

# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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## MAYDAY!

*Can Vital State Services Be Rescued?*



**2015 LEGISLATIVE  
PREVIEW**

**Pages 10-21**

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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

### *Straight Shooter*

State Auditor Gary Jones doesn't get near the credit he deserves as one of Oklahoma's finest, most honorable public servants.

Yes, he's a rock-ribbed Republican. Yes, he's ultra-conservative to his core. But he is no ideologue. He has a keen brain and he uses it – in an effort to help make Oklahoma, and its government, better and more efficient.

If the GOP-dominated Legislature truly cared about transparency and rooting out corruption, it would fully fund Jones' office and turn it loose.

The Powers That Be, though, are afraid what Jones would find – and when he did, that he wouldn't play ball to protect the sacred cows gorging themselves at the taxpayers' trough.

Jones' clear sense of right and wrong and fair play was on display recently on Facebook when he repeated something he's said many times before and since: "Oklahoma lawmakers' pay should be the same as the beginning pay of a teacher."

We don't begrudge lawmakers being well paid for their often around-the-clock service, but why would they be valued above teachers – who are only helping educate and shape our future generations?

Consider this: A first-year Oklahoma legislator makes \$38,400, a rookie teacher \$31,600. And this: Oklahoma is 48th in teacher pay, 14th in legislative pay.

Gov. Mary Fallin and state lawmakers routinely pay lip service to teacher pay raises, yet take steps to ensure the money isn't available to fund them. Their priorities have been far different: tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the rich and questionable tax breaks that line the pockets of Oklahoma's corporate elite.

It is true that Jones has a dog in this fight – his wife is a teacher in Cache. But that doesn't discredit his notion that legislative and teacher

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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# Observerscope



When will the State Chamber break its silence on Rep. John Bennett's anti-Muslim hate speech? It's not only bad for business – it's morally reprehensible.

Dart: To Gov. Mary Fallin, blaming ex-Corrections Director Justin Jones for the state's high incarceration rate. She bailed on the first Smart on Crime proposals because she feared being labeled Soft on Crime.

For Valentine's Day, you can honor an ex by adopting a San Francisco zoo's cockroach or scorpion. We can think of some Oklahoma lawmakers who fit the bill.

Laurel: To Sen. Anthony Sykes, killing the infamous "hoodie" bill without a hearing. A sign the adults are once again in charge at the Capitol?

Lord, help us: Tea Party hero Dr. Ben Carson headlines the Oklahoma Christian Home Educators gala Feb. 10 in OKC. Top sponsorships are \$21k, proving yet again dollars don't equate to sense.

Dart: To Sen. David Holt, R-OKC, proposing even more tax cuts – .1% annually for 20 years until the state's top rate reaches 3%. He must be chugging Grover Norquist's Anti-Government Hat-erade.

Save The Date: The 36th annual Friends of the Metro Library System book sale is Feb. 21-22 at the OKC State Fairgrounds.

Laurel: To the Oklahoma PTA, working to double the number attending this year's pro-education rally at the Capitol on Mar. 30. Lawmakers would ignore 50,000 marchers at their political peril.

Our friend Jody Harlan shares a classic billboard message: "Being cremated is my last hope for a smoking hot body."

Dart: To 10th U.S. Circuit Appeals Judge Jerome Holmes, whose ethical compass sorely needs to be recalibrated. He should have recused himself from a murder case appeal since he declared in a 2002 op-ed the convict "deserved to die."

We mourn the passing of staunch Observer supporter James Lazzarier, longtime Rose State College professor and former Cleveland County Election Board president. He was 81.

Laurel: To Journal Record editor Ted Streuli, for an editorial calling state Rep. Sally Kern what she is: a bigot. He minced no words, a refreshing contrast to editorials frequently appearing in the state's largest dailies.

OK Democrats named David Scott as interim executive director, succeeding Trav Robertson. Scott, a member of the Choctaw Nation, is believed to be the only Native American serving as a state Democratic Party ED.

Dart: To Rep. Kevin Calvey, R-OKC, seeking to strip DAs of authority to prosecute state officials for public offenses. How did this nitwit get returned to office?

Fool's errand: Former state Superintendent Janet Barresi poured \$1.3 million of her own money into her failed re-election bid. She didn't even get out of the primary.

Laurel: To the Humane Society of the United States, pushing back hard against Attorney General Scott Pruitt's grandstanding. He's playing to a deranged base that regards HSUS as a radical animal rights group.

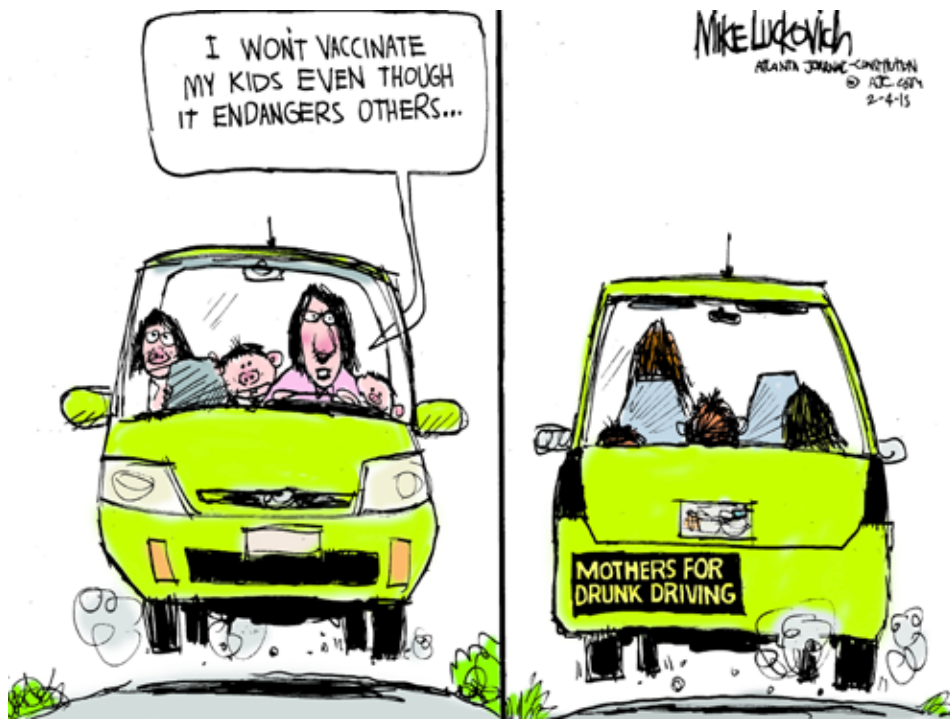
Unconscionable: 61% of Oklahoma public school students are in poverty – fourth highest rate in the nation. Do the state's policymakers know – or care?

Johnson Bridgwater is Sierra Club's new OK director and chief lobbyist. Wish him luck – the lege is full of climate change deniers and anti-science fundamentalists.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



# Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Preston Doerflinger, secretary of finance for Gov. Fallin, was arrested for having control of a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol.

The governor continues to have confidence in Doerflinger's good work as cabinet secretary of finance and director of the State Office of Management and Enterprise Services. Perhaps Doerflinger is the only one smart enough to grasp the magnitude of Oklahoma's financial problems, or they would all be drunk.

For four years Oklahoma has given hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks to the oil and gas companies. Why? Some fear they will leave if we don't, while others think oil and gas should be rewarded since they provide one of every four jobs in Oklahoma.

For whatever reason, oil and gas has received special treatment the past four years. New oil is below \$50 a barrel and state revenue will surely hurt if oil prices don't rebound soon.

Oil and gas have been given ev-

erything. It would compare to giving all the feed to a special pen of heifers to learn that none will have a calf. Guess what – we still have a feed bill.

In the case of Oklahoma, Preston Doerflinger still has to come up with a balanced budget after giving hundreds of millions to big oil. Preston Doerflinger has been sent on mission impossible!

Gov. Fallin was right – don't fire Preston. Get him a designated driver.

Jerry Ellis  
Valiant

*Editor's Note: Jerry Ellis, a Valiant Democrat, formerly represented District 5 in the Oklahoma Senate and District 1 in the Oklahoma House of Representatives. He is publisher of the Southeast Times newspaper in Idabel, where this first appeared as an editorial.*

Editor, The Observer:

A Dec. 31 op-ed appeared in the Tulsa World, titled *Economist Look At Teacher Shortages*, by Wendy P. Warcholik, PhD, an economist and research fellow for the Oklahoma

Council of Public Affairs.

As most everyone knows, one of the goals of OCPA is to undermine and shutter our public schools. The lady's solution to teacher shortages? Break up the "monopoly" of the "education establishment" by "expanding school-choice opportunities."

Dr. Warcholik's research somehow doesn't mention that Oklahoma public school teachers' pay ranks 48 in the U.S., at \$44,373, well below the national average of \$56,103, which seems just fine with our "business friendly" tax-cutting governor, Mary Fallin.

People should know that the OCPA purports to be a "think tank" which aspires to imitate the Heritage Foundation. Both are motivated by Social Darwinism, a theory formulated by Herbert Spencer, 19th Century philosopher whose mantra is that "the strong survive." For Spencer, the white European race was superior to others, and therefore destined to rule, as nature intended.

Their principle is "why drain resources from the strong to support the weak?" If we keep our schools under-funded, we can squeeze the life out of them and eventually "drown them in the bathtub," a la Grover Norquist.

However, the consequence is that many of our fine Oklahoma teachers are moving to other states which will truly reward their talent.

Although Charles Darwin never promoted Social Darwinism, it looks like the OCPA and Gov. Fallin do.

Bill Moorer  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

This letter is a plea to Observer readers to look at the facts about what the federal government led by President Barack Obama has been able to do for the United States

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



## A Comedian's Dream

**O**n behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma, I am pleased to offer a hearty “you’re welcome” to Bill Maher, Jimmy Fallon, David Letterman and Co.

The run-up to the 55th Oklahoma Legislature surely exceeded their wildest dreams – *hoodies and haters and melons, oh my*.

What could be better fodder than Rep. Sally Kern cementing her reputation as the state’s Bigot-in-Chief by proposing three – count ‘em, three – anti-gay bills.

Or Sen. Nathan Dahm’s bid for wackiest legislation – a plan to revoke the humble watermelon’s designation as official state vegetable – that was eclipsed by Sen. Ralph Shortey’s quest to give Oklahomans the right to shoot down drones that invade their air space.

And what screams bat-you-know-what crazy louder than Sen. Roger Thompson’s measure to make it legal for teachers to wish students “Merry Christmas” – *what ... you can’t already do that in Oklahoma?* – or Sen. Don Barrington’s idea to fight crime by outlawing hoodies?

As Will Rogers once put it, “There are adults running governments who shouldn’t be allowed to play with matches.”

It’s a sad fact that as the Legislature’s dimmest bulbs shone brightest, they eclipsed some smart, reasonable ideas that didn’t attract the man-bites-dog media attention.

Example: State Rep. Shane Stone’s HB 1261 that would provide a mechanism for undocumented immigrants to obtain Oklahoma driver’s licenses.

I know what you’re thinking: this proposal is DOA. This is Oklahoma, after all. Home of HB 1804, widely regarded as the nation’s harshest anti-immigrant law when it was enacted in 2007.

How long before the Legislature’s Xenophobe Caucus invokes the “A” word – amnesty?

This isn’t 2007. It’s 2015. The anti-immigrant fervor whipped up by the likes of disgraced former Rep. Randy Terrill in the decade after 9/11 has faded, even in Oklahoma.

Other states – California, most recently – already

have provided undocumented immigrants a means to obtain driver’s licenses.

It’s not amnesty.

What it is, is smart public policy.

Stone’s proposal would allow undocumented, *tax-paying* immigrants to secure an Oklahoma driver’s license by presenting their Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, a valid unexpired passport from their country of citizenship or valid unexpired consular identification document, and proof they’ve lived in Oklahoma for at least a year.

Think about it: We already share the road with thousands of undocumented immigrants. With a valid driver’s license, they could obtain insurance that protects all of us in the event of an accident.

Further, it would help authorities investigating criminal activity. How many crimes go unreported or unsolved because witnesses refuse to come forward because they don’t have a valid ID to present to police?

