

The state isn't going to leave it up to the locals to decide. The tribes aren't going to leave it up to the state. The landowners and local residents aren't going to leave it up to the urban Powers-That-Be or the tribes.



If history is any guide, there are excellent reasons the various groups are suspicious of each other.

You need look no further than Oklahoma City's commandeering of Sardis Lake, a shady deal greased by state officials that ignored the wishes of many southeastern Oklahoma residents and some tribal leaders.

Moving forward, the No. 1 priority must be Oklahoma's long-term water needs.

The comprehensive statewide water plan was supposed to provide independent, scientific analysis that

would make it easier for all southern Oklahoma water stakeholders to decide how much, if any, could be sold to out-of-state interests.

Unfortunately, the plan raised as many questions as it answered, largely because – as critics asserted – its scientific analysis all-too-often appeared to be of dubious quality.

If, however, it ever is scientifically demonstrated that surplus water would be available even in periods of severe drought, then the No. 2 priority in any deal must be a fair and equitable sharing of the bounty.

You can bet the state's big money interests will have a seat at the bargaining table. So will the tribes, flush with the cash necessary to legally protect their claims.

The ones in danger of getting screwed are the little guys in what historically has been Oklahoma's most impoverished region: Little Dixie.

Water is to the 21st Century what oil was to the last. And it belongs to all Oklahomans – not just the few who can afford to fight over it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Oklahoma's stewardship of this most precious natural resource will determine the state's fate, for better or for worse.

## Wingnuts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

This nonsense comes from people who quote the Constitution verbatim but are clueless as to what it really means. Nor do they care.

The final charade played out endlessly not only in our Legislature but the governor's office as well is, of course, their allegiance to any and all personal income tax cuts with this year's law going into effect in 2016 when taxpayers will receive about 35 cents a day in relief.

In the meantime millions upon millions worth of new fees, fines, assessments, charges, and gimmicks are in place now.

Money, as former Gov. Frank Keating liked to say, is fungible. The cash doesn't know for what governmental purpose it is being spent when it leaves your billfold or purse. It's just green and gone.

In closing, our third president, Thomas Jefferson, succinctly addressed Oklahoma's current conundrum when he penned, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

I obviously believe that ignorance is the major commodity being exchanged between and among Tea Party sycophants serving in our Legislature. If, however, after reading this column you think otherwise, would it sway your opinion to know that under Speaker Shannon's rule his minions also killed all attempts to allow local governments to develop more restrictive smoking standards in public facilities such as restaurants?

If that's not damaging enough, this same guy unilaterally decided our state, unlike more than 40 others, should do nothing to stem the plague of texting while driving especially by our teenagers.

Convinced now?

– The author, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore

## ED SHADID For OKC Mayor

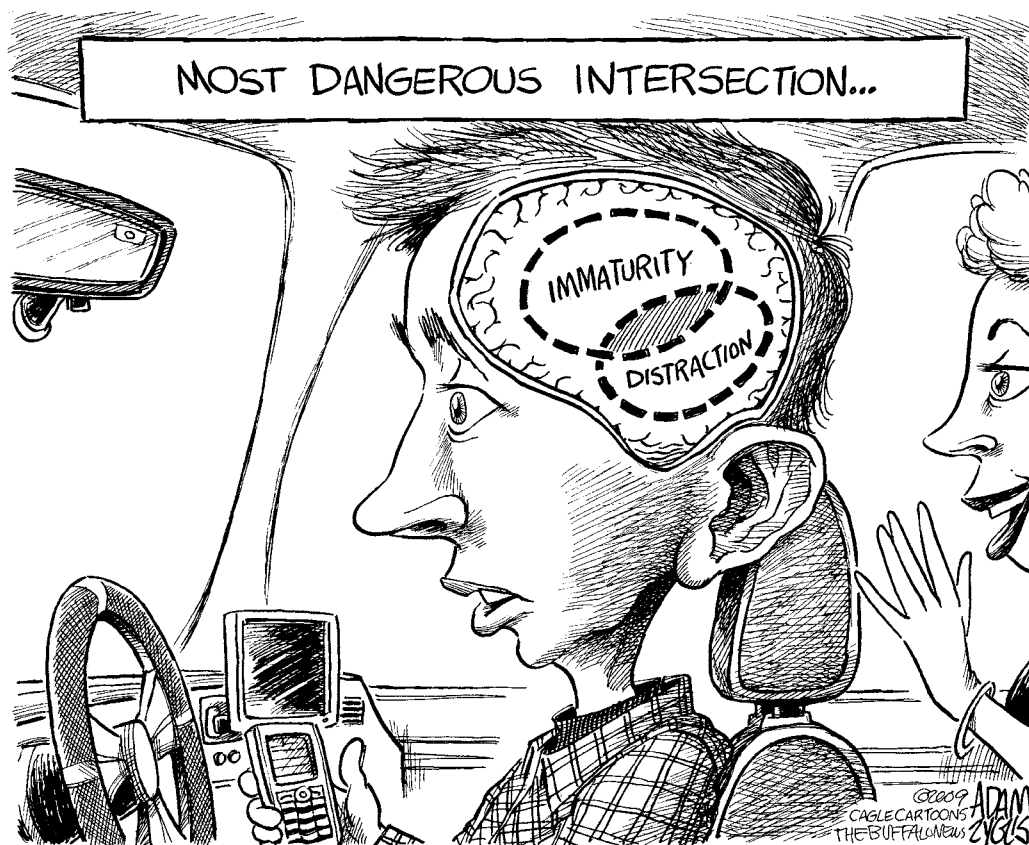
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# Will Oklahoma Leaders Answer These Questions Correctly?

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

**O**n June 5, 1955, Redmond O'Hanlon, a Staten Island policeman with a flair for facts about Shakespeare, was the first contestant on a new CBS sensation called "The \$64,000 Question." The game show's format allowed a person to answer up to 11 questions of increasing value in a quest to win \$64,000.

Every contestant was initially asked a \$64 question and the prize increased with each successive correctly answered question. To add suspense, after the seventh question, when the prize reached \$4,000, the contestant would be asked only one question per week.

In a matter of 10 weeks, the show had gained 47 million viewers. No television show's audience had ever gained such popularity so quickly.

According to historian Robert Metz, President Dwight Eisenhower was a faithful weekly viewer and did not want to be disturbed while the show was on. Metz also claimed that during the show's timeslot each week, the nation's crime rate, theater attendance and restaurant patronage all dropped dramatically.

Even today, 58 years after the show's debut, the top

grand prize of \$64,000 is nearly \$23,000 more than Oklahoma's average annual salary. In fact, \$64,000 in 1955 is roughly equivalent to \$555,000 in 2013 dollars.

Needless to say that was, and is, a lot of money.

Because of the immense popularity of the program, the name of the show quickly became a catch phrase that was used anytime a person was faced with a vitally important question that was difficult if not impossible to answer.

In the wake of the 2013 Legislative session, Oklahomans are faced with a number of \$64,000 questions:

1. Will state voters step up to the plate and demand that their elected officials protect students by requiring and funding storm shelters and safe rooms in Oklahoma's schools and child care facilities?

Gov. Mary Fallin has said that no law requiring storm shelters in schools will be approved because Oklahoma cannot afford it. She says that of the state's 1,752 public school sites, 94% of the them do not have storm shelters. Rep. Joe Dorman of Rush Springs filed a request for a legislative study on the issue.

2. Will highway patrolmen, correctional employees

# MISSING BOOTSTRAPS

## *Oklahoma De-Funds Adult Education*

BY KATE RICHEY

Oklahoma's adult education centers have historically offered low or no-cost GED prep courses, basic math and literacy instruction, and English as a second language [ESL] classes in every county in the state.

But for two – going on three – consecutive fiscal years, adult education in Oklahoma has been wholly defunded by the state – falling from a few million dollars in state appropriations for most of the last 10 years to \$0 in FY 2012 and FY 2013.

Since these centers also receive a federal funding match, they were able to keep their doors open initially. Yet for many smaller and more rural counties, the loss of state funding and the slow wane of their federal match has put their adult ed operations in jeopardy.

Basic skills are a prerequisite to employment – even fast food jobs are out of reach for Oklahomans who can't read or perform simple calculations. Even those considering CareerTech or college can't move forward without remedial math, reading, and language instruction. State leaders seem to understand and continue to stress the importance of workforce development, job training, and adult education.

The Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has warned of a "severe basic skills crisis," writing, "One out of four workforce age adults in Oklahoma lack the basic skills needed to succeed in an occupational training course or a knowledge-based job. These adults

face severe reading, writing, math, and analytic skill shortages that doom them to a low-income future unless they gain those skills."

During Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb's statewide listening tour on workforce development, business owners emphasized again and again how residents' lack of skills and training hold back economic development.

House Speaker T.W. Shannon pushed legislation to get adults "back to work" and off public programs, citing his commitment to the value of work and personal responsibility. Yet he eliminated his bill's work requirement once the cost of providing job training to unemployed food stamp [SNAP] recipients became clear.

Saying that we value work and responsibility, without demonstrating a commitment to those values, is distressing. We're quite literally closing the door on the thousands of Oklahomans who show up to adult education centers looking to lift themselves up the economic ladder.

Since adult ed was defunded, 150 full and part-time center instructors have been laid off, classes have been scaled back, and nearly 2,000 fewer adult students have been able to enroll in classes. If we continue to eliminate access to affordable basic education, the consequences for the state's budget and for Oklahoma families will be severe.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

and other state workers get a raise next session after seven years of no salary increases?

Two bills passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives promising highway patrolmen raises, however, the budget submitted to the governor did not include any money to pay for the promises.

Gov. Fallin said that she wanted to postpone any pay increases for state employees until a study could be done. She has requested a comprehensive study to determine appropriate pay and benefits levels for employees.

3. Will a bill be heard on the house floor next session that would prohibit texting while driving?

Despite the introduction of multiple bills last session, Speaker T.W. Shannon refused to allow even one anti-texting bill to be heard. Speaker Shannon says that he is "not a big fan" of any bill that would outlaw texting while driving.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation,

persons who text while driving are 23 times more likely to have an accident and texting while driving is six times more dangerous than drunk driving.

In 1955 Redmond O'Hanlon, a husband and father of five, chose to stop after he had correctly answered nine questions and won \$16,000.

If he had missed either of the next two questions, he would have lost all of his winnings and received a new 1955 Cadillac as a consolation prize. The Cadillac would have had a cash value of \$3,977. Mr. O'Hanlon chose wisely.

Is the Legislature?

You have the right and the duty to vote for elected officials and to let your elected officials know your thoughts on issues. Get involved. Let us know your thoughts.

– *The author, a Chickasha Democrat, represents District 56 in the Oklahoma House of Representatives*

# Priorities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

tried mightily for several years to persuade their colleagues to seriously review the tax breaks, credits and incentives.

They haven't succeeded under the Dome, but their efforts clearly haven't gone unnoticed. The OKPolicy-commissioned poll reflects a greater public understanding of the issue.

What's alternatively hilarious and maddening about legislative leadership's refusal to address the problem is that Republicans depict themselves as the party of free enterprise capitalism.

This is not free enterprise capitalism. This is picking winners and losers – something the GOP accuses Democrats in Washington of doing [Solyndra, anyone?]. This is a system that either guarantees higher profits for private businesses or socializes their losses. Corporate welfare.

If ever there was a time lawmakers would be sensitive to public perception, it would be now, right?

Around the globe, sensible people are asking a sensible question: How could a state prone to tornadoes not equip its public schools with shelters that protect children, teachers and staff?

One answer is Oklahomans long thought their schools were built well enough to ensure safety. What's changed is the state has endured increasingly more powerful tornadoes in recent years – winds all-too-often topping 200 miles per hour.

Experts say it's no longer enough to be in an interior hall or closet. You need to be under ground, in a safe room or out of the way to ensure your best chance of survival.

So now comes the time for a serious discussion about retrofitting our schools? In the wake of the May 20 deaths at Plaza Towers Elementary, state Rep. Joe Dorman, D-Rush Springs, urged legislative leaders to authorize a bond issue to finance a shelter program.

His idea went nowhere.

Cost is the most-often mentioned excuse. But there's also a political calculus about "bonds."

State and local governments and school districts long have issued bonds to finance major projects – the equivalent of taking out a mortgage for your home or a loan for your car.

But Tea Party-types have demagogued the term to the point it now equals "deficit spending" in the minds of too many voters. Indeed, staunchly conservative Republican lawmakers won't even consider a bond issue for fear they could lose in their primaries to a challenger even farther to the political right.

Moreover, legislative leaders know attention spans are short. In the days and weeks after Sandy Hook, new gun control measures seemed a certainty – universal background checks, closing the gun show loophole, banning high capacity magazines ... something. By spring, the momentum all but evaporated.

The same thing could happen in Oklahoma. As neighborhoods, schools and businesses are rebuilt, as life returns to normal, the sense of urgency fades.

But only if we let it.

If the safety of school children, teachers and staff is the priority we claim it to be, we shouldn't sit idly as legislative leaders proclaim poverty – all the while allowing corporate welfare to siphon our tax dollars away from our most important priorities.