“One of biggest issues I’m working on this session is trying to help get domestic violence reported more often,” says Stone. “So many people out there are afraid to say anything to anybody.”

“So this would not just help get them on insurance, but get them to be more active members of society.”

It’s a simple, sensible idea, but even a rookie lawmaker and a member of the Legislature’s minority party like Stone knows it won’t be an easy sell.

“Republicans I’ve talked to immediately say this is going to be tough,” Stone says. “But I’ve talked to several who’ve said, ‘If this gets close to passing I’ll do what I can to help you out on it.’ But it’s an uphill battle.”

It makes political sense that Stone would author such legislation – his south Oklahoma City district has a large, growing Hispanic population, the vast majority here legally.

But research also indicates Oklahoma is home to at least 75,000 undocumented immigrants. Stone’s proposal would help bring them out of the shadows and benefit Oklahoma economically.

What’s not to like?

## Journalism 101

*This Best of Frosty column first appeared in the July 10, 2011 edition of The Oklahoma Observer.*

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.



## You Just Had To Ask

A little old lady was sitting on a park bench in The Villages, a Florida retirement community. A man walks over and sits down on the other end of the bench.

After a few moments, the woman asks, "Are you a stranger here?"

He replies, "I lived here years ago."

"So, where were you all these years?"

"In prison," he says.

"Why did they put you in prison?"

He looked at her, and very quietly said, "I killed my wife."

"Oh!" said the woman. "So you're single ..."

– From Frosty's Notebook, June 25, 2007

# LETHAL INJECTION

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## TWO WEEKS TOO LATE

### *Justices Finally Take Up Challenge To Oklahoma's Death Cocktail*

BY KATIE FRETLAND

**F**our United States Supreme Court justices would have stayed Oklahoma's execution of Charles Warner on Jan. 15. Without the fifth vote the court needed to halt his death, the state executed the convicted baby rapist and killer in Oklahoma's first lethal injection since the botched execution of Clayton Lockett last April.

But on Jan. 28, executions were put on hold again. The court agreed to review the appeal of Warner and three other Oklahoma inmates who argued the use of a controversial lethal injection drug would cause unconstitutional suffering. In taking up the case, the court changed the title from Warner v. Gross to Glossip v. Gross in the name of living inmate Richard Glossip.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor said she found a district

court's conclusion that the drug midazolam will work "difficult to accept."

"Lockett was able to regain consciousness even after having received a dose of midazolam – confirmed by a blood test – supposedly sufficient to knock him out entirely," Sotomayor wrote.

The appeal to the Supreme Court stems from a ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Stephen P. Friot in Oklahoma City. He denied the inmates' request for a preliminary injunction and a panel in the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld his decision.

Lockett writhed, groaned and spoke during his execution on April 29, prompting Gov. Mary Fallin to order a review. A problem with a single intravenous line placed in his groin area was cited as the main issue, but lawyers for the inmates argue that midazolam is

not an appropriate drug even when it is administered correctly.

Mike Oakley, the former general counsel at the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, said his research on the drug included “Wiki leaks or whatever it is,” according to a transcript of an interview he gave to the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety.

“You got an attorney general who is running for office,” Oakley said in a transcript. “You’ve got a governor who is running for office. You’ve, there’s pressure to get it done.”

Assistant Attorney General John Hadden defended the use of the drug in a court filing.

“Florida has established an impressive track record of successful executions using midazolam,” he wrote.

Sotomayor said Florida’s “apparent success is subject to question,” because the second drug in the three-drug cocktail injected into inmates is a paralytic.

“The inmate may be fully conscious but unable to move,” she wrote.

She said Oklahoma’s expert witness on midazolam “cited no studies” and “appeared to rely primarily on the Web site [www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com).”

Oklahoma’s expert witness in Friot’s court was Roswell Lee Evans, a doctor of pharmacy from Auburn University in Alabama. Records show he was contracted at a rate of \$350 per hour for “case/records review, expert report preparation and deposition/trial preparation” and \$2,500 per day for “all appearances ... for depositions, hearings or court trials,” plus travel reimbursement.

According to the Associated Press, Warner said he felt his body burning during his execution in which Oklahoma employed midazolam.

AP reporter Sean Murphy, who witnessed the execution, said the shade covering windows to the execution chamber was raised at 7:08 p.m. and Warner began to give his last words. He said he was “poked” five times.

“It hurt,” he said. “It feels like acid.”

The execution began at 7:10 p.m.

At 7:11 p.m., he said, “My body is on fire.”

Warner also said, “I’m not afraid to die,” said journalist Morgan Chesky.

He was silent and twitched a few times after 7:12 p.m. and did not move after 7:18 p.m., Chesky said.

He was pronounced dead at 7:28 p.m., 18 minutes after the execution began.

Warner was convicted of raping and killing Adrianna Waller in 1997. According to documents, a doctor diagnosed physical and sexual abuse to the 11-month-old baby. She died from injuries to her head, abdomen and chest.

“The state and federal courts have consistently affirmed the jury’s determination,” Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt and Assistant Attorney General Robert Whittaker wrote in documents asking for clemency to be denied for Warner. “It is now time for

justice to be served.”

Adrianna’s mother, Shonda Waller, gave an interview in January 2014 in which she said Warner’s execution would “definitely not” honor her daughter.

“That would dishonor my daughter,” Waller said. “It would dishonor me and everything I believe in. I wouldn’t want to have to know about something like that because I wouldn’t want to know that my hand or what I went through personally is the reason why he is no longer living.”

She said she is a Christian and opposes the death penalty.

“If they want me to have to go back though the traumatic situation and having to deal with knowing that because what I went through someone else has had to die,” she said, “then they will give him the death penalty.”

*Katie Fretland is a correspondent for The Oklahoma Observer and for the UK Guardian. She represented The Observer as a media witness of Clayton Lockett’s execution in April 2014. She was not selected to be a media witness to Warner’s execution.*

# *‘We The Citizens Have Our Name On That Gurney’*

**BY ARNOLD HAMILTON**

**O**n Jan. 28, the U.S. Supreme Court postponed three Oklahoma executions until it can determine whether the state’s three-drug cocktail violates the U.S. Constitution’s ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

The order was announced less than 30 hours before Richard Glossip was set to be the next Oklahoma inmate to die by lethal injection at the state penitentiary in McAlester.

Attorney General Scott Pruitt had asked the court to halt the executions until it could decide the case. Death penalty opponents – including Sister Helen Prejean – waged a separate battle aimed at halting Glossip’s execution, delivering petitions with 30,000 signatures to Gov. Mary Fallin urging she step in.

“There is no humane way to kill a conscious, imaginative human being,” said Sister Helen, author of *Dead Man Walking*. “We the citizens have our name on that gurney.”

Sister Helen, who is serving as a spiritual advisor for Glossip, joined religious and political leaders, social justice activists and Glossip’s attorneys at a state Capitol news conference Jan. 27 organized by the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.





Sister Helen Prejean urges Richard Glossip's life be spared

It was standing room only in the Capitol's fourth-floor press conference room – not only death penalty foes, but also state, local and international media, underscoring the fact that Oklahoma's damn-the-torpedoes approach to capital punishment is commanding widespread interest [and in many cases, scorn].

"I want to just say that, truly, the eyes of the world are on Oklahoma today," Sister Helen said.

#### **HUMAN EXPERIMENTATION**

Even though witnesses said Warner betrayed no pain or discomfort during his execution, it's clear Oklahoma's lethal-injection cocktail – particularly the drug used to render an inmate unconscious, midazolam – can be described accurately as human experimentation.

Oklahoma deployed midazolam for the first time in the bungled Lockett execution – he died of a heart attack after the lethal procedure was called off. So, when it executed Warner, the state increased the amount of midazolam five-fold.

Florida has used midazolam, apparently without incident, but Arizona and Ohio – which had problems with executions involving midazolam and another drug – announced they would not again use the mixture.

Such mixed reviews could give a conservative U.S. Supreme Court pause.

#### **GOOD POLITICS, PUBLIC POLICY**

Pruitt's request that SCOTUS delay three Oklahoma executions until it rules on the inmates' lawsuit was good politics and good public policy.

It was good politics because it helps inoculate Pruitt from criticism he is a bloodthirsty ideologue who cares nothing about fairness, only revenge. It was good public policy because the state's execution protocol deserves a thorough review by the nation's highest court which then will deem it fair or foul.

The high court will hear oral arguments in April. It is expected to rule by late June.

In the meantime, the state continues to search for alternatives to midazolam.

#### **WHERE'S THE FAIRNESS?**

Glossip's case illustrates that the death penalty often isn't applied fairly and evenly.

Glossip wasn't even present when the murder for which he was convicted occurred. Justin Sneed, who delivered the fatal beating to Barry Van Treese, was given a life-without-parole sentence after he agreed to testify that Glossip offered him \$10,000 to kill Van Treese. Glossip proclaimed his innocence and refused to accept a plea deal that would have given him the possibility of parole in 20 years.

Now he faces lethal injection, while Sneed lives out his life in a medium-security Oklahoma prison.

#### **BY THE NUMBERS**

Numbers worth noting: 150 death row inmates nationally – including 10 in Oklahoma – have escaped society's ultimate punishment after post-conviction/post-sentencing investigations proved their innocence.

There is no way to undo a death sentence.

#### **WORTH THE COST?**

It costs taxpayers a lot of money to be punitive – precious resources that could be applied to public services with far more societal value like education, mental health care or roads and bridges.

In Kansas, for example, the defense in death penalty trials costs an average \$400,000 per case – four times as much as when capital punishment is not sought, according to a 2014 study. In California, death penalty cases cost the state over \$4 billion between 1978-2011. And in Florida, enforcing the death penalty costs \$51 million more annually than punishing first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole [2000 report].

Rather than searching for creative execution protocols, Oklahoma lawmakers – and taxpayers – would be far better off seriously considering this question: Is the death penalty a deterrent?

Overwhelming evidence suggests it is not. Most capital offenses are heat-of-the-moment, the perpetrators in full drug and/or alcohol stupor. A driver in full road rage doesn't pause to consider the consequences of pulling the trigger.

Even more intriguing, FBI data suggests a link between murder and execution rates. States where the death penalty is pursued more often tend to experience higher murder rates.

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# Sinking Ship Of State

*As Governor Pledges More For Vital Services, Lawmakers Scramble To Plug \$300 Million Revenue Hole. Budget Gimmicks Alone Can't Solve A Revenue Crisis Of State Leaders Own Making.*

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

**L**et the shell games begin?

Last year, Gov. Mary Fallin and the Republican-dominated Legislature hid a looming budget crisis from Oklahomans by swiping money from agency revolving funds.

The state's Republican attorney general, however, ruled that diverting millions from trauma care and Oklahoma's Promise higher education scholarships was unconstitutional.

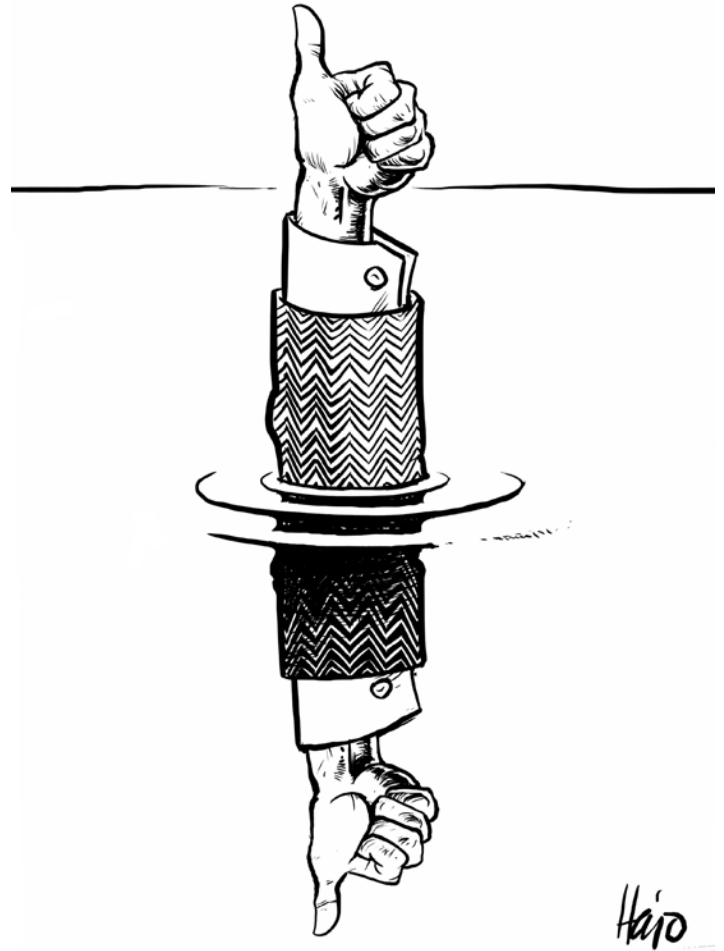
So what's the plan this year, when the state faces a projected \$300 million to \$400 million budget hole?

Hello, revolving funds.

The governor and other state leaders think they are on solid legal ground if they harvest some of the \$900 million not yet obligated. But what the strategy really exposes is just how limited their options are when crafting budgets for 2015-16 – and beyond.

Even if they can rob Peter to pay Paul this year, and keep budget cuts to 6.25% for 55 state agencies, it's hard to imagine how they can come up with the money to meet Fallin's plan to give \$25 million more to education, \$16 million to the Department of Human Services and \$15 million to corrections, just to name a few of the increases she proposes.

Fallin and Co. have weaved a noose around their necks when it comes to spending: They've approved



tax cuts that mostly benefit the rich, tax breaks that please their campaign donors, and rejected billions in federal health care funds to placate their noisy, uber right anti-Obama base.

Raiding revolving funds is unsustainable, as agency budgets continue to shrink – most down 20% in recent years – and as oil prices slump.

The state's Rainy Day Fund is up to \$535 million, but Fallin and lawmakers steadfastly refuse to dip into it. It was, after all, only 12 years ago Democrat Brad Henry slid into the governor's chair and discovered the emergency fund was tapped out.

This could get ugly – fast.

The state's public schools have endured the nation's deepest budget cuts the last five years. The state's overcrowded, understaffed prison system is ripe – as House Speaker Jeff Hickman noted – for another federal court takeover. And the state's Health Care Authority, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and crumbling state Capitol are in desper-

ate need of increased dollars.

Oh, and have you driven on Oklahoma's highways or crossed its bridges lately? The transportation budget line has been stronger than most in recent years, but it doesn't take a structural engineer – or numerous studies – to know our infrastructure sorely needs more.

The fact is, since Republicans took command of both legislative houses less than a decade ago, they've taken advantage of the state's latest energy boom to turn Oklahoma into an anti-government laboratory.

A free market approach? Hardly. They refused to touch hundreds of millions in corporate welfare that left Oklahoma with a public education nightmare – 1,000 fewer teachers and 40,000 more students.

Yet, Fallin and Co. prattle incessantly about letting taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned money. Yes, the taxpayers at the top of the income tax scale get to keep more – lots more. But the quarter-percent tax cut that kicks in this July will save the average taxpayer only about \$85 a year – enough for a Big Mac combo meal each month.

That's another \$50 million off the negotiating table when state lawmakers craft a budget that provides the services rank-and-file taxpayers depend on – and want.

Will state leaders take note of a recent SoonerPoll that found Oklahomans overwhelmingly support higher pay for teachers?

Some already have. Senate President Pro Tem Brian Bingman, R-Sapulpa, recently expressed alarm over Oklahoma's stingy teacher salaries – \$4,400 less than Texas and nearly \$12,000 less than the national average.

"We've got to do a better job with the pay differential between Oklahoma and Texas and some of the surrounding states," he told The Oklahoman's editorial board.

"We've got to do a better job of putting a good package together that we can attract and get the good teachers in the classroom."

When was the last time you heard a Republican legislative leader say publicly that Oklahoma's teachers are underpaid?

Bingman, of course, knows better than most how difficult it will be to negotiate a significant boost in education funding, not least because plummeting oil prices are contributing to sluggish state revenues.

Another huge hurdle: Both legislative houses include significant blocks of uber rightwing GOP lawmakers that are rabidly anti-public ed – some because they despise the teachers' unions, others because they prefer religious schools or homeschooling.

Fortifying the anti-public ed cabal are corporate interests that increasingly view schools as cash cows – opportunities for taxpayer dollars to flow to everything from for-profit higher ed to standardized test-

ing.

Still, pro-public ed forces are mustering again. Last year, an estimated 25,000 rallied at the state Capitol demanding legislators make public education the priority it must be if Oklahoma is to flourish in the 21st Century. This year, 50,000 are expected Mar. 30 for an Oklahoma PTA rally for better school funding and teacher pay.

The 2014 rally failed to persuade lawmakers: Rather than make significant investments in public education, they voted to cut taxes again, heeding their deep-pocketed political benefactors.

This year's spending strategy won't become clearer, of course, until the last month or so of the legislative session. In the meantime, lawmakers will preen for the cameras by debating a series of base-rallying proposals – God, guns and gays lead the uber right agenda.

An anti-crime bill that could have banned hoodies – a national black eye for Oklahoma – won't be given a hearing in the Senate, thankfully.

Will serious issues take center stage? More than half a million Oklahomans can't afford health care insurance. One in four Oklahoma children is food insecure. Oklahoma's county jails are the state's largest mental health facilities.

Or will special interests – corporate, religious and ideological – dominate much of the session with proposals that would undermine the carbon industry's enemy, renewable energy, and demonize almost anyone who isn't a straight, white Christian?

We'll know soon whether Speaker Hickman and Pro Tem Bingman are serious about systematically reviewing the state's \$2 billion or so in tax breaks. There is powerful opposition to such analysis – special interests scared their corporate welfare scheme will be exposed for what it is: a legalized looting of the state treasury.

We'll also know whether the governor, speaker and others are committed finally to criminal justice reform, ending a punitive system that threatens to bankrupt the state – we are a national leader in locking up almost anyone for almost anything.

And we'll know whether Fallin finally comes to her senses – joining fellow Republican governors like Indiana's Mike Pence – and finds a way to tap the federal government's Medicaid reimbursement expansion. The health of Oklahoma's least depends on it. So does the financial health of Oklahoma's hospitals, especially in rural areas.

All three – reviewing tax credits, reforming criminal justice and accepting Medicaid expansion – will give a clear signal whether Oklahoma's Republican-dominated leadership is serious about governing and solving the state's long-term problems or is content to yet again kick the can down the road.

Stay tuned.





# *A Legislator's Survival Guide To The Latest Energy Bust*

BY CAL HOBSON

**D**o you feel lucky, Oklahomans? Do you? We should for at least one big reason. Like many other Okies I usually take for granted this state's abundant natural resources. For example, our state has more lakeshore miles than any other except for Minnesota. Really. Look it up.

Besides offering recreational enjoyment our lakes, surrounded by deep woods and abundant parks, also provide millions of gallons of water for human, animal and industrial consumption. Additionally our land surface is the topographical overlay for several large aquifers and is crisscrossed by numerous flowing rivers and streams.

This great liquid bounty is so prolific that Baja Oklahoma, also known as Texas, covets part of it to help quench the seemingly unquenchable thirst of so many in the fast growing Dallas-Fort Worth me-

troplex.

Two other naturally created sources of energy, solar and wind, are becoming more common and affordable as both primary and secondary producers of electrical power with numerous wind farms sprinkled across our plains.

As is often the case, the NIMBY crowd – Not In My Backyard – has expressed opposition to some and, in one case, Tulsa real estate developer Joe Robson, owner of a 20,000-acre ranch in Rogers county, is leading a very public legal battle to stop it. His acreage is adjacent to a planned new multi-turbine site.

Joe, like the Koch brothers, is a fervent free enterprise advocate unless governmental intervention, through a proposed law which he supports, would serve his personal desires and bottom line.

Another resource abundant here, yet nearly deplet-



ed some 90 years ago by both human overuse and nature's own destructive powers, is our soil. The Dust Bowl, coupled with the deepest depression in American history, wiped out fortunes, futures, and fertile farms as heartbreakingly depicted in John Steinbeck's epic novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

History has proven that without the visionary leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt and his legislative allies, the entire Great Plains today might be known as the Sahara Desert 2.0.

Readers still laboring through my monologue perhaps realize there are common characteristics inherent in the development and protection of these natural gifts found within our borders. For example, they are vulnerable to the ravages of both man and nature. They obviously are necessary to sustain life itself. Logically they best serve us now and in the future through wise, long-term, cooperative planning and investments by both the public and private sectors.

Thanks to visionary leaders both past and present, such as Robert S. Kerr, Henry Bellmon, Carl Albert and David Boren, as well as just plain geographical luck, our land, water, wood, wind and solar have benefitted us for many generations and will continue to do so for future ones.

However, there are two other earth-offered resources, natural gas and oil, that are less predictable, replaceable, and certainly much more volatile – politically, economically and socially.

To generate state revenue, severance taxes are applied to both products as they flow or are pumped from the well-head. Effective July 1, the rate will be 2% based on the dollar value of either a barrel of oil and/or a thousand cubic feet of gas. Although this is an increase from last year, the energy industry in this state will still pay the lowest severance tax in the country and that makes our geological structures even more attractive for investment.

Horizontal drilling into and subsequent fracking of huge shale formations such as the Woodford, Mississippian, Hunton, Viola and many others promises a bright future both for the oil men and women as well as state, county and local coffers.

However, oil prices have plummeted 60% since June 2014 and natural gas sells for less than \$3 a thousand cubic feet. When combined, oil and natural gas severance taxes are the third largest source of funding, behind only income and sales taxes, and they pay for our schools, health care, public safety and infrastructure.

Not the mythical and easily distorted fat, waste, graft or bloated giveaway programs that know-nothing talking heads blame for alleged excessive public spending.

If that were true, why would the governor and legislators, who proclaim daily their love of and support for our educational systems, cut them more deeply

than any other state – 22% since 2009?

Of critical importance, and unlike every other natural resource mentioned above, oil and natural gas are *finite* sources of energy. Thus they cannot be replenished except in the short term and eventually only in declining amounts.

Yes, more lucrative production fields like the Bakken, Eagle Ford, and Woodford will be developed and brought on line. Yes, additional methods of extraction will be discovered, regardless of temporary price fluctuations. Yes, more efficient modes of transportation, agricultural production and conservation alternatives will extend the life of fossil fuels. But in the long run, we will run out of fossils!

If only those shy dinosaurs had been more interested in mating rather than eating each other – no telling what our energy future might be.

Recognizing these facts, while overshadowed by the pending state budget crisis, the important question to answer now is what new statutory policies and procedures, if any, should be put in place by the Legislature to maximize the benefits still available from black gold deposits.

A few difficult yet do-able suggestions follow:

- First, create a permanent endowment fund by taking a small percentage annually from severance taxes paid by the energy industry. For statutory guidance, review the language in our Tobacco Settlement Fund. It was created nearly 20 years ago and is doing exactly as we hoped it would. Former elected officials such as Jari Askins, Stratton Taylor, Drew Edmondson and even the Liberal from Lexington are still around and can advise you how to overcome the obstacles that await if you choose this challenging path.

- Second, earmark the energy endowment account for long-term investments by spending only the interest earnings not the corpus. Choose infrastructure activities such as roads, bridges, buildings, research, technology, environment, scholarships, etc.

For example, finish the Native American Museum in Oklahoma City. Message to lawmakers: The 240-acre tract is not only an ugly eyesore in our capital but on your legislative record as well. Stop blaming everybody else, past or present, for the situation and do what you were elected to do – provide some leadership even when it's a little bit hard to do so. After all, you've already accomplished all the easy stuff like declaring it's OK for teachers to wish kids Merry Christmas or telling us you hate Muslims, taxes, and Texas. Such political shenanigans can carry you only so far with the goobers in the coffee shops while besmirching the state's reputation nationally by an equal and dubious degree.

- Third, quit using the word "bond" like a nasty four letter descriptor. It isn't. By now self-proclaimed conservative solons should realize they are handcuffing themselves, and thus our state's future, by refus-

ing to use this prudent, wise and common sense approach to investing.

Low state debt characterizes a deteriorating and dangerous infrastructure that guarantees eventually higher replacement costs and an unattractive business environment. Hell, even *The Oklahoman* has editorialized frequently in favor of this concept. For proof of purpose, realize downtown OKC is booming because visionaries like Devon's Larry Nichols are constructing buildings, often through bond financing, thus resulting in growth and development.