We should instead to encouraging Mazzei and Dank – and alerting other legislators that we expect them to fix a broken system of tax breaks, credits and incentives.

Then, we should support Dorman's idea of a state-wide vote on a bond issue to begin retrofitting our schools. If approved, the tab could easily be repaid with money saved from eliminating spurious tax credits. Where are our priorities?

# Speaker

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

toxic chemicals it uses in the drilling process, fouling your drinking water. Or a trucking company is overworking its drivers, one of whom plows into your car, leaving you a quadriplegic.

Do you really want your case being decided by judges who can't afford to buck big trucking or big oil?

Shannon has proven himself a reliable toady of the State Chamber and other special interests who want nothing more than to permanently tilt the scales of justice in their favor.

Don't buy the bunk about so-called activist judges. The bigger problem is corporate activists who want to dominate the judiciary as they do the state's lawmak-

ing bodies.

Shannon's proposal flies in the face of a century of Oklahoma populism that – as reflected in the state Constitution – guarantees powerful, well-heeled vested interests can't run over the Average Joe with impunity.

Frankly, it's beneath the dignity of the House Speaker to stomp his feet and threaten the state's most prominent jurists simply because they're enforcing the Constitution.

The problem isn't the judiciary. The problem is a speaker and his comrades who think the rules apply to everyone but themselves.



# Pawns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

thousands, but also the financial viability of health providers across the state.

And it bought her political cover from a high-profile firm – headed by a conservative former Utah governor – that offered some inoculation from uber right attacks against anything that remotely resembled ObamaCare.

The report, delivered in late June, deployed all sorts of rightwing rhetoric about personal responsibility, but its message was unmistakable: Take the federal money.

“Mary Fallin is pulled between the business wing of the GOP and Tea Party-hatred-of-Obama-trumps-everything wing,” says Dr. Katherine Scheirman, former chief of medical operations for the U.S. Air Force in Europe and staunch supporter of the Affordable Care Act.

“The [Oklahoma] Hospital Association and the Chambers really want the money, but they are kind of pulling their punches a little bit because what they don’t want is a Tea Party governor. That would really cause them no end of problems.”

Indeed, the ink on the Leavitt Report was barely dry before the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs trashed the proposal, declaring in a blog post that “conservatives must insist this is no time for Oklahoma’s political leaders to ‘go wobbly,’ as Margaret Thatcher would say, in the fight against ObamaCare.”

Leavitt Partners, headed by ex-Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt, urged Oklahoma to tap ObamaCare dollars to expand the state’s Insure Oklahoma program rather than federally-sponsored Medicaid.

Leavitt suggested Oklahoma, over the first 10 years, could save in the neighborhood of \$464 million and insure somewhere between 187,000 and 275,000 not currently covered.

Given the anti-Obama venom at the statehouse, the strategy seemed so simple, so obvious, so prudent that it begged a question: Why didn’t someone in state government leadership think of that?

Actually, someone did think of that. Two someones, in fact: Sen. Brian Crain, R-Tulsa, and Rep. Doug Cox, R-Grove. The Leavitt plan mirrored many of the specifics in Crain’s and Cox’s SB 640 that died in the waning days of the recent legislative session.

So why did taxpayers need to pay Leavitt \$248,000 to tell us what Cox, an emergency room physician, and Crain, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee chair, already knew – and proposed?

It’s all part of a delicate political dance involving the governor, Senate President Pro Tem Brian Bingman, House Speaker T.W. Shannon and noisy far-right extremists in the Legislature who don’t want anything to do with what they regard as an evil federal government or a Kenyan-born, socialist, you-pick-the-pejo-

native president.

The public relations high-stepping began in 2011 when Fallin thought she and legislative leaders – including then Speaker Kris Steele – had a deal to accept a \$54 million federal grant to set up a state-operated health insurance exchange under the Affordable Care Act.

Under pressure from wingnuts in his caucus, Bingman abruptly yanked the rug from under Fallin and Steele, meaning the grant – which we, as taxpayers, already had paid for – would be spent in other states.

Fallin learned a powerful lesson: With re-election in 2014 at top of her agenda, she wasn’t about to do anything to cross the Tea Party crowd, which exerts outsize influence in low-turnout Republican primaries.

Enter Leavitt Partners. She needed a face-saving strategy that would give the illusion that Oklahoma was going its own way and not getting in bed with evil Uncle Sugar.

That’s one of the primary reasons SB 640 stalled this session – Republican lawmakers were paralyzed by the notion they somehow could be tarred-and-feathered as ObamaCare adherents.

It mattered not one whit to Speaker Shannon and the fed-haters that thousands of Oklahoma’s working poor were on the verge of losing health insurance – the feds denied a waiver that would have permitted Insure Oklahoma to continue after Dec. 31.

Or that hundreds of thousands of others would remain without coverage.

Or that Oklahoma’s hospitals – particularly its rural health care providers – were on the verge of bankruptcy because of backbreaking uncompensated care.

All that mattered was devotion to a twisted ideology that in effect declared we’re Oklahoma – by God – and we’re not going to take one damn dime of money from a debt-riddled federal government.

Never mind, of course, that Oklahoma is beneficiary of more federal spending per capita than just about any other state and would dry up without it – think our three Air Force bases, Fort Sill, the FAA and on and on.

So now that Leavitt has come back and advised Oklahoma to do what Crain and Cox proposed, where does the state go?

First, there’s no guarantee the feds would approve the plan, even if Oklahoma’s elected leadership can unite behind it. But without the governor, Senate president, House speaker and Legislature on board, there’s zero chance of enacting an Oklahoma-centric plan.

Special session, anyone?

The problem clearly is Shannon. He was elected speaker on the strength of the tea partiers in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

# *Supreme Court Breathes New Life Into 'Jim Crow'*

BY WANDA JO STAPLETON

A majority [five men] on the U.S. Supreme Court recently gutted the most effective section of the Voting Rights Act – an act signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The Voting Rights Act was a response to decades of voting discrimination – with tactics like “literacy” tests and poll taxes to suppress the vote of black citizens.

In the distant past, there were grandfather clauses in the law, which meant that citizens could vote only if their grandfathers had – an impossibility at that time for African Americans.

Purpose of the Voting Rights Act was to make sure that African Americans and other minorities could vote, freely and fairly, without fear of recrimination. The problem is that they voted for President Obama and other Democrats.

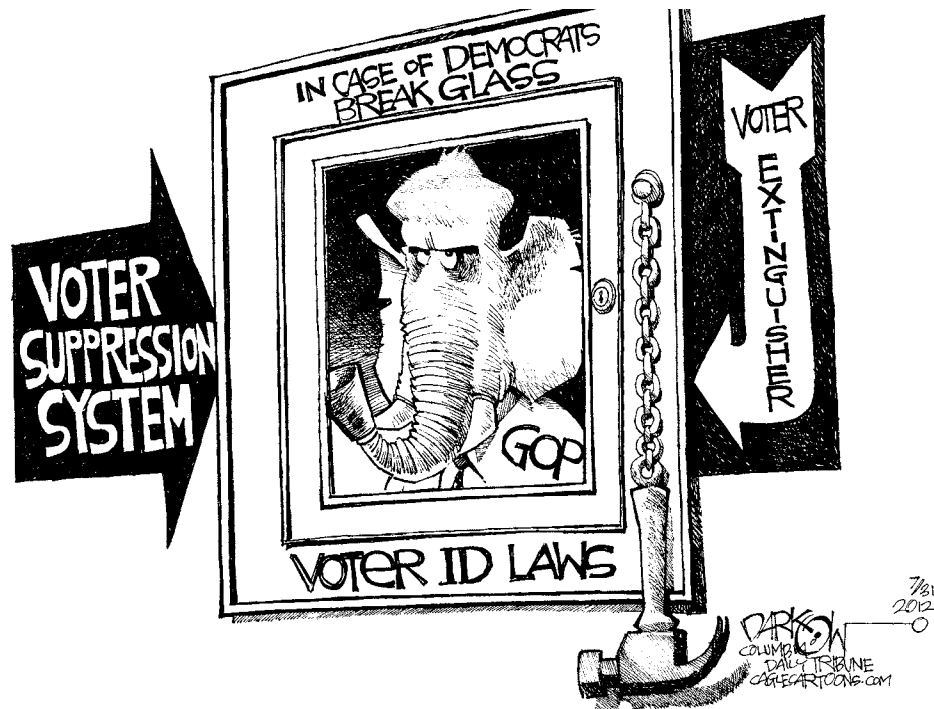
That's why the Supreme Court, by disabling the popular Voting Rights Act, erased fundamental protections against racial discrimination in voting that had been effective for almost 50 years.

Over the years, the Act has been repeatedly renewed by wide bipartisan majorities in Congress.

## **JIM CROW LIVES**

Almost immediately after the Supremes gutted the Voting Rights Act, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and North Carolina acted to require that voters show a photo ID before voting.

This requirement burdens the poor [mainly minorities] and the elderly – the elderly who no longer drive and have no driver's license to use as a photo ID. The poor



who can't afford a car, have no driver's license and no money for a taxi to travel somewhere to buy a photo ID [and perhaps produce a birth certificate in order to do so].

Equally offensive, there are other ways that can now be employed to suppress voter turnout by minorities:

- Curtail voter registration drives, which register minorities at twice the rate of non-minorities.
- Intensify citizenship challenges.
- Purge voter rolls – for example, Florida's governor, Rick Scott, in 2012 and Florida's secretary of state, Katherine Harris, in 2000.
- Racial gerrymandering by redrawing election maps.
- Reduce the number of polling places and put them long distances from minority communities.
- Open the polls only on weekdays from eight-to-five to discourage those [mainly minorities] who

must work at those times.

- Eliminate same-day registration.
- Reduce or eliminate early voting.
- Cancel voting on Sundays, thus eliminating a ritual in African American churches known as “Souls to the Polls” when church members, after Sunday services, car pool or ride in busses from church to the polls.

Congress could bring the Voting Rights Act back from the dead. Democrats favor revival; but Republicans don't.

I'm going to ask my congressman and senators to work for reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. And I hope that all Democrats and responsible Republicans will do the same.

– The author, a former Democratic state representative, lives in south Oklahoma City and is a regular contributor to *The Oklahoma Observer*

# Fallin Fails Oklahoma

BY BOB CLARK

**G**ov. Mary Fallin's "Tea-billy" bent of mind is hurting Oklahoma's rankings.

The governor, a Tea Party rally leader, has attacked our state's revenue sources at a time that is so critical to our future. Already ranking consistently near the bottom in educational measures and tax burdens, we are a "taker" of federal funds, receiving more than we are paying in federal taxes.

Most Red states are, but most are led by governors that take advantage of federal mandates that are funded. By putting her personal ideology ahead of practical solutions and by not applying for the Affordable Care Act's uninsured or Medicaid monies, what Gov. Fallin is, in effect, doing is re-directing scarce state tax resources instead of the appropriated federal funding, thereby diminishing further our standings among the other states.

Our low rankings in educational measures will negatively impact our economy and job growth. Despite the Right to Work and all of

the corporate welfare tax breaks we offer companies to locate here, she continues to whittle away at our state income tax system that is so vitally important to essential state services.

Her tax plan would mostly benefit the wealthy. Thus, by being a cheerleader for the "Trickle Down Theory," she disregards a 30-year economic history of the theory's failure exhibiting her penchant for the wealthy getting wealthier at the expense of our national rankings or comparative measures in education, transportation, social services, and per-capita income.

That means we will continue our slide south in teachers pay, teacher-student ratios, and be without a state incentive funded program for assistance to build safe rooms at schools when tornado season appears next Spring, placing our children's lives further at risk. Instead, she calls for "private donations."

There is no excuse for policies that could take another child's life because the governor is placing her anti-government extreme

ideologies ahead of the state's welfare.

We need a governor that understands Oklahoma's watershed moment in history. One who will lead by initiating programs that take advantage of our central geographic location, natural gas reserves, and water that Texans would die for.

Mary Fallin is not leading, she is being led by a diminishing minority of the Republican Party.

A governor should recognize that the Affordable Care Act is the LAW and regardless of the source, money is money. Instead of refusing federal funds for our state's poorest and tearing apart our tax system to mostly benefit the wealthy, we should be investing for future generations by ranking at least in the upper half of all the states nationally in quality of life measures, instead of the bottom 10.

Gov. Fallin should resign and let Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb try to repair some of the damage.

— *The author is state librarian emeritus*

## Revolution!

BY SHARON MARTIN

According to Fairleigh Dickinson University's Public Mind Poll, 44% of Republicans and 18% of Democrats think "armed revolution might be necessary in the next few years to preserve our liberty."

Wait a minute? What are we rebelling against?

Immigrants? That seems to be the loudest squeal from the pig pen.

It's a lie I see repeated, that immigrants take from the system and give nothing back. In reality, they pay taxes of all kinds and spend money that circulates

through our economy. And they work.

Ever seen a recent immigrant holding a sign asking for donations? No, me neither.

Do we need freedom from abortions? The rash of legislation lately would make one think so.

Abortions will happen. Legal abortions in safe, clean clinics save the lives of desperate mothers. Their numbers can be reduced, however, with education and contraception.