The message to members of the Legislature is simple and obvious: Quit treating Oklahoma as your personal fiefdom by embracing only the status quo ... not what could be. *Start thinking big with a billion dollar bond issue funded by the energy endowment account.* The \$500 million higher education bond issue of 2005 could provide a good "how to proceed" template ... so read it! Like Mikey, you'll like it.

- Finally, revise the severance tax law from today's flat 2% regardless of price to a sliding scale that would go up as dollars paid per barrel increase and down when they fall. Such an approach benefits producers by assessing minimal severance when times are tough yet would enhance revenue to the endowment fund during flush periods. In other words it would take into account the boom/bust cycles that have historically plagued or profited us due to this most volatile of all commodities.

Remember, just like land, no one is creating more oil. Drillers are just brilliantly extracting the remaining finite amounts found thousands of feet below us and, like a former spouse, when it's gone it's gone.

Mother Nature has clearly and comprehensively done her part in making Oklahoma lucky. With the notable exceptions of beaches and mountains [best used only for sitting during sun stroking or star gaz-

ing while freezing] the Sooner state has been blessed with more natural resources than any other. And, with some notable exceptions, the water, wood, wind and sun have been well-protected, developed and utilized for the benefit of their human, animal and plant recipients.

Right now – not later, sometime or whenever – visionary public and private leaders should maximize the benefits of the still-abundant fossil reserves embedded in strata after strata underneath 74 of our 77 counties. As I said in a previous column, opportunities like this come around about as often as Haley's Comet – every 84 years or so. Act boldly now, big thinkers, and you may be remembered later for doing so.

In closing, the February Observer coincides with the return of our 149 newly-elected, eager-beaver lawmakers to Oklahoma City for the 2015 session. Therefore, unless these rulemakers are too busy wishing each other a late Merry Christmas, or looking under their desks for masked Muslims, or even peering in their closed-minded Capitol closets for now-married LGBTs, they should join the rest of us at the sunny dawn of the 21st Century while exiting their self-imposed social darkness of the 20th.

During the session, a useful and important way to change the subject, and the lives of many of their constituents for the better, would be to take a fresh, expanded and long-term look at the natural resource that has been integral to the history, purpose, progress and too often peril of Oklahoma since before statehood: oil.

*Cal Hobson, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore. He helped steer Oklahoma through the 1980s oil bust that crippled the state economy.*

# Will We Ever Learn?

BY KENNETH CORN

Oklahoma has been blessed with resources that boost our economy. For most of modern history, the oil and gas industry has been one of the bedrock industries building our state and providing good jobs to thousands of Oklahomans. While it has been a blessing, the revenue generated has been a curse for the Oklahoma Legislature.

When the oil patch is booming, the Legislature can't resist the temptation of gross production revenue as it makes state budget decisions. Spending grows with new programs created and old ones expanded. More stable revenue streams are reduced and supplanted with the milk and honey from the oil patch.

At the Capitol, legislators seem to believe that the revenue will continue to flow forever.

Unfortunately, we've been here before. In the 1980s, the Legislature cut revenue and increased spending with the oil boom. When the energy cycle went bust, Oklahoma was forced to raise taxes dramatically and reduced spending to core services which crippled our state.

It was a crisis that Oklahoma managed to rebound from in the late 1990s only to see the same thing happen again in 2002-03 when we faced a \$427 million shortfall. Fast forward to present day: Oklahoma again faces such a fiscal crisis due to our state's over-reliance on gross production revenue in our state's

budget.

In 2007, I introduced a constitutional amendment that would stabilize the state budget by stopping lawmakers from continuing roller coaster budgeting with gross production revenue. Its provisions were simple.

For yearly budgeting, it would have required the certification of a 10-year average of gross production tax revenue from oil and natural gas. It would also have limited legislative appropriation of revenue above that average to one-time expenditures such as infrastructure needs or even a tax rebate to taxpayers.

This common-sense approach to our budgeting died because of politicians' desire to approve unrealistic fiscal policies and increased spending that is now returning to haunt our state.

Oklahoma must learn from her past. We cannot keep repeating the same mistakes and expect a different result. It's time for the Legislature to give the people of Oklahoma a chance to change our budgeting process through a constitutional amendment that will halt the see-saw spending and bring greater stability to our state.

*Kenneth Corn, a Poteau Democrat, is a former state senator who chaired a subcommittee on Appropriations and Budget.*

# Oil, Gas Breaks Cripple Budget

BY DAVID BLATT

**T**he cost of tax breaks for the oil and gas industry will exceed \$500 million this year, according to projections recently released by the Oklahoma Tax Commission. This is substantially more than the projections made a year ago, reflecting the growing shift of production to minimally-taxed horizontal wells. The tax break for horizontal production alone is now estimated at a whopping \$379 million for FY 2015.

The Tax Commission presented forecasts of gross production tax revenues on oil and gas for FY 2015 and FY 2016 in mid-December. For FY 2015, the Tax Commission projects the state will collect \$590.5 million in gross production taxes based on an average oil price of \$76.32 per barrel and an average natural gas price of \$4.25 mcf. Of this total amount, \$63.1 million will be collected at the 1% tax rate, which is the rate currently assessed on horizontal wells during the first years of production, and \$5.6 million at the 4% rate assessed on deep wells.

If this production were taxed at the standard 7% rate, the state would collect an additional \$379 million from horizontal wells and an additional \$9.7 million from deep wells. Along with the tax break in the form of a lower rate, the state this year is looking to pay out \$77.6 million in deferred rebates to horizontal and deep well production that occurred from 2010-12, and \$50.6 million in rebates for other forms of production that are taxed at less than 7%. All told, tax breaks for oil and gas production are expected to total \$516.7 million in FY 2015.

The cost of the oil and gas tax breaks is some \$130 million greater than what the Tax Commission projected last February. At the time, the lower tax rate on horizontal production was expected to have a \$238 million revenue impact, compared to the current estimate of \$379 million. The revenue impact of the tax break for horizontal production will have more than doubled in just the past two years and increased almost five-fold since 2010.

The Tax Commission also provided estimates of gross production tax revenues for FY 2016, the first year that the new tax rates approved last year in HB 2562 will begin to apply for new production. Under the new law, most new production, including traditional vertical wells, will be taxed at 2% for the first 36 months and at 7% thereafter. At the same time, some earlier production will continue to be taxed at the 1% and 4% rates. Based on the current price and production forecasts, we calculate the total cost of the lower tax rates to be \$308 million in FY 2016.

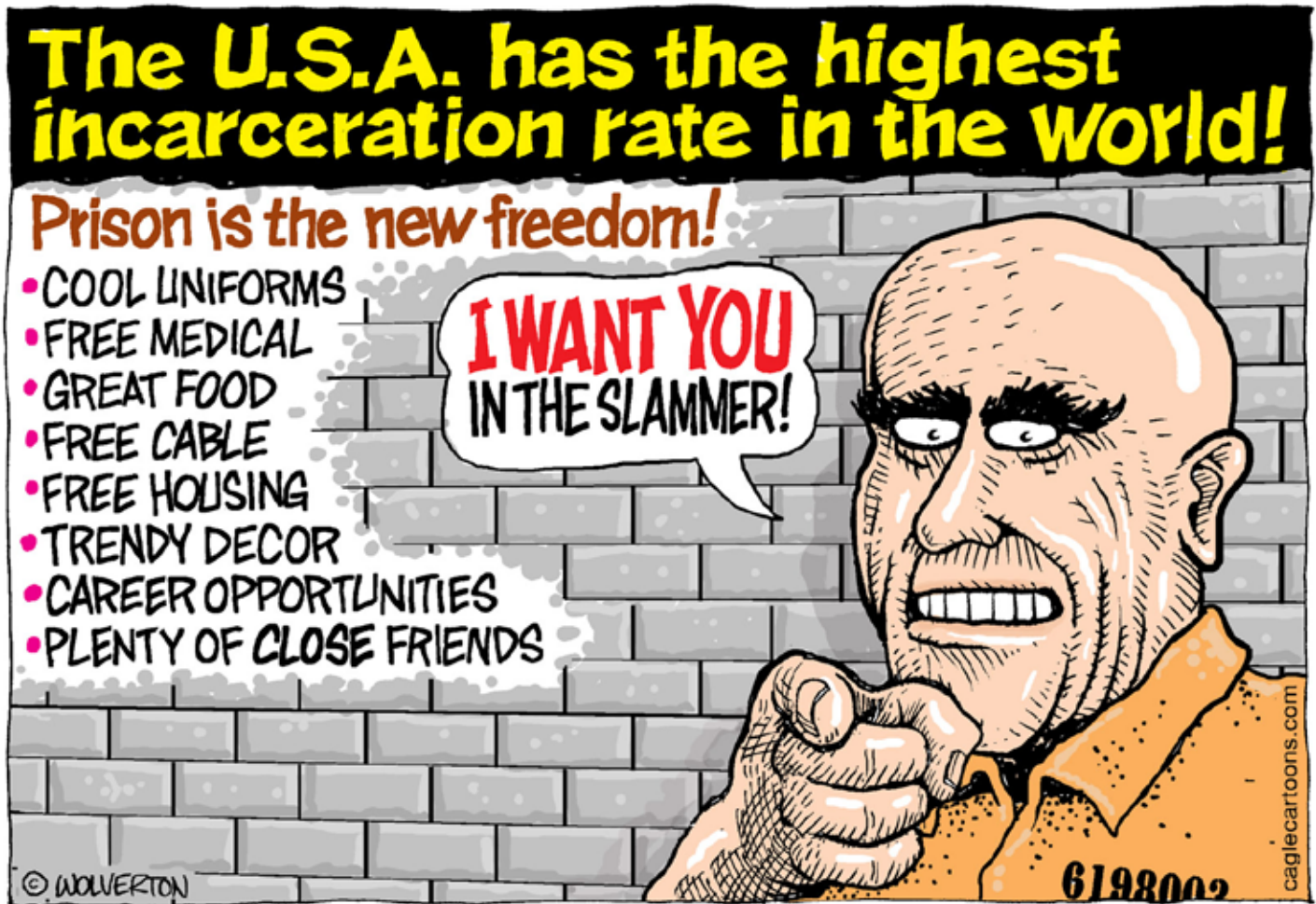
Since new horizontal, deep well, and traditional production are no longer differentiated, there is no way to calculate how this amount compares to what the tax breaks would have cost under the law prior to HB 2562.

These tax breaks have been a big part of why Oklahoma has faced repeated budget shortfalls even while the economy recovers. If it weren't for revenue lost to the tax break for horizontal drilling, Oklahoma could have restored all of the cuts to education since 2008 and still have more than \$200 million left to spare – enough to avoid painful cuts to Medicaid and community health centers, fully fund court-ordered child welfare reforms, and meet other serious needs for our state and citizens. Instead, we've allowed this unnecessary and unaffordable tax giveaway to grow unchecked.

As the energy boom fades in the face of plummeting gas prices, we may only be able to look back with sorrow and anger at a huge missed opportunity to invest in Oklahomans and keep wealth in our state.

*David Blatt is executive director of the 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>*





## *Every Sentence Is A Life Sentence: Three Barriers To Life After Prison*

BY GENE PERRY

**C**riminal justice reform is in the air for the upcoming legislative session.

For more than a decade, experts and advocates have warned of a mounting incarceration crisis that has created huge costs for taxpayers while, perversely, possibly increasing crime.

For years these warnings were ignored, but the situation may have finally gotten so dire that lawmakers will pay attention. Reports from prisons leave no doubt that they are “understaffed, overcrowded and badly in need of repair.”

Already, both corrections officers and inmates have paid for our neglect with serious injuries or lost lives. House Speaker Jeff Hickman recently spoke out that Oklahoma risks losing control of our prison system to the federal government if we don’t manage it more

responsibly.

As we consider the best reforms to reduce the number in prison, we should not forget to look at what happens after inmates return to the streets. In numerous ways, Oklahoma continues to punish ex-felons long after they have paid their debt to society. We put up so many obstacles that it can be extremely difficult just to survive out of prison without returning to crime.