Makes you wonder why so many in the anti-choice crowd want to limit access to both, doesn't it?

Taxes? A stamp tax set off one rebellion here.

We have a taxation problem, but it may not be the one libertarians and conservatives are protesting.

First, FICA is not a tax, but an insurance premium. Yes, it comes out of your paycheck. If it didn't, most of us would never save enough to ever slow down. We'd work until we keeled over or until our kids took us in.

The reality is that both Social Security and Medicare are effective programs. Their problems are fixable without armed rebellion.

But what about income taxes,

property taxes, sales taxes, and the assorted fees and outright thievery? With our increasingly bottom-heavy taxes, we are in transition from democracy to plutocracy – government of the wealthy, by the wealthy, and for the wealthy.

Taxes are necessary. We should all pay our fair share so that the government of the people can do its business.

But the same people who benefit

from our increasingly regressive tax laws are cashing in, offering for big bucks those things that our taxes should be providing – access to education, security, and quality healthcare.

And in a real public relations coup, they have us protesting taxes for them, when we're the ones who pay.

Finally, a real reason to rebel! But armed rebellion? Hell, no.

We only have to look at the suc-

cessful rebels – Mahatma Gandhi, Clara Luper, Jesus Christ – to know that there are better ways to change the system.

We can't sit, like an old man at the stop sign, waiting for someone else to make the first move. The time to tackle our real problems – regressive tax laws, lobbyist-run legislatures, and a bandit economic system – is now, before rebels with automatic weapons rush in.

– *The author lives in Oilton*

## Pawns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

state House. Since speakers can be toppled at any time, he's probably not interested in crossing a core constituency – especially given his ambitions for higher office.

In a hallway outside the OU Children's Hospital conference room in Oklahoma City where the Leavitt report was presented to the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Dr. Cox said he believes that if the governor supports the proposal, the speaker will, too.

It's hard to imagine Fallin wouldn't be on board. Hiring Leavitt's consulting firm was her idea, after all. And the Leavitt strategy – similar to Arkansas' plan – would give Oklahoma the best of both worlds: access to massive federal financial support and the appearance of state independence via Insure Oklahoma.

Though it was Bingman who torpedoed the exchange grant two years ago, most eyes are on Shannon as the key figure in whether Oklahoma can move forward with the Leavitt plan and win federal approval for its implementation.

As this year's session reached its final days, Shannon rejected Fallin's efforts to save Insure Oklahoma jeopardizing healthcare for 9,000 working poor.

At the time, Shannon blamed the Obama Administration's waiver denial, adding: "This is exactly what

happens when government goes into the health-care business. Taxpayers are burdened, and promises to recipients run the risk of being broken."

Leavitt smartly emphasized that leveraging federal dollars to push more of Oklahoma's working poor into health insurance exchanges – where they could affordably purchase coverage from private companies – helps encourage personal responsibility.

Private – not government – insurance. Personal responsibility. That should be red meat for the uber-right. But the fact is, anything that can be remotely tied to ObamaCare is toxic in Wingnut World ... which means it's toxic within the GOP.

"I think [Leavitt's] probably as good as we could hope for from" a right-wing consultant, Dr. Scheirman says. But whether that's enough to finally persuade our elected leaders to do the right thing – putting the needs of the working poor over politics – remains to be seen.

It's going to be a long, hot summer as state officials career toward year's end and the demise of Insure Oklahoma. Who'll blink first? And who'll be counted among the casualties? One can only hope it's not the working poor who deserve better from their state leaders.

## Bootstraps

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Too many working age adults, many of them parents, will find themselves without the skills to find and keep a good job and without opportunities to learn those skills. Oklahoma will find itself without a workforce capable of filling jobs in industries it's trying to recruit.

Adult education funding falls under the authority of the state superintendent. And while Superintendent Janet Barresi has included state-wide adult education centers in her budget requests, she ultimately de-funded them entirely after her department received far less than re-

quested for education from the Legislature.

Even though FY '14 looks to be a better year for the common education budget, the legislative allocation of \$74 million in additional funding didn't stipulate restoring adult education, and the future of these vital programs remain very much in doubt.

– *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>*



# What It Means To Be An Optimistic Pessimist

BY FRAN MORRIS

**T**hrough the years I have occasionally been called an optimistic pessimist. That's understandable.

Whether it is "This is the day the Lord has made; rejoice and be glad in it," or "Life is a gift. It is our job to enjoy it," or "The world is full of greed, mendacity, tragedy and violence. Do what you can and move along," somewhere along the line, I have come to accept who we are and how we behave – as citizens of the world, this country and this state.

It's not always a pretty sight but as one grows older, one sees the wisdom of helping where you can, accepting what you can't, learning to tell the difference, and realizing that smiling and loving beats hating and worrying every time.

Some people are literally making themselves sick from worry, frustration and fear about politics, the environment, religion, health care, our military, poverty and death. Wouldn't it make more sense to put that energy into some up-beat act that might improve the future for our offspring?

My idea of a really cool optimistic pessimist is Sarah van Gelder, executive editor of Yes magazine. She says, "Don't let the Apocalypse get you down. Let the radical uncertainty of this moment enlarge your sense of possibility. If one way of life is ending, we can build a new one. When the status quo is unstable, we have the best shot at replacing it. Since a system built on greed is dying, let's create one built on love."

University of Texas professor Robert Jensen agrees: "It is ecocidal to treat the planet as nothing more than a mine from which we extract and a landfill into which we dump. We cannot know for sure what time the party will end, but the party's over. 'Apocalypse' need not involve heavenly rescue fantasies or tough-guy survival talk; think of getting apocalyptic as meaning clear vision and recommitting to core values."

A favorite core value? My mother, who was not a traditionally religious woman, taught me by word and deed that you do the right thing simply because it's the right thing to do.

In the small town where I grew up, if it was a cold night and we had more quilts than we needed to keep warm, some family who didn't would get one of our extras at bedtime. Sometimes we got them back; sometimes we didn't. That didn't matter. It was the right thing to do.

It's surprising how often that and other examples have resurfaced in my memory. You may be drawn

to projects that are doomed to failure or unpopular political issues, simply because of a firm conviction that it is the right thing to do.

I've lived long enough to see racism, sexism and homophobia decrease. I've learned that civil rights movements can change laws, practices, and sometimes even beliefs. Peace demonstrations make people think. Signed petitions sometimes influence decisions.

And I'll never forget the way I felt when I participated in my first demonstration [the 1969 sanitation worker's strike]; I was a tiny little part of something that would help make something better.

That must be when I realized it was OK to be an optimistic pessimist.

The world was in an awful mess, but I could feel more hopeful and useful [and optimistic] if I found things and people to hang with that were positive and pleasant.

There's nothing radical about core values such as justice, equality and sustainability. Every day there are small windows of opportunity where we can contribute toward their achievement.

Nobody I know thinks he/she is going to change the world; humanity has chosen its path. But if getting apocalyptic means spending more time with like-minded people, working together, and increasing possibilities, bring it on!

– The author, a longtime child advocate, lives in Oklahoma City



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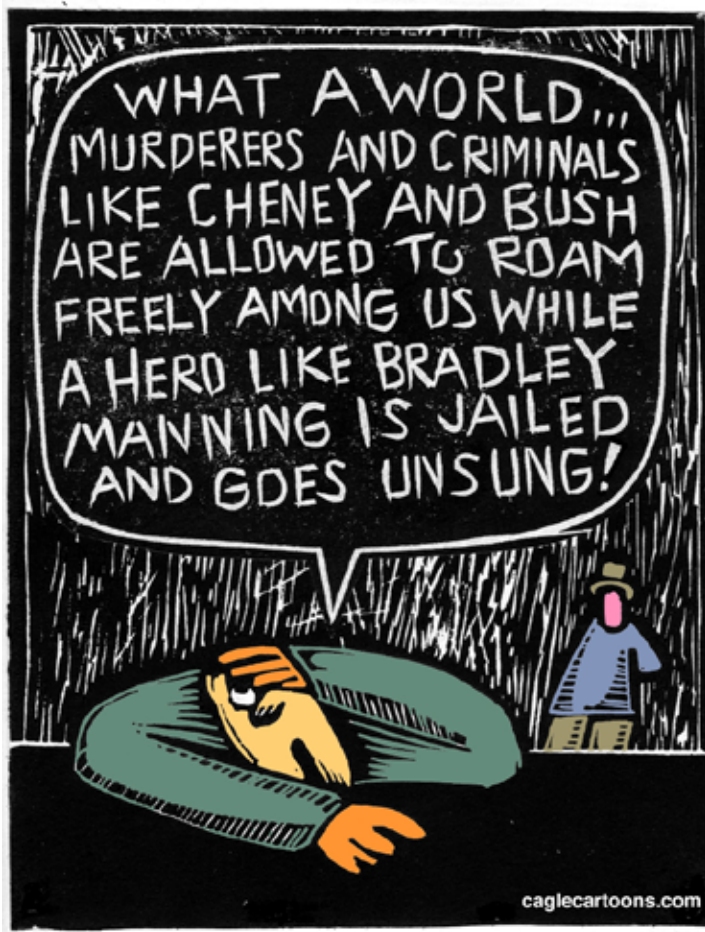
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# COURT MARTIAL

## *A Citizen-Journalist Sits In On Oklahoma Native Bradley Manning's Trial*

BY RENA GUAY

**B**radley Manning, the Army private being court-martialed at Ft. Meade for giving classified documents to Wikileaks, among other charges, was born in Crescent and lived there most of his life until he was a teenager. Whatever you think of him, if you are from or live in Oklahoma, he is one of us, a native son.

Crescent is a small rural town about 40 miles north of Oklahoma City. It could easily serve as Mayberry if they wanted to remake the Andy Griffith Show. But like that fictional TV town, Crescent may not be as simple a place, nor its people as conforming, as stereotyping would indicate.

Bradley Manning had a difficult childhood there, according to written accounts, but he seems to have developed a strong sense of justice, and a commit-

ment to truth.

His supporters – and I am one of them – consider the Oklahoma native to be a whistleblower who exhibited those “simple” values when he exposed war crimes and diplomatic misdeeds. They think that rather than being charged and tried, he should be thanked and honored.

Unlike Bradley Manning, I’m not an Oklahoma native. But since moving here in 2003, I’ve learned about the state’s radical history and progressive heroes, and found others who, like me, seek to reveal and reinitiate some of that progressive radicalism for our time.

I guess that’s why I have always felt a responsibility to defend Bradley for what I consider a brave and democratic act, and why I felt called to go to Ft. Meade

and sit in the courtroom for a few days at the start of Manning's court-martial on June 3.

And, perhaps more important, I wanted the Bradley Manning support network to know that despite Oklahoma's current conservative politics, many Oklahomans consider Manning a hero.

So go to Ft. Meade I did. My trip was funded by the Oklahoma Center for Conscience and the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild. I serve as executive director of the former and as secretary of the latter; both are strong supporters of Bradley Manning, and involved with the Bradley Manning Support Network. The Observer provided a press pass.

**I** arrived in time to attend the June 1 march and rally outside Ft. Meade, along with about 1,000 supporters. Being among so many other Manning supporters was affirming, since our local events had involved only about 20 folks at most [our work has been done primarily through e-mail and social media].

Loud and colorful, the march included contingents from Code Pink, Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War. Leading the march was a large banner held by some notables in the wider peace and justice activist community, who also have been very vocal about their support for Manning, including Col. Ann Wright, Lt. Dan Choi and Daniel Ellsberg.

At the rally at Ft. Meade's main gate, Ann Wright began her speech by asking where we had traveled from to be there, and I yelled "Oklahoma" immediately, which she graciously repeated into the microphone. Daniel Ellsberg, who was the featured speaker at the rally, also mentioned that Bradley was from Oklahoma, at which point I whooped loudly, to supportive laughter. My personal mission was accomplished!

Finally, it was time for the court martial to begin. On Monday, June 3, I trekked to Ft. Meade again, to make my way to the courtroom. But instead I got a reminder of military insistence for documentation. I did not have the contract for my rental car, therefore was not able to enter the base.

I would have to wait for the next day to witness the court-martial, but I did follow the news via Twitter that my colleagues were facing a new development in the Army's strict control of the courtroom.

The simple black and white "truth" t-shirts, which had been almost a uniform for supporters during the many pretrial hearings, were now banned! To get in the courtroom, all who had worn them for Day 1 had to turn them inside out – a perfect example of how erratic and nonsensical much of the proceedings seemed.

On Day 2, my paperwork in hand, I got on base. We stood in line to be scanned [no weapons, no electronics] before we could be cleared for the courtroom. The previous day's t-shirt issue was topic No. 1, but then we learned that Judge Lind had lifted the ban [probably initiated by some hyper base official] and the "truth" shirts could now be proudly worn as we sat in support of Manning and his legal team.

Once in the courtroom, I made my way to a seat in the third row on the defense side. I was about 10 feet directly behind Bradley Manning. It would have been nice to tell him that Oklahoma was "in the house" but of course I didn't.

He appeared very calm, and remained so throughout all my time observing. Under the circumstances, I found that remarkable, and a testament to his inner strength.

Around me in the galley were folks from Mexico, Germany and many other countries where Bradley Manning is far better known and his action more appreciated than in the U.S.

This makes me ask, rhetorically, why aren't more Americans here? The answer, I'm afraid, might take a book or two.

As at the rally on Saturday, the international media outnumbered U.S. outlets, though during the first week the New York Times – the "newspaper of record" – did deign to send someone.

The media was ensconced at another location on the base where they observed court proceedings through closed circuit TV. Among them were the independent journalists and bloggers, like Alexa O'Brien and Kevin Gosztola, who have been covering the story for years and whose reporting has put their "professional" counterparts to shame.

**B**eing in the live courtroom is dramatic and exciting, and an experience I won't soon forget, but I found it is not the best way to follow the action. Some of the attorneys are soft-spoken, and the judge seems to be, no disrespect intended, a mumblor.

On the afternoon of my second day [Day 3 of the trial], I moved to the overflow trailer just outside the courtroom, where I got the same feed the media was getting, and then I understood why they would forgo the live action.

With the judge's bench and the podium mic-ed, and a boom over the room, the sound is superb and several cameras give you close-ups of the speakers, as well as the exhibits.

In this article, I can't begin to address the actual arguments in the case, but I want to suggest some excellent websites where each day of the trial is reviewed, in varying levels of detail. You can find that info on the MLTF website, [www.nlgmltf.org/bradley-manning](http://www.nlgmltf.org/bradley-manning), or by e-mailing me at [sec@nlgmltf.org](mailto:sec@nlgmltf.org). You will also find a list of books and other resources on the Manning case. And of course, at [www.bradley-manning.org](http://www.bradley-manning.org) there is everything relevant to the support campaign, including how you can contribute to the legal defense.

I'm extremely glad that I made the effort to attend Bradley Manning's court martial, even for only three days. I became even more committed to organizing support here in Bradley's home state, where I hope someday his name and contributions to global peace are proudly remembered by all Oklahomans.

– *The author lives in Oklahoma City*

# AN OKLAHOMA

## *Celebrating Founding Editor*

More than 250 members of The Observer family, from across Oklahoma, gathered June 13 in Oklahoma City to celebrate Founding Editor Frosty Troy's 80th birthday and honor his six decades of journalism excellence.

The Observer staff wishes to express special thanks to those who helped make the event a rousing success:

- Nationally syndicated columnist and best-selling author Jim Hightower, our featured speaker.

- George Krumme, Robert D. Lemon and Robyn Lemon Sellers for their generous sponsorships.

- Dr. Robin Meyers and Mayflower Congregational Church for hosting the dinner and program.

- Scott J. Hamilton and the Cimarron Alliance Equality Center for hosting our pre-event reception for Frosty, his family and event sponsors.

- Bill Hellams of Video Producers for a beautiful, touching, nine-minute video interview with Frosty.

- Frosty's family, especially daughter Marti Troy and niece Cynthia Ury, for sharing family photos that helped tell the story of Frosty's life.

- Dr. Meyers [who also served as emcee], former Gov. David Walters, Tulsa attorney and Democratic activist Kalyn Free and former Capitol press colleague and longtime Frosty friend Gayla Machell for sometimes hilarious, always poignant reminiscences of the Frosty they know and love.

- Iris Lochner of Edmond for her generous donation of Oklahoma wine for the pre-event reception.

- Eli Grayson of Tulsa for his extraordinary work on the centerpieces that adorned each table at the dinner.

- Observer advertisers Jane Eulberg of Jean's Plumbing, Tom and Sherri Goodwin of Cheyenne and the Brennan Society's Tom Guild and Iris Lochner.

- James Nimmo and Donna Cain for their



**Founding Editor Frosty Troy [right] and nationally syndicated columnist Jim Hightower share a laugh at a reception at the Cimarron Alliance Equality Center.**

**– Photo by Gayla Machell**

graceful string artistry.

- Members of our dedicated Oklahoma Observer advisory board [their names are listed on page two of each issue] who helped plan, organize, welcome and seat guests.

- Observer essayists including Sharon Martin of Oilton, Richard L. Fricker of Tulsa, former Senate President Pro Tem Cal Hobson of Lexington, former Rep. Wanda Jo Stapleton and OKC Peace House Director Nathaniel Batchelder.

- Our great friends Dana Meister and Jim Tolbert from OKC's Full Circle Books for making copies of Hightower's latest book – *Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow* – available for purchase and autographs.

- Last, but certainly not least, our family – sons Andy and Matt, our fantastic daughters-in-law Ashley and Jamy, and our fabulous niece, Robyn Neill – all of whom devoted hours to ensure a wonderful evening.

**– Arnold & Beverly**



# MA ORIGINAL

## *Frosty Troy's 80th Birthday!*



Clockwise from below, George Krumme [right], Aldean Newcomb [center] and Robyn Lemon Sellers visit at pre-event reception at the Cimarron Alliance Equality Center; former state Rep. Wanda Jo Stapleton [right], Martha Hardwick [center] and Paul Delaplain, at the dinner at Mayflower Congregational Church; James Nimmo and Donna Cain provide music at the reception; Jim Hightower [left] and Robert D. Lemon chat; Frosty's birthday cake.

– Photos by Darla Shelden



Could't attend? Read what some of those toasting Frosty's career had to say [pages 26-27].



# *A Marvelous Mentor, An Even Better Friend*

BY GAYLA MACHELL

I met Frosty Troy in 1977 at the state Capitol. I was fresh out of college and thrilled to be a news reporter covering the Capitol. I was SO happy to have a desk in the press room and the charge of reporting on the state Senate.

I can't remember exactly how I met Frosty but I remember it being early in my tenure at the Capitol. I had heard of Frosty; he was a legend and I was thrilled to meet him. I don't have any memories of getting to know Frosty, I can only remember being friends with him.

I remember sitting in the Senate's old press room, on the east side of the chamber, listening to eloquent debate [and it was eloquent debate then. When I had questions, Frosty was quick to decode the rhetoric; he cited the history of the vote or the issue, includ-

ing who debated, what they said and why they said it. Frosty was a walking encyclopedia of Oklahoma politics and government in addition to having the best verbal skills of anyone I'd ever met, read or heard.

He was not pretentious but was eager to take me under his wing and teach me the ropes. He treated everyone – new reporters, powerful elected officials and janitors – with total respect and honesty. He called me “kid,” a moniker I would love to hear these days. Frosty delighted in being able to teach new reporters that they were entering into a noble profession if done the right way, with energy, honesty and drive. His moniker for another young journalist, 22-year-old Arnold Hamilton who reported for the Tulsa Tribune, was “tiger.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

## *Ode To Frosty*

BY KALYN FREE

We gather tonight to honor the life and service of a great man,  
I can tell you Frosty, I certainly believe I am your No. 1 fan.  
McAlester calls him a favorite son,  
Because of all the good works for others he has done.  
There were nine Troy kids, one girl and eight boys,  
They were raised with lots of love, but very few toys.  
Devout Irish Catholics they were in a Protestant town,  
They were taught to hold their heads up and never look down.  
Troy's Cleaners kept food in their tummies and a roof overhead,  
Bernard carried on the business, where all gathered to hear what was said.  
His mother Ruth was the life of the party,  
For senior citizen dances, she never was tardy.  
His love of country is paramount,  
The Troy veterans are so numerous to count.  
In Korea, his brother Kevin gave his life,  
Frosty knows all too well that war brings suffering and strife.  
Frosty is a veteran, who bleeds red, white and blue,  
To his family and his country – he has always been true.  
No better journalist has ever graced our state,  
He speaks truth to power, disregarding his own fate.  
His caustic wit and keen intellect are renowned across the land,  
The Democratic Party thinks he's just grand.

He's driven thousands of miles to give of his time,  
Helping elect candidates – all on his own dime.  
An endorsement by Frosty means the world when a candidate decides to run,  
If Frosty isn't for you, then in our minds you are simply done.  
His beloved Helen was so blessed to have such a wonderful mate,  
Because of her, The Observer never arrived late!  
Philip and Marti, thank you for sharing your father with us for all of these years,  
Our state is a mess, but Frosty just makes us laugh through our tears.

# Well Done, Frosty

BY ROBIN MEYERS

I am delighted to have this event at Mayflower, where I have served for 28 years, and where I have read *The Observer* as faithfully as Frosty Troy has listened to my sermons. In 1985, upon arriving to take this job, someone handed me a copy of *The Observer* and said, "If you are going to survive around here, you will need a second opinion." In fact, if you even care about the truth, you need to know Frosty Troy and you need to read *The Observer*.

Over these many years, I have marveled at the pugnacious power of this little paper, one of the last remaining examples of independent prairie journalism – offering up a diverse group of writers who give readers of *The Observer* something other than the standard Right Wing and Chamber of Commerce Crowd view of the world. We live in the reddest of the red states, and as I like to say around here on Sunday morning, America does not have to deal, as Jesus did, with Herod the Fox, but we do have a news network named after him!

In particular, I am grateful to Frosty as a human being, for taking the best of his Catholic social gospel upbringing and trying to make sure that somebody remembered those without a voice, without a lobbyist, and without the money to shape public policy after their own self-interest.

It all started, as you know, when Frosty decided to write about the plight of the mentally ill in our state, and he has never looked back in his calling to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." It became so difficult to tell the truth around here sometimes, and often so dangerous, that the people who did it, whether in print or from the pulpit, were labeled dangerous subversives, un-American and unpatriotic. And my favorite, unchristian – this in a state where everyone prays for Jesus to come back – but if he did, and picked up where he left off, we would arrest him immediately!

Frosty, I am grateful to you for answering the call to do what you believed you were meant to do, not

He shuns bigotry and racism and is a champion of those who need him the most,  
His work for the mentally ill saved lives – but you will never hear him boast.  
Public education has never had a better friend,  
And CareerTech always knew on Frosty they could depend.  
And who fights for the rights of working women and men?  
What has Frosty done for organized labor? I don't even know where to begin.  
The corporate elite is his No. 1 foe,  
Frosty knows all too well that we reap what we sow.  
Republicans have cut services so they can feed on the government trough,  
But we can count on Frosty to tell us which legislators have been bought off.  
His awards are simply just too numerous to mention,  
But in Kalyn's Hall of Fame – no one else is even in close contention.  
I lived in DC for 10-plus years and folks wondered how I stayed in touch,  
Because the Oklahoma Observer was never far from my clutch.  
Frosty, I wish you the best on your 80th birthday,  
And I have a very special gift for you I am so happy to say.

What does our state need more of – if we could only clone?  
It's journalists like Frosty – we all bemoan.  
To honor the legacy you have in our great state,  
I am making a donation to the Oklahoma Democratic Party on this very date.  
My gift will permanently fund the Frosty Troy Communications Intern,  
At the ODP three college students will be paid to work and to learn.  
To follow in your footsteps and continue to lead the way,  
To fight for those less fortunate – so that tomorrow will bring them a brighter day.  
Happy Birthday Frosty,  
I love you to the moon and back and admire you even more than that.  
– Kalyn Free, former Pittsburgh County district attorney and founder of INDN's List, serves as chief counsel to Cherokee Chief Bill John Baker

what would make you rich. Thank you for speaking truth to power, for believing in the decency and good will of both Oklahomans and Americans. Thank you for cranking out *The Observer* on a shoestring, and when you were broke. Thank you for getting it in the mail to us, because some of us retrieved it first from the mail box and read it before we read anything else. Thank you for standing in the gap and making sure that people do not forget that democracy is a struggle, and that there are no victimless political crimes.

Thank you, Frosty, for believing that the pen is mightier than the sword. Tonight, I hope you feel the love and respect that all of us feel for you. And that you take as much comfort from it, as we have received wisdom from you. Well done, good and faithful servant. Well done!

– Robin Meyers is pastor of Mayflower Congregational Church and a nationally acclaimed author

# Mentor, Friend

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

Working with Frosty earned me a lot of points among people on the outside, including my mother. Often she would follow my name with the words “and she works with Frosty Troy” when introducing me to someone. She loved OETA’s Week in Review when I was on ... especially if Frosty was on, too!

While being on the show with Frosty was a lot of fun, all reporters knew who was going to do most of the talking.

After six years as a reporter, I moved overseas for two years. Before I left, I threw a birthday party at my house for myself and invited friends from the Capitol. Frosty and Helen came and I was thrilled. I can still remember them sitting together on my brown corduroy sofa, in front of the fireplace, smiling.

I hated leaving my job at the Capitol but I did. While in Japan, I sent Frosty articles on Japan for *The Observer* – the role of women in Japan and Japan, Inc. I mailed the hard copy to Frosty and he printed them verbatim.

When I returned to OKC, I stopped by *The Observer* office off Lincoln to give Frosty a woodblock print of rooftops that I had picked out for him in Kyoto. We talked about what kind of job I was looking for and he said he would pay me to cover occasional stories for him, something *The Observer* had never done. When I would turn the story in, Helen would slip me a \$100 bill.

Fortunately for Frosty and Helen, I took a job with the House of Representatives in 1986 and Frosty and I discretely remained friends despite my new role as a legislative staffer. “Talking to the press” was discouraged but we kept in touch.