With an estimated one in 12 Oklahomans having a felony conviction in their past, these barriers affect a substantial part of our state’s population. Here are three barriers that can block Oklahomans with a felony record from putting their lives back together:

### **JOB RESTRICTIONS**

I’ve previously written about Oklahoma’s numerous



## 2015 OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE

restrictions on employment for ex-felons. The article has attracted numerous comments and heartbreaking stories from Oklahomans. Here's just one example:

"After completion of six years in custody with Oklahoma Department of Corrections for a drug felony, I came face to face with this horrendous barrier to employment. I applied to many jobs I am qualified for but because of my felony I was denied employment. ... Finally someone took a chance on me. ... I was hired as a job coach to work with adults with developmental disabilities. The pay isn't great but the rewards

job offer on learning about convictions, but the rule allows workers a fair chance to make their case.

### EXCESSIVE FEES AND FINES

Even as Oklahoma makes it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to find a job, we weigh them down with numerous fees and fines that leave them even more destitute and threaten them with returning to incarceration for non-payment. These harsh fees are a major contributor to Oklahoma's incarceration crises.

A 2013 Tulsa World investigation found that the percent of Tulsa jail bookings involving nonpayment of fees and fines has more than tripled in the last de-

**"The Legislature deserves plenty of blame for some of these systems we've set up that have made it almost impossible" to stay on the right side of the law. – House Speaker Jeff Hickman, R-Fairview**

are paid directly to the heart. ... In March of this year [2013], I was given the award of excellence for my service to adults with developmental disabilities at the Governor's Conference on Developmental Disabilities. ... In this month of September I once again felt the effects of my *life* sentence come back. The same state agency that gave me the award terminated my employment as a job coach due to the felony in my background. Now I am back at square one looking for employment."

His story is one of many. Oklahoma permanently bars ex-felons from taking a long list of jobs, and for many others, a state board may use a felony record as grounds for refusing to grant an occupational license.

The rationale behind some of these restrictions is hard to find – Oklahoma may block anyone with a felony from working as an interior designer, architect, physical therapist, land surveyor, and many more occupations, no matter what the felony charge or how long ago it happened.

Compounding the issue, Oklahoma counts as felonies charges that would be misdemeanors in almost every other state.

An even more far-reaching problem is that numerous employers will not hire anyone with a felony on their record. They weed out anyone who admits to a felony on their job application without even going as far as talking to them to understand the background and what the person has done since.

That's why several states and municipalities have enacted a "ban the box" rule, which says employers can only ask about prior convictions after making a tentative job offer. Employers can still withdraw the

cade, rising to 29% of all jail books in July 2013.

The criminal justice system's increasing reliance on offender fees for its funding is a national trend, but in Oklahoma the problem has been exacerbated by repeated state budget cuts that have sent court and prison officials scrambling for alternative sources of funding.

In a telling symptom from last August, a Muskogee County judge wrote a letter to many of his colleagues asking them to assess a minimum \$1,000 fine in all felony cases. Attorney D. Michael Haggerty II, president of the Oklahoma Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, whose clients include indigent defendants, responded, "They can't write a \$1,000 check ... These are people that have substance abuse problems, mental health problems and now we are having to deal with them in the jail."

These fees become even more destructive when ex-felons [or even people with fines from misdemeanors] are denied drivers' licenses until they pay off their charges. They are put in a situation where they can't legally drive until they pay off fees, but they can't reach a job to earn enough to pay off the fees without driving. It's a Catch-22 that can force many ex-offenders to have no reasonable option other than breaking their parole and risking a return to prison.

Speaker Hickman recently acknowledged this problem, saying, "The Legislature deserves plenty of blame for some of these systems we've set up that have made it almost impossible" to stay on the right side of the law.

### RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC AID

On top of being blocked from getting a job and buried in fees, numerous states prevent ex-felons from

getting basic income and food aid needed to survive. Federal laws impose a lifetime ban on anyone convicted of a drug-related felony from receiving SNAP benefits [food stamps] or TANF emergency cash assistance, but states can opt out of the ban. Oklahoma is one of the states that has opted out, for good reason. However, a bill already filed for the upcoming legislative session by Sen. Rob Standridge, R-Norman, would re-impose the ban for the TANF program.

Note that TANF already has mandatory drug screening for all recipients, and 85.5% of Oklahoma's TANF recipients are children. In Oklahoma, TANF is a minuscule program that provides a small amount of cash for a limited period and requires adult recipients, all of whom have dependent children, to be employed or looking for work.

By targeting those who would go through an already rigorous process to qualify for TANF, the bill would block a path for precisely those ex-offenders who are seeking to reintegrate with society.

We don't yet know if this bill will get any traction, but it's a disappointing sign that the "dumb on crime" approach has not disappeared at the Capitol.

Until lawmakers fully embrace the principle that attempts to rebuild a life after prison should be rewarded instead of blocked, Oklahoma taxpayers will keep spending more to be less safe.

*Gene Perry is policy director for the 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>.*

# *Oh, What A Tangled Web We Weave When We Make Tests Punitive*

BY JOHN THOMPSON

**W**hen I was in school in the 1960s, we occasionally took a standardized test, and we took ACT and SAT tests as a part of the college application system.

These were not the type of tests you could "teach to" or "study for." Consequently, they provided a huge database of invaluable information about students and schools. These tests were a Consumer Reports on education, and they could have been an essential component of a data-informed – not data-driven – contemporary school reform movement.

I don't want to get into the weeds of the social science, but the ACT and other tests were Norm Referenced Tests [NRTs] that assessed where students stood in comparison with others on the types of testable knowledge that students needed. They were not appropriate for holding individuals accountable. Back then, we showed a healthy respect for the proper use of test methodology, and ACTs and similar NRTs were not imposed for high-stakes purposes.

So, a new set of tests, Criterion Reference Tests [CRTs], were developed for measuring testable knowledge of Standards of Learning. Fifteen years ago, several outstanding experts in the Oklahoma City Public School System Planning Department explained, chapter and verse, how the seemingly arcane shift from NRTs to CRTs would corrupt tests and accountability systems.

With the passage of No Child Left Behind, the misuse of these new tests expanded further than we

could have imagined. Then, Arne Duncan became the nominal secretary of education, and the test-loving Bill Gates became the real driver of school policies, and primitive bubble-in tests were misused in conjunction with not-ready-for-prime-time statistical models.

The entire testing system became hopelessly corrupted, undermining the quality of instruction in Oklahoma and the rest of the nation.

Now, Oklahoma is taking the lead in rescuing our schools from the test, sort, and punish mania known as school reform. A recurring suggestion, by good people who seek to rein in the testing frenzy, is the proposal that the ACT replace Oklahoma's EOIs [see Rep. David Perryman's HB 1497, for example].

While I don't think that's a good idea, I'd like to suggest a framework of discussing the potential value of using the ACT as a graduation examination.

The good news is that the ACT would help solve some of the problems that vex educators. The bad news is that the ACT could liberate adults, and many students, but dramatically increase the dropout rate.

Like most states, Oklahoma was coerced by the federal government into the use of "value-added" estimates of student test score growth in teachers' evaluations.

As an overwhelming majority of scholars explained, these models [known as VAMs] used inappropriate tests in an unreliable manner. They are biased against educators in high-poverty schools with large



numbers of English Language Learners [ELLs] and special education students. If Oklahoma can't find a way to abandon these invalid value-added evaluations, the exodus of our top teaching talent from poor schools will increase.

The courts have tended to conclude that value-added evaluations are improper and unfair, but that they cannot be struck down until they produce outcomes that are irrational. If systems tried to turn ACT test scores into VAMs, that methodology would be so invalid that the entire evaluation system would likely collapse. That would be a great thing for educators and schools, and it would free Oklahomans from the single worst legacy of the education reform blame game.

Unfortunately, because of the way that testing has been misused over the last 12 years, the problem facing students is more complex. It took years to do so, but Oklahomans debated the type of End of Instruction [EOI] graduation tests that would be fair to all. We reached the reasonable conclusion that these exit exams should be minimum skills tests, and that the stakes attached to them should be phased in. Today, however, school reformers ignore the intent of the people and demand that EOIs be rigorous college readiness test. Moreover, corporate reformers insist that these high-stakes tests must be imposed imme-

diately.

Today, the ACT is better than ever in providing diagnostic information. It would be far better for most students to be taught in schools where the ACT replaced the EOIs. It would be a wonderful test to teach with. But it still has a huge problem as a high-stakes test to be taught to.

The biggest problem is setting an ACT cut score that is high enough to be politically viable, but low enough to prevent an explosion in the dropout rate.

In 2009, I attended an Oklahoma Senate interim committee on testing. I'm basing my analysis on data provided by the ACT to that committee. The ACT can provide updated data, but it would not be much different. Back then, 30% of eligible Oklahoma students were excluded because they didn't take the ACT. A disproportionate number of them would be unable to pass such a test, then or now.

The ACT materials showed that 16% of Oklahomans failed to get a 14 on an ACT. If the cut score was set at 15 then 22% would fail. If it took a 16 to pass an exit exam, then 28% would fail. Add those numbers to those in the 30% who don't take ACT [which includes disproportionately high numbers of poor, urban kids of color] and who wouldn't pass it, and you can see the potential disaster.

Moreover, we should not go down the ACT path un-

less the votes are available to set a multi-year schedule for fully implementing the ACT. It would be unreasonable to expect students to shift over to the college readiness test without providing a several year grace period.

Of course, with an administration [like that of new Superintendent Joy Hofmeister] that has the trust of educators, some of these problems might be addressed, quietly, and a less dangerous set of rules might be possible. But such solutions might not be possible.

So, any legislation that adopted an ACT should include strong and explicit language. The State Education Department must be empowered to respect the will of the people and the Legislature. Regardless of what it takes, cut scores must be set so that the non-graduation rate will not increase.

Students, especially those with no intention of attending college, should not be denied a high school diploma because they fail to meet college readiness standards.

There could be an unintended bonus to such legislation. Today, students who fail the freshmen and sophomore EOIs often face a humiliating consequence. They basically forfeit the chance to have a holistic high school experience, and they lose their senior year to a focus on retaking EOIs. Too many students are sentenced to "EOI Boot Camps."

We should think of what we would want for children who fail their EOIs if they were our own children. In poor schools, those children are subjected to repeated remediation and test prep. If they were our children, would we want a choice between an unflinching focus on passing the EOIs or a portfolio that builds on their strengths?

The law currently allows for portfolios as an alternative option, even though that path is largely spurned and stigmatized. The better path would be to make the portfolio/project option a normative and equally respected course for graduation.

I understand that money is short. Urban districts might be able to divert the resources that have been devoted to remediation into project-based efforts to meet graduation requirements. That would require leadership from the state, and I believe most districts would trust the Hofmeister Administration on this.

I also believe that many parents would choose high-quality portfolios if it was a common and respected path to graduation. All parents should be free to choose such a path without their children being stigmatized. I believe this could be a very popular, common sense policy that would enjoy the support of all stakeholders.

*Dr. John Thompson, an education writer whose essays appear regularly at The Huffington Post, currently is working on a book about his experiences teaching for two decades in the inner city of OKC. He has a doctorate from Rutgers University and is the author of Closing the Frontier: Radical Responses in Oklahoma Politics.*

# School 'Choice' All About Money

BY BRETT DICKERSON

Once upon a time in Oklahoma, magnet public schools were the "choice" that allowed for much more creativity and freedom. They helped to break years of racial/economic segregation. But that's not the point of a huge "school choice" push today.

Instead, "school choice" has become code for getting an unwitting public to allow private investor corporations to siphon tax money from the public and funnel it into accountability black boxes. And worse, they will do that while re-segregating American education and society.

Proponents of "school choice" – choicers – argue that when there is competition in an education marketplace, quality will just magically break out.

But it won't. It won't because participants in any market place actively attempt to eliminate the competition. Increasing profits for any business come from doing away with or absorbing their competition.

Anyone who argues for competition as a way to improve schools while keeping all of the choices in place simply doesn't understand how competition works. Or, worse, they are consciously trying to deceive others.

And that deception is what I want to point out here.

## DECEPTION

There are some people for choice who are sincere. But the ones we are hearing from the loudest and the most right now are those who make a handsome living trying to destroy support for a common, publicly-controlled education.