In fact, during that period, Frosty, Helen, Arnold

and I started a tradition of going to lunch monthly. Our restaurant of choice was the Governor’s Club. That tradition is alive and going on 25 years; Frosty, Marti, Arnold, Bev and I met for lunch last week at Iron Starr and Frosty had his favorite – a bowl of chili.

For about 10 years I lobbied for Legal Aid at the Capitol. I loved running into Frosty out there and more than once he told me I was the “best lobbyist at the Capitol.” He and I both knew that wasn’t true, but once again he was making me proud and reminding me that I was doing the right thing.

Frosty’s “star power” continues but now I view him as a real friend instead of a celebrity. “Only small people dwell on small things, kid,” he would admonish me when I needed it and “You’re the best researcher in the state Capitol” when I needed that.

Through the years, we have developed a friendship founded on the politics of the Oklahoma Legislature, and fine-tuned through everyday experiences of life, both good and bad. I also became close friends with Helen for which I was immensely proud. My husband Mark and I went to their home to watch the Super Bowl on Boxer Day.

Frosty was a great mentor for the new reporter I was in 1977 and for many others after me. He asked tough questions and kept digging. He wasn’t interested in the story that most of the reporters were going to write; instead he wanted to work harder and come up with the story that nobody else was going to have.

I was very fortunate to be able to learn from Frosty and I shall be forever grateful for the lasting friendship that emerged. Happy birthday, Frosty!

– Gayla Machell works for Legal Aid in Oklahoma City



Above, *Observer* Editor Arnold Hamilton [center] and *Observer* contributors Sharon Martin and Richard L. Fricker – *Photo by Belinda Fricker*  
Right, Dr. Bruce Prescott visits with Pauline Hodges. Iris Lochner is seated in the background. – *Photo by Darla Shelden*



# *A Right For The Religious Is A Right For The Non-Religious*

BY CHARLES C. HAYNES

**G**overnment in America must be neutral among religions and neutral between religion and non-religion – at least that's how the U.S. Supreme Court interprets the Establishment clause of the First Amendment.

But escalating conflicts involving government treatment of the nonreligious – atheists and humanists – reveal that far too many government officials are confused and conflicted about the meaning of “neutrality.”

In June alone, an atheist monument stirred controversy in Florida, an atheist applicant for citizenship was instructed to join a church, and a congressional committee nixed atheist chaplains.

Let's start with the first-ever atheist monument, a 1,500-pound bench erected alongside a Ten Commandments monument in front of the Bradford County Courthouse in Starke, FL.

After a local Christian group installed the Ten Commandments monument last year, American Atheists sued to have it removed.

When county officials refused, the atheist group decided to put up a counter-monument featuring quotations from various American founders about church-state separation and passages from the Bible describing punishments for violating the Ten Commandments.

Bradford County set the stage for this confrontation in 2011 when it designated the space a “free speech forum” in order to allow a local Christian group to put up a Ten Commandments display.

But county officials soon realized that once the courthouse courtyard is open to one, it must be open to all.

American Atheists, of course, would rather have no monuments on government property. But if you can't beat them, join them.

The tactic of putting an atheist message next to a religious message puts governments on notice that any attempt to promote religion on public property will be answered by demands for equal treatment from the non-religious.

The pushback from atheists in places like Bradford



County is triggered by the fact that equal treatment for the non-religious is difficult to come by in a society where religion is often privileged.

Consider the cruel choice faced by Margaret Doughty, a British-born atheist who has lived in the U.S. for 30 years. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services informed Doughty earlier this month that unless she joined a church her application for naturalized citizenship would be denied.

Doughty ran into this roadblock because she can't in good conscience swear that she is willing “to take up arms to defend the United States.”

The government, it turns out, routinely grants conscientious objectors exemption from this oath – but only if they belong to a religion that opposes the bearing of arms.

This policy puts atheists and humanists seeking citizenship – but who have moral objections to war – in the unfair and unjust position of either joining a church or being denied American citizenship.

What makes this particularly galling is that the Supreme Court made clear years ago that draftees with moral and philosophical beliefs that impose a duty not to participate in war must be granted conscientious objector status on the same basis as those with traditional religious convictions [*Welsh v. United States*, 1970].

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35



# *It's Your Sole Decision, Mr. President*

BY RALPH NADER

**D**ear President Obama, June 25 marked the 75th anniversary of the federal minimum wage law in the United States, known as the Fair Labor Standards Act. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed this legislation, his vision was to ensure a “fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” and to “end starvation wages.”

Seventy-five years later, there are 3.6 million Americans working for pay at or below the federal minimum wage. More extensively, 30 million low wage workers are making less today, adjusted for inflation, than they did 45 years ago in 1968.

They are working for a minimum wage that does not even reach the federal poverty line for a family of three and they cannot afford basic necessities like food, housing, transportation, and health care.

Had the minimum wage simply kept pace with inflation since 1968, it would stand at \$10.70 per hour today instead of the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25. In that time, the minimum wage has lost nearly one-third of its value while the prices of everything from food to housing to health care have been increasing – often at rates higher than inflation.

Each year that the federal minimum wage is not increased, you and Congress are effectively telling low-wage workers that they are not worth as much as they were the year before and each of the dollars they earn gets stretched even further due to the effects of inflation.

Here’s where you can make a decisive executive decision.

Just about a month ago, federally contracted low-wage workers walked off the job and participated in some of the larger strikes the nation’s capital has seen in recent years. Despite the fact that they work indirectly for the federal government, they are still being paid poverty wages – some even explained that they were being paid below the federal minimum wage, which invites your administration’s immediate investigation!

This is disgraceful; the federal government should be providing a shining example of fair and just treatment of their contractors’ workers for other employers to follow.

Your executive order to get this done would move closer to FDR’s vision of ending “starvation wages.” Your decision would set a good example for the rest



# Making Equal Pay A Reality

BY ELIZABETH WARREN

In mid-June, I was looking for a picture I wanted to show my daughter, and pulled out a box of old photographs from a shelf in the basement. The pictures of my mother and my aunts were wonderful-old hairstyles, dresses with big petticoats and hats-and-gloves for going out.

As we sifted through the pictures, I thought about how life had changed for women over the last 50 years. Women doctors and scientists, women union leaders and small business owners.

I also thought about how life had not changed. Across the board, women still earn less than men.

When President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law in 1963, women earned 59 cents for every dollar earned by a man. While the wage gap has narrowed somewhat since then, women today still earn only 77 cents for every dollar a man earns.

Over their careers, that means they take home hundreds of thousands of dollars less than men. For middle class families, it takes two incomes to get by these days, and many families depend as much, if not more, on Mom's salary as they do on Dad's. And for single-parent households, lower salaries make it that much harder to stay afloat.

The wage gap also compounds the nation's student debt problem.

Although women and men borrow roughly the same amount of money to pay for college, women only make 82 cents on the dollar compared to men one year after graduating. This means that as a percentage of income, many young women bear a greater student loan debt burden than young men.

In an already difficult job market, with student loan debt at an all-time high, unequal pay compounds the challenges young women face.

It's clear that making sure women receive equal pay for equal work is a key part of our work to rebuild our economy and strengthen America's middle class. We need to focus on creating a level

playing field to help working women earn what they're worth.

That's why I was proud to co-sponsor the Paycheck Fairness Act, introduced by Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-MD. The Paycheck Fairness Act amends the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to ensure that wage differences are the result of factors such as education, training, or experience, rather than gender. It increases protection against retaliation, strengthens enforcement mechanisms, and authorizes training programs and assistance to small businesses.

Earlier this spring, the Senate passed a budget amendment supporting efforts to close the wage gap. This is an important first step, but there's still more work to be done.

Closing the wage gap will help both women and men here in Massachusetts. At a time when the economy is still hurting, women are essential to making sure working families in the Commonwealth and across the country can get by.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, we need to recommit ourselves to passing the Paycheck Fairness Act and finally making the idea of equal pay for equal work a reality.

When the Equal Pay Act was first passed, many people believed women weren't worth as much as men in the job market. We've made changes, but until the reality reflects equal pay for women, all of us-and all of our daughters-will pay a price.

I want every little girl to grow up thinking about becoming a doctor or a scientist, a union leader or a small business owner. I don't want her to have to think about how she will get by on wages that are lower just because she is female.

It is time to adopt the Paycheck Fairness Act so that pay inequality can go the way of the big petticoat.

- The author, an Oklahoma City native, is Democratic U.S. senator from Massachusetts

of the business community to follow and provide the type of determined and persistent leadership that our country's political class has lacked for decades.

Especially if you also limit the CEO's and other top executives' pay for substantial federal contractors to a multiple no greater than 25 times their entry level wage. [Both famed management guru Peter Drucker and legendary investor Warren Buffett believed in this range as prudent corporate practice.]

According to a recently released report from Dem-

os, a public policy organization, the federal government indirectly employs the largest number of low-wage workers in the country. More even than Walmart and McDonald's combined.

The Washington Post reported that a report from the National Employment Law Project [NELP], surveyed a sample of 567 federally contracted jobs. Seventy-four percent earned less than \$10 per hour, 58% have no employment benefits, and 20% or more depend upon

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# Jim Hightower

## *Serve Banksters Or Serve The Poor? Congress Reinterprets Jesus*



**T**hank God for Congress, right? When things get out of balance in America, we can always count on our legislative stalwarts to recalibrate the scales of justice.

Take greed, for example. The barons of Wall Street, whose raw greed and casino scams wrecked our real economy five years ago, are back to shoving great gobs of bonus pay into their pockets. Meanwhile, the middle class remains decimated, and millions of workaday Americans who were knocked all the way down into poverty are still stuck there.

In this nation of fabulous wealth, our poverty numbers are shocking and scandalous: 50 million people are officially poor; another 51 million are “near poor.” A third of our country!

You’ll be pleased to know, then, that U.S. House members turned their legislative guns on the greed that’s sapping the moral vitality of our society. Unfortunately, their aim was a bit off. Instead of popping the privileged, they hit the most unprivileged: families who need food stamps to make ends meet.

The food stamp program is out of control, they shrieked, noting that it’s been expanding even as the unemployment rate has been coming down. Yoo-hoo, knuckleheads, the jobless rate has ticked down largely because job-seekers have become so discouraged by the absence of opportunities that they’ve quit looking.

Plus, getting a job no longer gets you out of poverty – just ask the barista who’s making your next latte about the joys of working for poverty pay. Food stamp rolls have reached record numbers, because – guess what? – there are record numbers of Americans in poverty!

Yet, the House called for cutting some \$2 billion a year [and 2 million Americans] out of the program. On June 20, however, the members balked – not because the cut was too severe, but because it was not enough for Tea Party Repubs, who have been demanding a total food stamp gut job, proposing to slash the program by \$25 billion a year.

Also, the GOP majority lost the votes of nearly all Democrats by adding a couple of fiendish amendments to punish poor people for the crime of being

poor. One was to put additional work requirements on families seeking the food benefit. “We cannot continue to deny able-bodied people the dignity of work,” blathered a worked-up know-nothing named Steve Southerland of Florida.

Then, Rep. Michele Bachmann had a tempest in her teapot of a brain, offering her support of Southerland’s amendment in a sort of Biblical falsetto: “If anyone will not work, neither should he eat.”

Hello, Michele – that’s not exactly in keeping with the moral message of the Biblical Jesus. Nor is it in keeping with reality – today’s poverty does not stem from any unwillingness to work. Indeed, millions of food stamp recipients are working, but not being paid enough to put adequate groceries on the family table. And many more are in desperate search for jobs that aren’t there.

In fairness, though, let me note that House Republicans did try to give hard-hit families something extra in this legislation: drug testing. Following in lockstep with the Koch-funded American Legislative Exchange Council – which has been peddling this vile, insulting slap at poor people all around the country – the House majority added a urine-test provision to its bill. That really puts the mean in “demeaning” – and this from small government poseurs who piously decry government intrusion into people’s lives!

Once again, the Tea Party Congress-critters should have used their ever-present Bibles for instruction, rather than just for thumping. They would’ve learned that Jesus, at the Sea of Galilee, distributed free fish and loaves to everyone there – with no pee-in-the-cup requirement. And if he had wanted to test whether anyone was on drugs, he would’ve passed cups to bankers first, then to lawmakers.

A society’s response to poverty is one measure that speaks directly to its essential character. In particular, a wealthy society’s nonchalant tolerance of poverty in its midst, the willingness of that society’s leaders to disregard the spread of poverty and the callous calculations by some that it is permissible and even profitable to denigrate those mired in poverty – these are three flashing indicators of a meltdown in our society’s moral core.

# *Let Us Commence Towards The Common Good*

**I**ronically, June is both the month of the summer solstice and of America's biggest annual blizzard. I don't mean a weather event blowing in from the Arctic, but a merciless storm of words blowing from the mouths of commencement speakers at high school and college graduation events.

This year, I was one of the blowhards, the chief speechifier for some 260 graduates of my old high school in Denison, TX. While it was an honor to be chosen as their ceremonial yakker, it's also a truly humbling experience, since I was the person that the degree recipients and their 5,000 supporters in the audience were least interested in.

Plus, commencement pontificators are expected to offer some sage advice to guide the grads as they moved on, and I was all out of sage. So, I resorted to three admonitions I once learned from a West Texas cowboy: "Never squat with your spurs on;" "Always drink upstream from the herd;" and "Speak the truth – but ride a fast horse."

Then I hit them with my main message: Now that you've had a dozen years in the classroom and earned

this important credential, DON'T BE AN IDIOT! I used "idiot" in the same way that ancient Greeks originally meant it. *Idiotes* were not people with low-watt brains, but individuals who cared only about themselves, refusing to participate in public efforts to benefit the larger community – to serve the common good.

The Greeks, I told the students, considered such people selfish, contemptible and stupid ... and so should we.

The encouraging news is that this crop of graduates from Denison High nodded in agreement. After all, they've seen that the idiots are running things in Washington and on Wall Street, and the youngsters seem to be hungry for less selfishness and more togetherness as our society's guiding ethic.

To stress the rich possibilities of a society working together, I noted that any of us who rise in life do so because many helping hands give us a lift. While this night of celebration belonged to the students, the achievement being celebrated belonged to the whole community – the families, friends, teachers, taxpay-

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## *IRS Should Outlaw All 'Social Welfare' Political Fronts – Left And Right*

**I**f you're covered in political stink, it might be prudent to avoid yelling "dirty politics" at others.

Lately, a mess of right-wing Tea Party groups have been wailing nonstop that they have been targeted, harassed and denied their civic rights by partisan, out-of-control, Obamanistic IRS thugs [no adjective too extreme when assailing Obama or the IRS].

The groups certainly are right that it's abhorrent for a powerful agency to run a repressive witch hunt against any group of citizens just because of their political views. After all, liberals have frequently felt the lash of such official repression by assorted McCarthyite-Nixonite-Cheneyite forces over the years, and it must be condemned, no matter who the victims.

In this case, however, the right-wing groups were not targeted by government snoops and political operatives, but tagged by their own applications to be designated by the IRS as 501(c)(4) "social welfare"

groups.

This privileged status would allow them to take unlimited bags of corporate cash without ever revealing to voters the names of the corporations putting up the money.

The caveat is that 501(c)(4)s are supposed to do actual social welfare work and cannot be attached to any candidate or party, nor can politics be their primary purpose.

Forget what the rule says, though. Such notorious political players as Karl Rove and the Koch brothers have cynically set up their own pretend-welfare groups, openly using them as fronts to run secret-money election campaigns.

Suddenly, hundreds of wannabe outfits were demanding that they be given the special hide-the-money designation, too, brazenly lying about their overt political purpose. Some even asserted that they were

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# Commence

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ers and others who were part of the lifting.

I told them about Harrell's hardware store, located near my home in Austin, TX. It's an independent *un-chained*, *small-box* store with a knowledgeable staff willing to help customers figure out how to do most any project. Harrell's slogan is, "Together, we can do it yourself."

Like most commencement droners, I urged the bright faces beaming from beneath their funny square hats to do "Big Things" in life. But my point was that bigness cannot be measured in terms of personal wealth and self aggrandizement [the narcissistic ethic presently being preached and practiced by today's corporate and political elite].

Rather, only by joining with others in democratic actions can you achieve something bigger than yourself.

As Bill Moyers noted in an earlier graduation speech: "Civilization is not natural. It's an accomplishment of culture. It is not just 'what happens,' it is what we

make happen." The key word there is "we," for no "I" is big enough to do the job. But together, as Harrell's hardware says, "we can do it."

The proof of this was sitting right in front of me at the graduation ceremonies. When I was in their place in 1961, every single person in my class and the audience was a white Anglo. Our schools and town were totally segregated.

On this night, though, the ceremony taking place on a beautiful night in the football stadium was a glory of Anglo, African, Latino, Arab, Asian and other ancestries.

Denison became a better, more civilized place only because so many people [including some of the gray-heads in this audience] had dared to stand together to make it happen. The class of 2013 applauded this ethic of social progress, and they gave me hope that they and others like them will pull our country together again, *e pluribus unum*. – *Jim Hightower*

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# Outlaw

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

engaged in no political activity, when their own websites bragged that they were.

It was these groups' stupidity and audacity that prompted the IRS inquiries, and their current hissy fit about the agency is really just a PR effort to let them continue their "social welfare" fraud.

I think of a "social welfare charity" as being an altruistic enterprise, like The Little Sisters of the Poor – not the avaricious Little Koch Brothers of the Plutocracy.

Yet the brothers have created their very own 501(c)(4) charity, which they used last year as a political front group for funneling \$39 million into campaigns against Democrats. Interesting, since, the law bans these tax-exempt entities from spending more than 49% of their funding on political efforts to promote their "issues."

Yet, there they are – hoards of political (c)(4)s, mostly right-wing, operating primarily as political pipelines for secretly gushing corporate money into raw, partisan campaigns. Their hocus-pocus lawyers and congressional consiglieres have badgered the IRS into handing them the (c)(4) get-out-of-jail-free card, then defied the agency to stop them as they dump millions of corrupt dollars into our elections.

For example, American Action Network, a "charity" created by Wall Street lobbyists, has spent two-thirds of its revenue on elections, including putting

up \$745,000 from secret donors to elect Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin. How ironic, then, that Johnson is now one of the Tea Party mad dogs howling at IRS officials.

It's scandalous, Johnson shrieks, that some Tea Party groups have not been given (c)(4) status, because IRS agents have had the temerity to question whether the groups actually are charitable enterprises – or just rank political outfits fraudulently posing as charities.

While Tea Party groups should not be singled out for IRS scrutiny, neither should they be allowed to cheat in elections by shamefully masquerading as Little Sisters of the Poor. That's the real IRS scandal. – *Jim Hightower*

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# Minimum Wage

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

some form of public assistance.

In the absence of any serious movement in this disconnected Congress to increase the minimum wage, you have the potential to exert significant influence on the wages paid to millions of low-wage workers in this country. With a simple executive order, you can fix this shameful deprivation.

I urge you to sign an executive order which mandates that federal contract workers be paid no less than \$10.70 per hour, which would catch those workers back up with the inflation-adjusted minimum wage they would have been paid in 1968. Is this too much to ask of you?

This is, of course, no substitute for a lasting federal minimum wage increase. But an executive order provides you with an option to avoid the morass in Congress and effect real positive change to millions of low-wage workers' lives and to effect that change now.

I hope that you will recognize and seize this opportunity.

This small but important example will make it easier for you to push Congress for a greater and bolder minimum wage increase than you did in your State of the Union address. Your proposal for a \$9 minimum wage by 2015 does not go nearly far enough, remains far below what workers made, adjusted for inflation, in 1968, and doesn't even match the \$9.50 by 2011 you called for five years ago during your 2008 campaign!

On the 75th anniversary of the federal minimum wage, you should sign an executive order raising the minimum wage of those working for the federal gov-

ernment through corporate contractors.

It is the federal government's – and your – responsibility to set the example for the rest of the country to follow.

Not to mention that increasing wages could help spur on a lagging economic recovery. The Wall Street Journal's story on June 24, "Slow-Motion U.S. Recovery Searches for Second Gear," discussed how the slow pace of recovery has left businesses and consumers wary.

The Economic Policy Institute, in examining legislation by Sen. Tom Harkin, D-IA, and Rep. George Miller, D-CA, to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2016, estimated that increasing the minimum wage above \$10 per hour would provide \$51 billion in additional wages during the phase in period for consumers to increase their spending for their livelihoods.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act into law, he showed courage in the face of the Great Depression as well as considerable opposition and criticism from businesses.

Is it not time, after four and a half years, for you to leave your mark, to show Americans what type of President you want to be remembered as, and to be a leader on this issue?

Millions of workers throughout the country deserve a minimum wage that, at least, catches up with 1968.

I'm sending a copy of this letter to Michelle Obama who is said to have your ear.

Sincerely,

Ralph Nader

To find out what you can do to get involved, go to <http://www.timeforaraise.org/>.

# Non-Religious

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After letters of protest from the American Humanist Association and other groups representing atheists and humanists, the immigration service backed down – and Margaret Doughty is now an American citizen.

Immigration officials may finally understand the meaning of equal treatment for the non-religious. But many members of Congress have yet to learn this First Amendment lesson.

Recently, the House Armed Services Committee voted down an amendment to the defense bill that would have authorized atheist and humanist chaplains in the military.

Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist chaplains serve in all branches of the military. But a

majority of the members of the Armed Services Committee apparently believe that the non-religious don't have the same needs as the religious for counseling, support and community.

These and many other clashes involving atheists fighting for equal treatment could be avoided if government officials understood that religious liberty isn't just for the religious.

As guaranteed by the First Amendment, religious liberty is built on a simple, but profound, principle: A right for one is a right for all.

– The author is director of the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum in Washington, DC





# Two Snoops: NSA And The Market

BY GENE GRABINER

**E**dward Snowden's NSA revelations suggest that the government has violated the Fourth Amendment. At the same time, we are faced with a novel historical situation.

Literally understood, or understood through the rhetoric of right-wing originalism ["what the Founding Fathers intended," etc.], the Fourth Amendment only prevents "unreasonable searches and seizures" of our "persons, houses, papers, and effects." But this literalism is today much too narrowly comprehended, as just going into your house or spying on your conversations – Big Brother watching.

What about noting that your house is painted green; its location already having been duly noted by GoogleEarth? What about the outside of the house?

"Meta-data" is precisely about creating patterns out of this external aspect of information. It's not about listening to your phone calls, per se, but capturing the fact that you make one, and to whom and where, and for how long; and registering your physical location when that call was made.

Today the external aspect has multiplied enor-

mously, seemingly overwhelming the internal. So, it's now unnecessary to violate "persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures," as stipulated in the amendment.

Clearly, since the Founders had no plausible notion of what we're dealing with, originalism cannot possibly carry the day. If the e-trail has all the information needed to keep track of people, there is no "need" to listen to the conversation or enter the house – at least not yet! So we now must have a broader view of Fourth Amendment privacy protections.

Add to this the problem that our sense of privacy, especially among young people, has been diminished by our own confessional social media practices.

As disturbing as these revelations about government spying are, there is yet another sort of spying, a daily life espionage that we all know about; and in which we are willing participants.

Despite the fact that my older Social Security card stipulates, in print, "not to be used for identification purposes," that line has been disappeared from newer cards for years. Banks, vendors, etc. constantly seek

# ***Top 10 Ways Beltway Press Will Treat Snowden And Cartwright Differently***

**BY JUAN COLE**

NBC reports that Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright is under investigation as the source for David Sanger's 2012 New York Times article revealing that the United States is behind the Stuxnet computer virus, which was used to infect computers at Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facilities and at the Bushehr nuclear energy plants and delay their going hot.

High government officials in Washington routinely leak classified information, as part of turf battles inside the government. Cartwright may have been using Sanger to ensure that Stuxnet was not wholly abandoned [it was his baby]. That such leaks are so routine, and are part of Washington's way of doing business, is what makes the harsh espionage charges against people like Edward Snowden so hypocritical.

He who is without leaks should cast the first stone.

The Cartwright story [and remember that he is only a suspect] intersects with Edward Snowden's revelations about National Security Administration spying in many ways.

It seems likely that suspicion is now falling on Cartwright because the NSA knows David Sanger's phone number and has been looking at everyone he talked to on the phone in the months leading up to his article. We know that the NSA has been repeatedly requesting massive amounts of US phone information and storing it for easy search.

Since Sanger's article is proof that an illegal act was committed, as Obama said at the time, getting a FISA warrant to go through Sanger's already-stored records would have been child's play.

When the PATRIOT Act was proposed, the FBI promised it would be used only for counter-terrorism. But that promise has for many years rung hollow.

While Osama Bin Laden knew not to use the phone during the last seven years of his life, American reporters and generals thought they were safe. PRISM did not catch Ben Laden because he went off the communications grid, and now anyone who wants to do anything the Fed-

eral government considers illicit had better do the same.

This simple observation demonstrates that the Obama/NSA cover story, that they are collecting all these phone records to fight terrorism, makes no sense. The data is most likely to be used against American non-terrorists.

Another cautionary tale about NSA warrantless surveillance and Stuxnet is that the program shows how the U.S. government is now a criminal enterprise and entirely willing to take risks that harm ordinary Americans.

In 2010 the U.S. government programmers made an error in Stuxnet that allowed it to escape from Iran's Natanz computers out onto the internet, where it became a pest, infecting ordinary business and home computers around the world, including inside the U.S.

By August 2010, the worm had infected 100,000 computers in 115 countries in the world. Obama decided not to shut Stuxnet down even after it had caused all this damage.

The ordinary consumers and businesses affected ought to sue the U.S. government.

If we can't trust them not to infect us with worms, why in the world should we trust them with all of our personal information?

Since Cartwright is a member of the inside-the-Beltway elite, you can bet that the courtier press will not treat him the way they have Edward Snowden, even if he proves guilty. Here will be the differences:

1. No one will obsess about the exercise habits of Gen. Cartwright's wife.
2. Gen. Cartwright will not be characterized as "a 63-year-old hacker."
3. Gen. Cartwright will not be described as "nerdy" or "flaky."
4. David Gregory will not ask that David Sanger be prosecuted for espionage because he aided and abetted Cartwright's leaking.
5. We won't get stories every day about where in McLean, VA, Gen. Cartwright is living.
6. Gen. Cartwright won't be accused of being a spy for Iran.