Their donors want a small minority of the rich to control what is being taught, and that can't happen unless publicly-controlled schools and professional teachers are destroyed in their current form.

I'm seeing a very real increase in cynical stunts by some organizations, mostly those that are associated with the American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC.

If you don't already know, the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, or OCPA, is tied in tightly with ALEC, the Koch Brothers, and many other donors who want to profit by forcing you to pay taxes that their buddies in the Legislature will turn over to them without any accountability.

There are several cynical, deceptive practices that I have been observing over the last several weeks as we drew near to the Oklahoma Legislature convening.

## TWITTER HASHTAG FLOODING

Hashtag flooding is where a relatively small group



of people flood a particular hashtag that is being used by their opponents to connect with each other. The subject matter of the tweets is intended to discredit the position of their opponents.

The flooding happens when a small, well-organized group use a large number of Twitter accounts to RT one well-written attack tweet, which makes it harder for those in the hashtag to actually communicate with each other.

Hashtag flooding also gives occasional observers of the hashtag the impression that opinions have shifted when they have not.

This stunt was originally perfected by conservative organizations opposed to liberal TV commentators who were gaining a large nationwide Twitter following like Rachel Maddow and Melissa Harris-Perry.

Followers of their show's hashtag get to know one another and support each other in their agreement about the issues being presented.

Eventually what was once organic with several conservative hot-heads jumping into the hashtag just because they enjoyed trolling the followers, turned into an organized effort that involved staffers and interns of well-funded think tanks and lobbying organizations.

Especially during the recent School Choice Week I saw this very stunt being used in the #OklaEd hashtag, widely known as primarily supporting public schools, professionalized teachers, and transparency of school funding.

Did you notice the sudden appearance of OCPA attack master Brandon Dutcher in the #OklaEd hashtag? Yes. Can't recall seeing him there much before, though. Hmmm. Did you notice how many people were RTing his tweets? Did you recognize very many of those Twitter handles that were flooding the hashtag with the same tweet during certain parts of the workday? I didn't think so.

All that stunt takes is one person to work up about five pithy tweets to attack a position, and five staffers plus five more interns with 10 bogus Twitter accounts each RTing those original tweets, and ... business! To occasional observers, #OklaEd has shifted to being all for school choice. Well, whatayaknow.

What is most significant is what this reveals about the deep cynicism of these promoters. "Huckster" is a better word.

Remember, these lobbyists and think tanks are paid very well, which means that there is someone else who is willing to get that money if the current recipients object to demands for at-all-costs attacks in order to get their way.

### **BAIT AND SWITCH**

I previously pointed out how choicers use the bait and switch technique to get vouchers and school choice into a state's law books. It has happened in more than just a few states and it's being tried here in Oklahoma.

One part of the stunt is to point to the Catholic schools that have done a good job over many years of

educating students.

Most of us here in the state know at least one person, probably a lot more, who are graduates of Catholic schools. To their credit, Catholic schools have been widely known and respected for their development of civic pride in our country while couching that within the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is no accident that School Choice Week was set up during the same traditional week of Catholic School Week where Catholics celebrate the strong work that their schools have done over the years.

This is a cynical stunt at two points: It is a hijacking of someone else's emphasis to legitimize theirs and it's claiming to promote something that isn't even their true focus.

Catholic schools have been doing quite well for over a century in Oklahoma without one penny of tax money going to them. Why would they need it now? And after so many years of complete independence from state scrutiny and control, why would they want it now? They don't, and they don't.

Cynical boosters of corporate charters that don't support anything but the money-making of their investors have much to gain by pointing to the highly-respected Catholic schools and making us believe that's what all of this promotion is about. It's not.

And the Catholic schools have already been doing a good job with the poor students who come to them. Catholic education is couched in the Roman Catholic Church's defense of dignity for the poor.

But what I have shown in previous posts is that in the case of New Orleans, Detroit, and Newark, corporate charters have taken over the education of the poor, only concerned to teach complete compliance to authority figures while being taught the most rudimentary of educations. That "dignity" business just complicates things.

Why work harder to develop independent thinking skills in a class of people who the investors think can't do anything but work at a minimum wage job?

So school choice isn't about supporting Catholic schools. It's about allowing corporate investor-owned schools to slide in under the cover of Catholic schools.

### **IT'S THE MONEY**

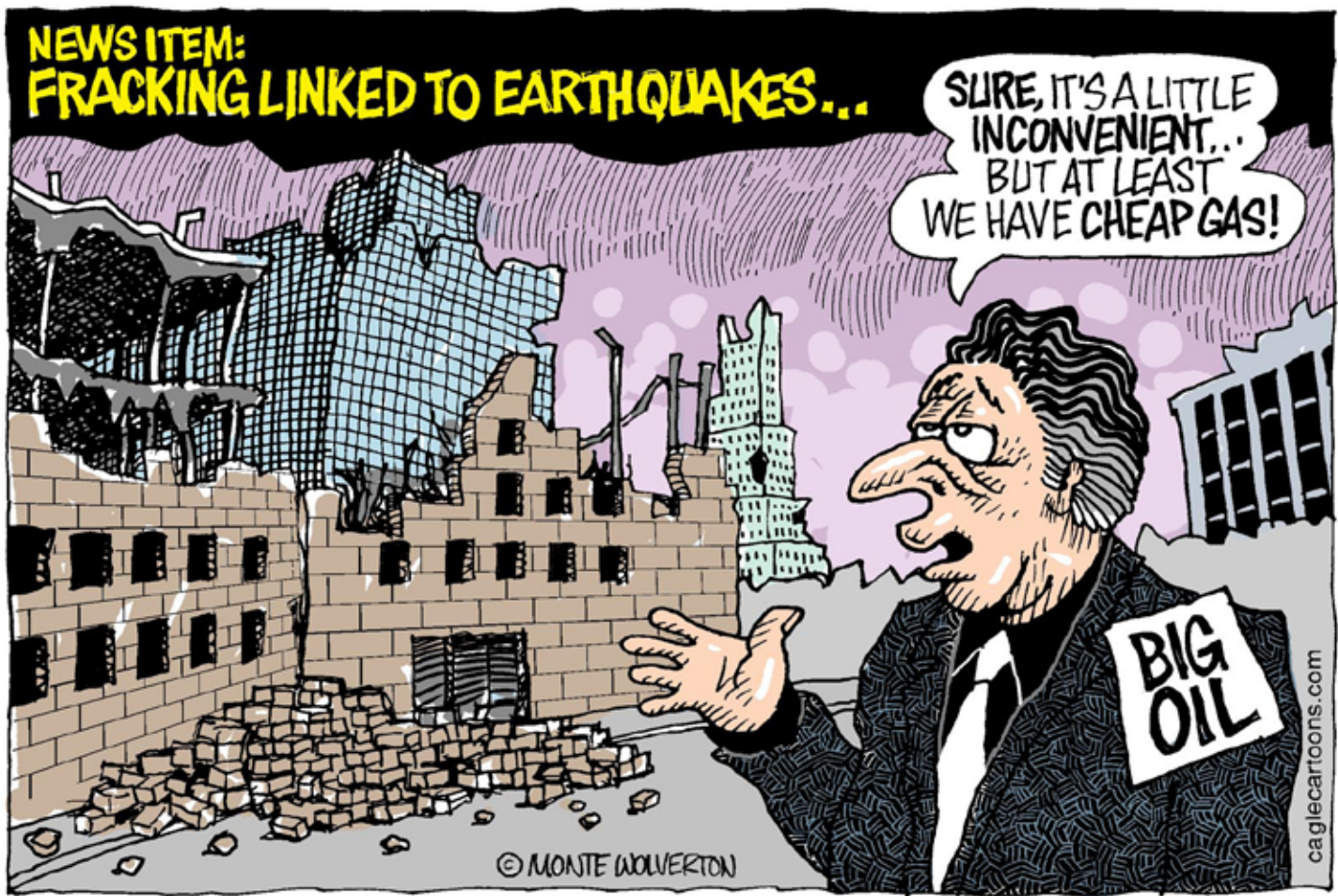
There are certain people in this society who are very susceptible to having large quantities of money waved in front of them.

And we have allowed the 1% in this country to take over to the point where they have a lot of money to burn on hucksters who claim to be working for the public good while working for investors instead.

It's time to understand that school choice is money-driven and those who are at the core of it's promotion have little virtue.

When we allow ourselves to see and hear clearly what is being done and said, then the reclamation of public schools will begin in earnest.

*Brett Dickerson's blog, Life at the Intersections, can be found at [brettdickerson.net](http://brettdickerson.net).*



# Shake, Rattle And ... Pay?

## *State Supreme Court To Decide If Oil Companies Liable For Earthquake Injuries*

BY EMILY ATKIN

**O**klahoma's highest court is about to make a decision that could really shake up the way fracking companies do business in the state.

In the coming months, Oklahoma's Supreme Court will decide whether two oil companies should be held financially responsible for injuries suffered by a woman during a 2011 earthquake thought to have been caused by drilling activity.

If the woman's lawsuit is successful, it could set a legal precedent for future earthquake claims against oil and gas companies in Oklahoma.

In other words, oil and gas wells in Oklahoma would "become economic and legal-liability pariahs," attorney Robert Gum told the Tulsa World.

First, the back story. The lawsuit in question was brought by Sandra Ladra, a woman who lives in a small town called Prague. Ladra claims that on Nov. 5, 2011, she was sitting at home watching television with her family when a 5.6 magnitude intraplate earthquake struck, causing big chunks of rock to fall from her fireplace and chimney.

Some of the rocks fell onto Ladra's legs and into her lap, causing what the lawsuit describes as "significant injury." Ladra was taken to the emergency room and treated.

Then, two years later in March 2013, scientists from the University of Oklahoma, Columbia University, and the U.S. Geological Survey published a peer-reviewed study in the journal *Geology*, linking the 2011 earth-

quake to a process called wastewater injection. During that process, companies take the leftover water used to drill wells and inject it deep into the ground.

The Geology findings were disputed by Oklahoma Geological Survey, which asserted that the Prague earthquake was more likely the result of natural causes. But at the same time, more studies across the country found connections between wastewater injection and earthquakes, including one which linked approximately 2,500 small Oklahoma earthquakes to the process.

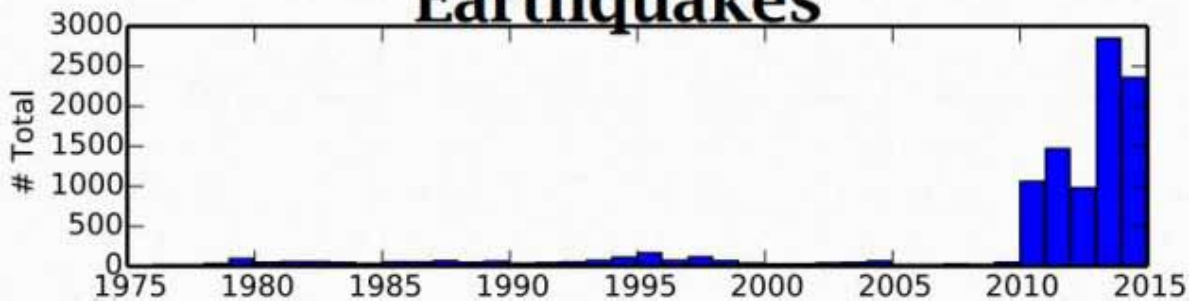
Wastewater injection is used in both conventional drilling and fracking, but is much more prolific during fracking because of the vast amounts of wastewater produced. Scientists increasingly believe that the

wrong court. That judge agreed with the oil companies that the case should have instead been filed with the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, as the oil companies were operating under permits issued by that commission.

Ladra's attorney's disagreed. The lawsuit claims the oil companies had knowledge that wastewater injection could cause seismic activity, and that knowledge represented "wanton or reckless disregard for public or private safety." Because of that alleged disregard and negligence, Ladra's attorneys claim the companies should be liable for at least \$75,000 in personal injury costs and punitive damages.

Attorneys for both sides can at least agree on one thing – that the fact that the Supreme Court decided

## Dramatic Increase in Oklahoma Earthquakes



large amount of water that is injected into the ground after a well is fracked can change the state of stress on existing fault lines to the point of failure, causing earthquakes.