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and use our Social Security numbers as forms of ID.

While we worry about ID theft at the individual level, the market has been scooping up our ID's all this time.

And since software "learns" when I bank, or buy a book or a food processor from Amazon, I am immediately treated to other purchasing possibilities.

These days, those who turn 65 are confirmed as "seniors" by the inundation of mailing address labels from unsolicited sources seeking donations. The phone – fortunately, the landline – may ring. Upon answering, a pre-recorded alarmist voice tells us, "[i]f you are over 60, do not to hang up; there have been thefts and break-ins in your neighborhood." A solution is then presented; buy their security system.

And anyone who uses e-mail daily constantly re-

*me, that may seem shocking. We ... [actually believe] that privacy and freedom are inexorably welded together ...*

While a recent Pew Center survey suggests that while all youth are not so delightfully compliant, with the Net – and specifically with Facebook and other social media – all now may enjoy Marshall MacLuhan's "15 minutes of fame" on steroids. Why should we be absorbed in self-absorption? But to a great extent, we are. With all of this self-referential self-indulgence, all this delight in subjectivity, is it any wonder that people are unperturbed by market snooping.

Here is the "metaphysical" issue: more and more we tend to identify ourselves with our digital personas as projected into the abstract social space of the digital universe.

We have willingly sacrificed to the market; we have confessed all to Wall Street and to Amazon. But now the confessional is inverted. Our confessions; our thoughts, dreams, desires – all expressed as purchases or surfing for other purchases – are out there for all to see.

ceives unwanted messages to use this or that credit card or buy this or that, some in postal mail, most in the junk mail box; but often, the inbox. How did they get my e-mail address?

Recently, in the Toronto Globe and Mail, a writer observed that she had ordered an item from Amazon and, upon switching to her favorite blog, received from Amazon an ad reflecting her previous choice. Truly, the eyes of the market are upon us. But who's complaining?

Tellingly, Steffen Schmidt, professor of political science at Iowa State University, in a column in USA Today, reprinted from the Des Moines Register, notes that:

*... in my electronic democracy class .... [n]o student who took my class was surprised ... about the federal government accessing Verizon customer communications. My students also were not shocked ... that Microsoft, Facebook and a gaggle of other companies' servers were also made available to the National Security Agency and FBI ... is it surprising to you that e-mail, Internet searches and cell phone traffic are the prime nexus of information to uncover such plots? When we look out over the cyber landscape and the cultures of 24/7 "tell-all" America, are you surprised that in 2013 there is really no privacy left? ... [The students'] response is almost unanimously, I don't care. I have nothing to hide. I'm not a terrorist or a criminal, so I don't care if the government intercepts my texting, cellphone, Facebook account or Internet surfing ... To old-school folks like*

The inner self or the private self, protected by the Fourth Amendment and essential for real political freedom, no longer seems to have any reality for more and more people. What counts is the digital self, the digital profile on Facebook, the moment-to-moment recording of our thoughts and activities on Twitter, as if they have no meaning unless and until they are projected into cyberspace for anyone and everyone to see.

This is our contemporary form of what Hegel called "recognition," the feeling that we are nothing until someone else acknowledges us. But Hegel thought that there is no true recognition except between free and equal individuals. There are many false forms of recognition, however, as when the master demands adulation by the slave.

It is our digital projections of ourselves that constitute our deeply unsatisfying contemporary form of recognition. To this extent, there is no real communication between one person and another. We constantly seek the 15 minutes of fame that now is available 24/7, but that leaves us isolated from one another in our very togetherness. It is a form of on-going self-commodification, putting ourselves out there for a new kind of market based on a new kind of currency that takes the alien abstraction of ordinary money to the next level.

Market thinking was there at the nation's birth. But over time it has profoundly strengthened its hand in the ideology of the State. [In some quarters, even democracy is a "brand."]

Just one month to the day after Sept. 11, 2001, George W. Bush said: "Now, the American people have got to go about their business [my emphasis]. We cannot let the terrorists achieve the objective of frightening our nation to the point where we don't conduct business, where people don't shop [my emphasis]."

Clearly, freedom is reduced to market freedom; and it is our patriotic duty to consume. But market domination is not at all individual freedom. Under the masque of individualism, and "because I have so many choices," it is the inverse – domination of individuals by the market.

We have willingly sacrificed to the market; we have confessed all to Wall Street and to Amazon. But now the confessional is inverted. Our confessions; our thoughts, dreams, desires – all expressed as purchases or surfing for other purchases – are out there for all to see.

What do we care? Why should we care – that is the question.

Slavoj Žižek observes that " ... the actual outcome of the sublime revolutionary explosion which promised *liberté, égalité, fraternité* is the miserable utilitarian/egotistical universe of market calculation."

## Beltway Press

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7. No lurid stories will be rehearsed on the Sunday shows about Cartwright's allegedly overly familiar relationship with a young female aide in 2009, with heavy innuendo as to what the episode said about his reckless character.

8. No FBI informants will be placed inside the elite Alfalfa Club in DC that Cartwright was known to attend.

9. Cartwright's loyalty to the United States won't be impugned by anchors or congressmen.

10. Dirt won't be dug up on David Sanger's

Problematically, we reveal way too much in this relinquishing of self to the market because – we want "the stuff."

As the "information society" has expanded, authentic civil society has more and more contracted, more and more dissolved; becoming an avatar of its former self, but hopefully not of its historically possible self. With all this "information," which has vastly dis-informed in so many ways, people have actually become more mired in their individual selves, increasingly de-politicized, and yet inured to their own de-politicization.

Lacking an effective theory of historical possibility that could link to action, we say "oh hum; what features will iPhone 10 have?"

But, as was shown in Gezi Park, Tahrir Square, and in the Occupy Movement, cyber-technology and social networking may be turned to concrete human ends.

Here, the issue is the use of technique, and technique for what ends, to serve which class interests. In the Soviet Union, the question was "kto," "for whom." And though the Soviet Union is gone, the human question remains. For whom?

– *The author is State University of New York Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus*

private life in an attempt to discredit his reporting on Cartwright's Stuxnet.

It's not what is done. It is who does it that matters in Washington. Even past closeness to power covers a multitude of sins.

[Just for the humorless, I don't think any of the above 10 things should be done, but these smear techniques also shouldn't have been deployed against Edward Snowden and Glenn Greenwald of the Guardian].

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## Senior Driver

My neighbor was working in his yard when he was startled by a late model car that came crashing through his hedge and ended up in his front lawn.

He rushed to help an elderly lady driver out of the car and sat her down on a lawn chair.

He said with excitement, "You appear quite elderly to be driving."

"Well, yes, I am," she replied proudly. "I'll

be 97 next month, and I am now old enough that I don't even need a driver's license anymore."

"The last time I went to my doctor, he examined me and asked if I had a driver's license. I told him yes and handed it to him. He took scissors out of the drawer, cut the license into pieces, and threw it in the waste basket, saying, 'You won't need this anymore,' so I thanked him and left!"

# Conservative Crusade To Remake America's Courts

BY CAROLINE FREDRICKSON

---

**THE FEDERALIST SOCIETY**  
***How Conservatives Took The Law***  
***Back From Liberals***  
**By Michael Avery**  
**and Danielle McLaughlin**  
**Vanderbilt University Press**  
**304 pages, \$35**

---

**E**arly in the 1980s, a few conservative law students – primarily from Yale and Chicago, with a few from Harvard and Stanford – banded together to challenge what they saw as the liberal orthodoxy then prevailing in the law.

Alienated from many of their professors and fellow students, they sought to establish a network to disseminate their view of constitutional principles.

The organization they founded, the Federalist Society, has grown into a significant force in the conservative legal movement.

The law students who founded the society, as well as the law professors and lawyers who participate in its events and write for its publications, are among the most well known and effective advocates of originalism. This theory, popularized largely by Justice Antonin Scalia, claims that the only “honest” way to interpret the Constitution is to read the words as, when and by whom they were written [property-owning white men only, of course].

The founding Federalists are also the architects of efforts to roll back reproductive rights, equal opportunity in education and the workplace, voting rights action, protections of civil liberties and much more.

As president of what some call the progressive counterpart to the Federalists, I was eager to read Michael Avery and Danielle McLaughlin’s *The Federalist Society: How Conservatives Took the Law Back From Liberals*.

The authors open with a brief history of the society’s founding. Notably, the fledgling organization almost immediately began receiving significant support from both foundations and the political elite.

Its young leaders soon found themselves in influential positions in the Reagan Administration, particularly in Ed Meese’s Justice Department, where they were able to advance their vision of the Constitution and how it should be applied.

The authors then describe the areas of the law where Federalist Society members have played the most significant role. For lay readers, this section may be the most interesting.

For example, Federalists have been central in attacking civil rights laws, including arguing that, in constitutional terms, “Jim Crow” laws are essentially equivalent to affirmative action.

Early challenges to discriminatory government policies contended that decisions should not be based on race and that members of minority groups should be treated as individuals under the law. Later, however, civil rights advocates came to believe that it would be impossible to eradicate the vestiges of racism and slavery without recourse to affirmative policies.

Universities and public employers adopted affirmative action plans to add diversity to their student bodies and work forces and to remedy the lingering effects of past discrimination.

Conservatives latched on to the language of race neutrality to decry all affirmative action programs, with great success. The authors show how the Supreme Court adopted society members’ arguments to limit the use of affirmative action. Federalist Society supporters also mounted public-relations efforts to discredit “reverse discrimination.”

Perhaps most meaningfully, they have successfully stacked the courts with like-minded judges; the authors note that “every single federal judge appointed by President George H.W. Bush or President George W. Bush was either a member or approved by members of the society.”

Society members no doubt hope for complete victory when the Supreme Court took up *Fisher v. University of Texas*, looking at whether race can still play a role in admissions policies of public universities.

Mitt Romney advanced these sentiments in bitter post-election comments that attributed his loss to “the gifts” President Obama allegedly bestowed on minorities and young supporters. Romney’s statement echoed Clint Bolick, an architect of the right’s strategy and frequent speaker at Federalist Society conferences, who has described affirmative action as “government’s power ... to confer enormous tribute upon its beneficiaries.”

The Affordable Care Act litigation also demonstrates how those associated with the Federalist Society have changed the direction of the law.



When libertarian law professor Randy Barnett, once a Federalist Society faculty adviser, first proposed challenging the individual mandate as beyond Congress's powers under the Commerce Clause, many experts scoffed. Barnett persevered, publishing widely, speaking everywhere and appearing regularly on television.

Ultimately he galvanized many state attorneys general and conservative organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and National Federation of Independent Businesses to adopt his approach.

Despite over 75 years of case law affirming Congress's authority to pass laws regulating commerce, Barnett and his colleagues persuaded a Supreme Court majority that Congress could not require Americans to purchase a product.

Although the court found that the act was valid under Congress's "taxing Power," Barnett's arguments may prove very damaging to future efforts to regulate on behalf of Americans.

Not only do the authors helpfully describe the society's theories – along with the strategies the conservative legal movement devised to advance them – but they critique those theories in terms accessible to lay readers.

From the regulation of private property, race and gender discrimination and sexual autonomy, to American exceptionalism, sovereignty and international law, the authors present both the Federalists' arguments and thoughtful commentary on the flaws in those approaches.

Some readers, however, may be disappointed that the authors do not spend more time describing the how, in addition to the who, what and why of the Federalist Society's work. We get a thorough description of cases the Federalists has sought to overturn – *Roe v. Wade* chief among them – and who is involved, but we learn less about how the Society has actually achieved its successes.

The authors chose not to interview people for the book, instead relying exclusively on the public

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record, including publications, live and recorded programs, and other materials.

Given my position running the American Constitution Society, I may be more interested than others in understanding what went on behind the scenes and how the

Federalists proved so successful. But this is a small quibble with an otherwise illuminating and important book that I hope will help engage liberals in a discussion of how we can reclaim the law from the right and learn from its unfortunate successes.

vote Democratic – from casting ballots, some for the short-term, some forever, depending on various states' laws.

Polls show a majority of Americans support marijuana legalization, but redneck Oklahoma lawmakers – afraid of appearing soft on crime – would not even consider approving a study of medical marijuana, now permitted in 18 states and the District of Columbia.

According to the ACLU, Oklahoma spent nearly \$30 million enforcing marijuana laws in 2010. Nationally, states spent an estimated \$3.61 billion enforcing marijuana possession laws that year.

It's past time for a serious, adult conversation on legalizing marijuana and other drugs. The state's drug enforcement agency and district attorneys, of course, will squawk and warn of dire consequences. Much of their criticism disguises alarm that their kingdoms could be diminished without the easy pickings of drug-possession enforcement.

"It's time for Oklahoma to end its participation in the failed war on marijuana," says former state Rep. Ryan Kiesel, ACLU Oklahoma's executive director. "From the distrust it creates, particularly in communities of color, to the diversion of scarce public safety resources, continuing down this path is not only foolhardy, it actually makes Oklahomans less safe."