To be sure, it's not definitive that earthquakes have been caused by fracking wastewater injection. Thus far, the research has lacked data on sub-surface pressure, which is rarely accessible but could take the science further than merely noting correlations between the timing of earthquakes, the timing of wastewater injection, and the location of faults.

But it is indisputable that Oklahoma has seen a rise in earthquakes since the fracking boom began – right now, the state averages about 10 small earthquakes per day. According to the Oklahoma Geological Survey, "[n]o documented cases of induced seismicity have ever come close to the current earthquake rates or the area over which the earthquakes are occurring."

In the wake of all that information, people who were injured in the 2011 Oklahoma quake began filing lawsuits against the companies thought to be responsible: Tulsa-based oil and gas company New Dominion LLC, and Cleveland, OK-based Spess Oil Co. In other states, similar lawsuits were filed, including two seeking class-action status against energy companies in Arkansas and Texas, the Tulsa World reported.

Ladra's lawsuit was originally dismissed by a lower court – but not on the merits of her claim. A Lincoln County judge found that the case lacked jurisdiction, which in Ladra's case meant that it was filed in the

to take up the case means the earthquake issue is significant.

"I think the court has recognized that it's just potentially a very, very significant issue for the state, both for the economy and the industry as it relates to these wells and for the safety of the citizens," Gum, who represents the oil and gas companies, told the Tulsa World.

Scott Poynter, who represents Ladra, said the same. "I think the Supreme Court sees this as a current issue and it's a very important issue."

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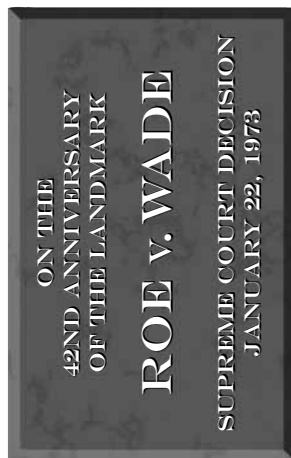
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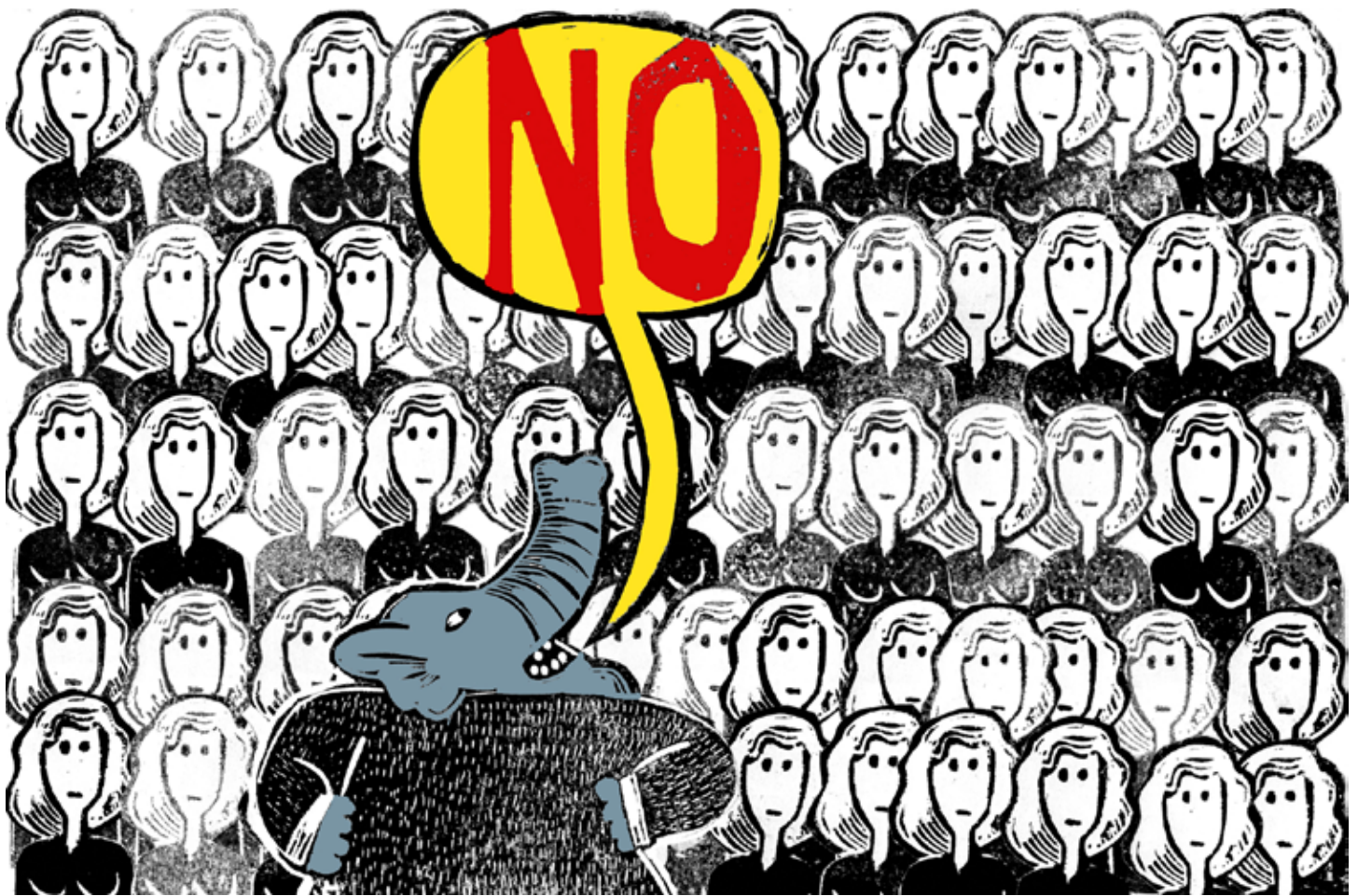
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# *Forty-Two Years Later*

BY SUSAN ESTRICH

**I**t has been 42 years since the United States Supreme Court held in *Roe v. Wade* that the right to decide whether to go forward with a pregnancy, prior to viability, belongs to a woman, in consultation with her doctors.

Forty-two years of marches and debates and occasional, horrible violence later, *Roe* remains the law of the land. But constitutional law is scant comfort when there is nowhere to get an abortion in your area – which, last time I checked, was true of more than 40% of the counties in the United States. The choice movement may have saved *Roe* in the courts, but on the streets, the access fight continues, sadly.

The politics of abortion have changed even more. For the first few decades after *Roe* was decided, abortion was, frankly, a problem for many Democrats. The polls were equivocal, the right to life movement was expanding everywhere, and Democrats were carefully phrasing their “personal” opposition to abortion notwithstanding the *Roe* decision.

These days, it's the Republicans who are squirming about abortion, and not very discreetly. They made

all kinds of noise about voting on a bill, on *Roe*'s anniversary, to ban all abortions after 20 weeks. Of course, that would be unconstitutional on its face under *Roe*, but that wasn't the reason the Republicans dropped the idea.

They dropped it because even some members of their own caucus wouldn't support a bill that would deny a rape victim an abortion unless she reported it to the police – even though rape is one of the most underreported crimes. Unable to pull together a majority to pass a symbolic unconstitutional view, the Republicans settled instead for having a meaningless vote on an old bill that bars public funding of abortion, a bill that has no chance of ever being signed by the president.

You might think, with all the problems we face, the House of Representatives would have better things to do than sit around having symbolic debates and passing symbolic bills, but frankly that's never stopped them, and it didn't stop them now. What did was the change in politics.

“There was a lot of discussion in our retreat [re-

cently] about this, and some of the new people did not want to make this the first bill they voted on, because the millennials have a little bit of a different take on it," Republican Rep. Ted Yoho of Florida told the press. "But you will see it come back, because the American people agree with it two to one. It's a hideous practice. It needs to stop."

Sorry, Ted. The two-to-one number is meaningless. The question isn't whether you're for or against abortion; the question is who gets to decide: the woman, with the advice of her family, her doctor, her minister, or the government. Ask the question that way, and the government loses, hands down. It isn't just the millennials who think the government should keep its nose out of the gynecologist's office. The millennials want to keep getting elected. The old timers seem bent on refighting the old battles.

Forty-two years should be enough time to spend debating symbolic bills and litigating unconstitutional laws.

The Republican bill doesn't help teen mothers. It doesn't address maternal health. It won't reduce infant mortality rates.

There is so much we could and should do that we all agree on. Let's take care of the wanted babies; let's help women have healthy babies; let's spend our energy figuring out how to help prevent teen pregnancy. Let's talk about how we're going to educate these kids, which is a public responsibility, and leave the gynecologists and their patients alone.

With so much to be done, and so much that we do agree on, lawmakers playing games with symbolic bills should be ashamed of themselves.

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# *Terrorism By Any Other Name*

**BY BARBARA SANTEE**

She had worked in the building for years, knowing the entire time that it could be a target for terrorists. It had happened before in the form of a bomb that came very close to bringing the building down. But, thankfully, it hadn't, and they had built back, determined not to be let terrorism rule their lives.

The staff still came to work every day, ignoring the threat and doing their jobs, as she did. Still each day as she got to the office, the thought in the back of her mind gnawed at her, "Will it happen today? Will this be the day I die?"

There had been hundreds of threatening phone calls and illiterate, hand-scrawled notes filled with religious babbling. The only way to survive with her sanity was to presume they were bogus, but still, precautions were taken.

The staff discussed what to do in case of violence. But it was so hard to plan a defense when you didn't know what you were defending against, when you didn't know when or from where the violence might come.

They had contingency plans, but would the plans work? Would it be another bomb that could shatter, maim or kill everyone in the building? Would it be a biological attack – anthrax or Ebola – that would cause an agonizing death, not only for everyone in the building but also for perhaps thousands of others? Would it be an attack that would come so swiftly she would not know what hit her, like a bullet in the back of the head?

The threats came from religious extremists – zealots who ignore the basic precepts of democracy or even civilization. In their minds, they are not subject to the mere laws of man. They answer to their sole constituency – God – or their version of God.

The perversion of their religious beliefs gives them

the excuse to commit atrocities in the name of God. None of the normal rules apply to religious extremists. They will do anything to impose their will on others – anything.

They think nothing of slaughtering people who disagree with them – people they call heretics, infidels, non-believers, the spawn of Satan. Names they coldly use to dehumanize their opponents to make it easier to hate them and to convince others to hate them.

Their version of religion is not based on love of humanity. It is firmly rooted in hate, a hate so strong it propels them to do unspeakable acts, like bombing a kosher market in Paris or ramming two jets into the Twin Towers in New York City.

Hate feeds their fanaticism, and nothing can penetrate the wall that protects their beliefs from the intrusion of the real world – the world the rest of us live in.

She arrived at the building, looking cautiously around her. The bullet-proof vest cut into her shoulders, but it was one of the precautions her husband agreed was needed. The escort rushed to open the car door. "Good morning, Dr. Callahan." She smiled at the friendly face. "Good morning," she responded, and then hurried up the sidewalk to the entrance of the Women's Reproductive Health Clinic.

One last glance behind her at the gaggle of hate-filled faces spewing vile garbage at her in the name of religion, then she entered the clinic.

She had patients to care for.

*Barbara Santee, PhD, lives in Tulsa and is a frequent contributor to The Oklahoma Observer. This essay first appeared in The Observer 14 years ago. The author updated it "slightly" but its essence remains as true and relevant today as it was in the aftermath of 9/11.*





## *But Is It A Tax?*

BY MARY FRANCIS

**W**hat do these three well-known Republican economists have in common?

1. George Shultz, President Reagan's secretary of the treasury, who was an Economics professor at MIT before Reagan tapped him for public service.

2. Greg Mankiw, Mitt Romney's economics advisor, chairman and professor of Economics at Harvard University.

3. Art Laffer, a member of President Reagan's Economic Policy Advisory Board for eight years with Economics degrees from Yale and Stanford.

Answer: All three actively support the Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal by Citizens Climate Lobby.

Is this idea a tax?

George Shultz says, "It's not a tax if the government doesn't keep the money."