We couldn't have said it better.

## Day Of Reckoning

What must former Sen. Bob Dole be thinking now?

Just weeks after he suggested his party should hang a "Closed for Repairs" sign on its front door, Republicans have doubled-down on dumb across the country – exacerbating image problems their own consultants warn could render them a minority party for generations.

Whether it's Tea Party resistance to immigration reform, a renewal of the anti-abortion culture wars, the never-ending assault on LGBT rights or a cave-man-

like resistance to scientific proof of climate change, the GOP is turning off generations of future voters and transforming the Wendy Davises of the Democratic world into stars.

What few sane voices appear to be left in Republican leadership – Oklahoma U.S. Rep. Tom Cole is one – are increasingly drowned out by noisy fringe elements, scaring the you-know-what out of middle-of-the-road voters who care primarily about good jobs, good schools and good roads.

Take the case of Eagle Forum founder and strident anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly, towering figure in the conservative culture wars. She recently told a radio host the GOP is making a terrible mistake targeting Latinos for outreach.

Though Republicans, including Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, depicted Hispanics as a natural fit in the GOP because of tendency toward strong family values and religiosity, Schlafly suggests they can never be proper Republicans because they have too many children out of wedlock and "don't understand" concepts of limited government.

"The people that Republicans ought to reach out to are the white voters," she told the conservative Clay and Marty Show, adding Latino voters will never vote Republican because they don't "have Republican inclinations at all. They're running an illegitimacy rate that's just about the same as the blacks are."

"The plain fact is they come from a country where they have no experience of limited government and the types or rights we have in the Bill of Rights. They don't understand that at all. You can't even talk to them about what the Republican principle is."

Since America is increasingly pluralistic, such comments from one of the right's icons should give GOP leadership pause – even in fire-engine-red Oklahoma.

After all, in the 2012 elections, only one in 10 Republican voters nationally weren't white – *one!* Moreover, Mitt Romney attracted a mere 27% of Hispanic voters. This is a recipe for political train wreck.

Democrats no doubt are enjoying the show. But

they are kidding themselves if they think they'll become the default choice of those turned off by Wingnut World.

Just look at voter registration figures nationally. More often than not, the category with the biggest growth is "independent."

A day of reckoning surely approaches for Republicans. But Democrats better be ready – with a serious strategy – to take advantage of the fallout. Or they, too, could be hurting long-term.

### 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

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

**Koch-heads:** Gov. Mary Fallin [\$5,000] and Tulsa Mayor Dewey Bartlett [\$2,500] received big checks from Koch Industries PAC this year. Bartlett is locked in tough re-election battle, facing former Mayor Kathy Taylor in November. Fallin is up for re-election next year.

**Big Brother?** Twenty-three percent of Americans support using drones to issue speeding tickets. – *The Atlantic*

OSU's Ponca City-based University Multispectral Laboratories received one of the highest civilian honors given by the Department of Defense for its support of National Guard and Reserve employees, making it easier to serve.

At this point, Gov. Mary Fallin's chief re-election worry: a serious primary challenge from her right flank. Watch out for House Speaker T.W. Shannon.

Odds that New York City will experience flooding again next year similar to Superstorm Sandy: one in 10,000. By 2100, the odds skyrocket to one in two, if scientists' worst-case sea level predictions hold. – *Mother Jones*

The rumor mill churns on possible 2014 campaign matchups. Is Democratic state Sen. Al McAffrey eyeing a challenge to two-term U.S. Rep. James Lankford, R-Edmond? D's 2012 5th District nominee, Tom Guild, is already running hard.

From 2002 through first quarter of 2013, 261,998 Iraq and Afghanistan vets received provisional diagnosis of PTSD at VA Medical facilities. – *Time*

The state is seeking new tobacco compacts with Oklahoma tribes, hoping to close a competitive price advantage enjoyed for decades by smoke shops. Five tribes already signed on to new deals: Apache and Fort Sill Apache, Cheyenne and Arapaho, Otoe Missouria, Kaw and Muscogee [Creek].

**FYI:** The Obama Administration has mandated a dramatic increase in fuel economy for new cars – 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

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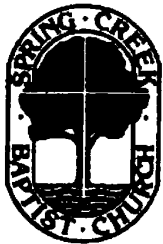
A high-fat, high-glycemic-index diet increases concentrations of proteins in the brain that are linked to Alzheimer's. – *University of Washington research*

**Mid-Summer Fun Fact:** The average American eats 24 pounds of ice cream each year. – *Better Homes and Gardens*

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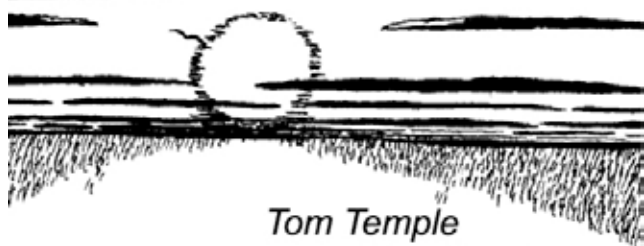


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## Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ian, President Obama himself “interestingly, offered a suggestion when speaking at a small New Jersey campaign event when he was first running for president.

“Someone asked him what he would do about the Middle East. He answered with a story about the legendary 20th Century organizer A. Philip Randolph meeting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Randolph described to FDR the condition of black people in America, the condition of working people.

“Reportedly, FDR listened intently, then replied: ‘I agree with everything you have said. Now, make me do it.’”

That was the message Obama repeated.

There you have it. Make him do it. You’ve got an invitation from the president himself.

James Nimmo  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

*An Open letter to President Obama:*

At the top of the list of urgent concerns among your hundreds of progressive supporters here in Oklahoma, whose votes unfortunately do not count, is the proposed mining of tar sands in the enormous Canadian reserves. Some of us are specially concerned as they have friends living on the path of the proposed Keystone Pipeline, whose land is slated to be taken through eminent domain. All are aware of the frequency of pipeline breaks and the devastation this poses for the environment, especially to threatened water tables here in prairie states.

I am a monthly donor to NRDC [Natural Resources Defense Council], the Union of Concerned Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and four other environmental groups, though I am a widow living on Social Security and a very small teacher’s pension. I am therefore aware of the opinion of Dr. James Hansen, leading climate scientist in the United States, that burning tar sands would mean “game over” for any attempt to preserve a livable climate.

I know that tar sands oil is the dirtiest form of petroleum, so thick it must be diluted and forced through a pipeline. I know that ExxonMobil and other subsidized oil companies are spending millions in TV ads claiming it can be a clean energy source. It cannot.

As a grandmother of 10, I would be in despair were it not that I also know that you, Mr. President, hold the



final decision in your hands. This is a rare moment in which you do not have to battle an intransigent Congress who votes against their own ideas. This is your moment to rise above political maneuvering to prove yourself a champion of the human race, a heroic idol who will stand as long as the United States endures.

You already have the eloquence of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Now you must show the tenacity and nerve of Harry Truman in proclaiming that, indeed, "the buck stops with you."

Nancy Zorn  
Warr Acres

*Editor's Note: Nancy Zorn's advocacy isn't limited to letter writing. In early April, she was arrested after padlocking herself to an earth-mover at the Keystone XL pipeline construction site near Allen.*

Editor, The Observer:

I have a question: Why are the Republicans protecting those big corporations and the very rich from paying more to keep the government out of debt?

I just read a report stating that 16 of the great corporations have basically stopped paying taxes, while at the same time are also cutting jobs. This report stated that for almost 20 years from 1989 to 2008, corporations paid an average of 22.5% in federal taxes, but because of the recession it has dropped to 10%, even as their profits have more than doubled in the last 10 years.

In another report it states that in 20 years corporate profits increased by four times, while their taxes have decreased by 50%. Meanwhile, the workers payroll tax has doubled. In effect, corporations have managed to let the middle class worker pay for the nation's expenses. From 1950 to 1964, those who's income was \$400,000 or more paid over 90%, after deductions, and the economy was good.

It is interesting to read that almost 19,000 companies claim their home office in just one building in the Cayman Islands.

The revenue lost from these tax havens is estimated at about \$450 billion per year, while other tax loopholes that benefit the rich are estimated at over \$1 trillion.

Our Republicans in Congress continue to hold solid with the wealthy by doing everything they can to keep them from paying their fair share to help the government pay for its daily operation, and keep it out of debt.

Maybe a better question is: why does the working American keep putting them in office?

George Kesselring  
Muskogee

Editor, The Observer:

The granddaddy of Oklahoma scandals involved the state Supreme Court, where justice was for sale.

Lawyer Harlan Grimes called the Supreme Court corruption to the public's attention and named the case in which bribery had occurred. The Oklahoma



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Bar disbarred him for breaking their code of silence.

While serving a 1964 federal sentence for income tax evasion, Justice N.S. Corn, 80, confessed he had accepted \$150,000 from the CEO of Selected Investments Corp. for a decision favorable to it in its case with the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

Corn paid Justices Earl Welch and Napoleon Johnson for their roles in the decision.

In 1967, the state Constitution was amended to order selection of appellate judges on a non-partisan retention ballot and established a Judicial Nominating Commission to forward three candidates to the governor who makes the selection.

In effect, it is a lifetime appointment because no Oklahoma justice or judge has been defeated through the statewide "yes-no" low profile retention voting.

The state House of Representatives is conducting an interim study on term limits for appellate judges, including the state Supreme Court.

It is long overdue.

Because power corrupts, we limit governors and presidents to two four-year terms and state legislators to 12 years.

We should limit judges and justices to terms of eight years because they get "black robe fever" after hearing lawyers say over and over, "Your Honor," and they mount the high bench above the rest of us in the common herd and bailiff announces, "All rise, the Honorable ... presiding."

If eight years is good enough for governors and presidents, it should be about right for bench warmers.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
Wagoner

Editor, The Observer:

We can't afford fuel for the Border Patrol to patrol the border, but we can sure as hell send millions to Syria and tens of millions to that thug [so-called president] in Afghanistan as was reported a while back.

Earlier this week, returning from a quick visit to Progreso, we saw two Border Patrol agents coming in off patrol on their ATVs, taking a break in the shade of one of the sparse trees and slurping down water. They were covered in a thick layer of dust, soaked in sweat [it's been knocking the door of 100-plus degrees] and generally looked worn out. They wear dark green uniforms [long sleeves], T-shirts, bulletproof vests, carry all sorts of gear [yes, various weapons ... but also water and first aid kits for illegals abandoned in the brush].

The worthless politicians in DC debate immigration issues, but never leave their ivory towers [except for one of their all too frequent "holidays"] to see what really goes on with the "boots on the ground." But they can sure dish out your tax dollars to every despot in Third World countries.

God save us from the politicians!

Norm Rourke  
Brownsville, TX

# One At A Time ...

Last month we celebrated Frosty's 80th birthday and his six decades of muckraking journalism with one helluva party in Oklahoma City.

One of the more poignant moments came during a video in which Frosty reminisced about his life and his life's work, especially The Observer's championing of the little guy.

"I'm really proud of The Observer," he said. "Gotta keep it going. More important today than it's ever been."

Frosty's right: We cannot – we must not – let The Observer fade into the dustbin of history.

From its first edition on Oct. 17, 1969 to today, The Observer has told the stories no one else in Oklahoma's butt-kissing, arch-conservative mainstream media would dare tell.

The Observer alone provides a voice for the voiceless, believing all deserve a fair and equal shot at the American dream – regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual preference or socio-economic status.

When we signed on nearly seven years ago, Beverly and I promised Helen and Frosty we would do everything in our power to secure The Observer financially – to ensure that it remains that all-important voice for generations to come.

It remains a daunting challenge. But we take heart in something Helen emphasized over and over: Observer subscribers and supporters are family. In other words, the challenge is not ours alone.

These are tough economic times for all media, but especially for independent journals like The Observer. If The Observer is not only going to survive for another 45 years – but also flourish – we need our family's help.

Too many Oklahomans – especially younger Oklahomans – that would be receptive to The Observer's message of fairness and inclusivity don't know we exist. And we don't have the deep pockets to spend on marketing to find them.

There's a simple, easy way you can help: If every one of our loyal friends and subscribers would help us land one – *just one* – new subscriber, The Observer would be stronger than ever.

Second, we need you to think long-term with us. What would Oklahoma look like without The Observer? If you think it's bad now with wingnuts, theocrats and corporatists running amok, imagine how it would be without The Observer to tell it like it truly is.

We can't bear the thought. And we're determined to keep our promise to Frosty and Helen.

So we're announcing creation of the Oklahoma



Observer Democracy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that will support The Observer's mission of helping create a better, more informed Oklahoma. [See coupon on page 21 for more details.]

For The Observer to endure for generations to come, we need our Observer family to step up and support our new foundation with legacy gifts – in other words, remembering us in your will. Or perhaps you would consider one-time or recurring gifts that will help us expand and improve The Observer's enterprise journalism.

If you've been putting off making such a gift, there is no time like the present. With your support, The Observer will continue to raise hell with the Powers-That-Be, demanding a fairer, more just Oklahoma!

– Arnold Hamilton/Editor



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