CCL's proposal, Carbon Fee and Dividend [CFD],

rebates the money back to Americans each month. A short summary, more details and graphs can be found at MIT's Climate CoLab and on the CCL website: <http://climatecolab.org/web/guest/plans/-/plans/contestId/1300404/planId/2802>

"As long as fossil fuels remain artificially cheap and profitable, their rising use threatens our survival. Correcting this market failure requires their price to account for their true social costs. A national carbon price, properly designed, will do four things: internalize the social cost of carbon, rapidly achieve large emission reductions, minimize economic disruption and recruit global participation. An escalating revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend [CFD] with border adjustments will achieve these outcomes."

Its success derives from these five distinct features:

1. Full dividend return: This feature will inject billions into the economy, protect family budgets, free



households to make independent choices about their energy usage, spur innovation and build aggregate demand for low-carbon products at the consumer level.

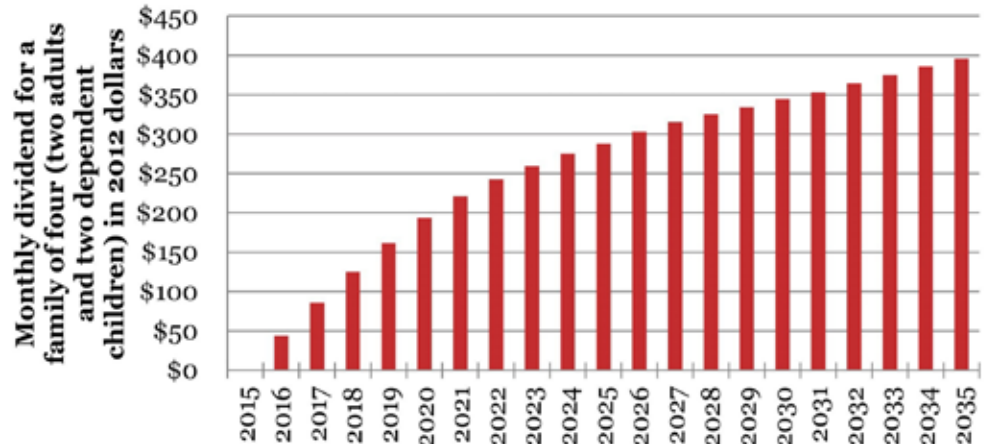
2. Transparency: CFD is elegant in its simplicity, accessible to public scrutiny and clear in its signals and benefits.

3. Bipartisan appeal: CFD does not increase the size of government, require new bureaucracies or directly increase government revenues. The dividend

A unique feature of this policy is that the international UN process will not determine what the U.S. does. We simply take action on our own. Foreign nations can choose to follow or pay the U.S. a border adjustment.

If you were China, would you rather pay Americans the fee – or enact an equivalent fee and collect it yourself? A global problem requires a global response. This feature forces a global response.

Monthly Dividend by Family



Source: REMI/MIT Climate CoLab/www.climatecolab.org

increases real disposable income, protects personal spending decisions and will recruit widespread, sustained engagement.

4. Border tax adjustments: Import fees on products imported from countries without a carbon fee, along with rebates to U.S. industries exporting to those countries, will create a fair competitive environment for exporters and motivate other countries to adopt similar carbon pricing policies. Existing tax and trade systems avoid complex new institutional arrangements.

5. Predictability: A structured rising price on GHG emissions will focus business planning on optimizing investment priorities to thrive in a carbon-constrained world.

What about jobs?

Recent economic modeling by REMI, a well-respected non-partisan economic consulting firm, shows that the CCL proposal, Carbon Fee and Dividend, with 100% revenue return creates more than two million jobs over baseline within nine years and increases employment in labor-intensive industries. The U.S. can lead with a definitive measure that increases its GDP and real disposable income while significantly reducing emissions.

Foreign emitters will not be affected directly by this fee, but their products will be impacted by the U.S. border fee. Those nations will come under pressure to reduce their carbon intensity or risk losing market share in the world's largest economy.

Avoiding this issue is quite simply a betrayal of all humanity.

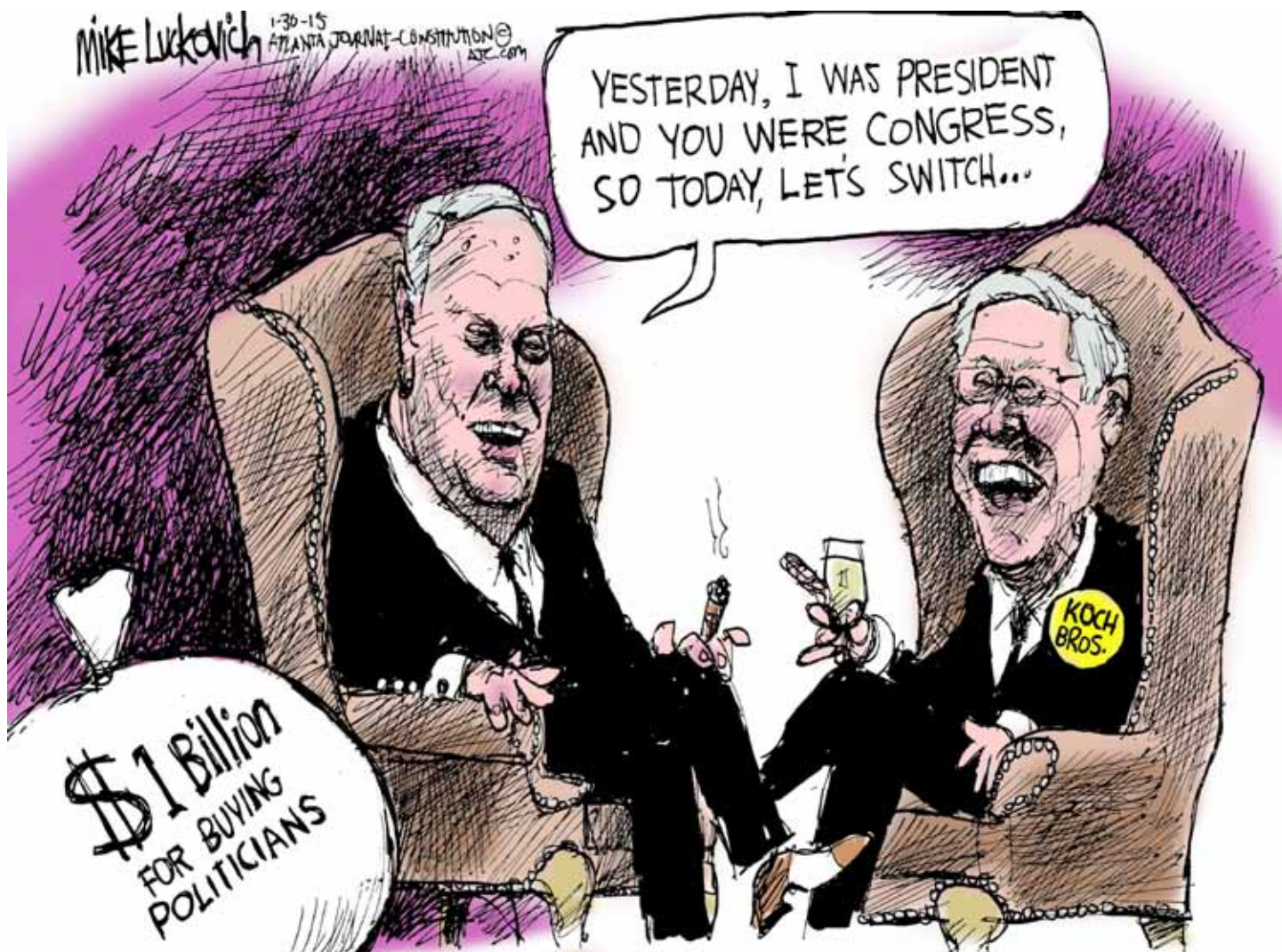
Can Oklahoma citizens help? Yes. Send this proposal to Sens. Inhofe and Lankford, as well as Reps. Cole, Lucas, Bridenstine, Mullin and Russell. The fate of our children and all future generations [including theirs] is being determined and our best scientists tell us we have little time to act.

*Mary Francis is a retired reading specialist, mother and grandmother, activist and writer for Citizens Climate Lobby. She lives and gardens in Norman.*



**Help keep the truth alive! Make checks payable to the Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation, PO Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113.**

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# *Are The Koch Brothers The Worst Humans In America?*

BY MARK MORFORD

**T**here's a storm coming, and it's far worse than the east coast blizzard, or California's beloved "superstorm," or Katrina, or the Iraq fiasco, or Bush/Gore's hanging chads, et al.

It's a storm made entirely of money, power, bloviated ego, malignant pollution and a brand of calculated, savage greed the nation hasn't seen since the days of the railroad tycoons and robber barons, if ever.

This particular hate-storm is borne of a single question: What would you get if you crossed a ruthless drug kingpin, a mafia crime lord, the willful blindness of the NRA, the combined CEOs of Monsanto, Exxon and RJ Reynolds and a couple of scared old wolverines with a God complex and a penchant for contaminating the world?

Why, you'd get the brothers Koch, of course, David and Charles, easily the most unsavory, power-mad libertarian mega-capitalists in modern American history.

I say that with a pretty healthy degree of certainty, too: No one anywhere likes the Koch brothers. You have never read a truly kind word about them, or how they have a terrific sense of humor, lots of warmth and charisma, a generous spirit, are always a delight to be around, bring good things to life and the planet.

On the contrary. Their companies [oil, coal, paper, energy] are some of the worst offenders in the country in terms of pollution and toxic waste. They have paid record fines, legal fees, hush moneys. They refuse to debate all sorts of allegations against them

["They are truly cowards in the worst way," says filmmaker Robert Greenwald, who made not one, but two documentaries exposing them]. They only recently started to grant interviews, because they do not come off well and they prefer to stay in the shadows. But when you're trying to forcibly buy the entire U.S. political agenda, you gotta play nice. For a minute.

The Koch's charitable donations, while sizable, are highly select [cancer research – because they both had prostate cancer – and big cultural and medical institutions, mainly]. They are no Bill Gates. No Clinton Global Initiative. They are not generous and caring souls. As anyone who works for a non-profit will tell you, people like the Koch boys never give to charities because they genuinely care. They do it either to spread their bitter gospel, or because it looks good

how much the brothers themselves have put into it. Does it matter? It's enough money [and influence] to make them, in effect, a third political party. And a horrible one, at that.

You can bet the Sierra Club didn't donate. Nor Gates. This fund is nothing like Obama's campaigns, raising tens of millions via countless individual donations, \$10 here and \$20 there from tens of thousands of minorities, women and working families [and of course, the party's own share of wealthy liberal elites]. This is no passionate, grassroots upwelling based on integrity and hope.

This fund is for strong-arming. This is Tony Soprano smashing out all your teeth on the concrete curb for daring to say climate change is real and the EPA is good. This is the drug lord hacking off the heads

This is Tony Soprano smashing out all your teeth on the concrete curb for daring to say climate change is real and the EPA is good. This is the drug lord hacking off the heads of the local cops and hanging them from the overpass to prove who's really in charge. The Koch fund is for political thuggery, pure and simple.

on the PR sheet. They do it because they sort of have to.

No one likes the Kochs, but plenty fear them, due to their billions, their ruthlessness, their reputation for buying their way out of whatever legal trouble they [often] get into, their bitter hatred of Obama, their anti-union/anti-minimum wage/anti-voter stances, their infamous support of dumbbell Tea Party candidates [and birthers] solely because the Tea Party is full of idiot science deniers and Koch Industries hates the EPA and its pesky regulations, and loves to dump sludge and pollute at will.

So, what's the storm, exactly? It's this: The Kochs are planning to spend nearly \$1 billion to influence the 2016 election.

This has never been done before. Not even close. As the Times' Nick Confessore points out: "In the last presidential election, the Republican National Committee and the party's two congressional campaign committees spent a total of \$657 million." In other words, the Koch fund is massive, unprecedented and full of all kinds of hate.

Despite David Koch's MIT degree and support of the sciences, the brothers spent millions helping build the ignoramus, science-denying Tea Party, for the sole purpose of helping kill environmental legislation/regulation resulting from climate change

Who has donated to it, exactly? Who the hell knows? Other billionaires and mega-millionaires. AKA the "Kochopus." Because they funnel the fund's massive piles of cash through bogus nonprofits, the brothers don't have to disclose names, or even to say

of the local cops and hanging them from the overpass to prove who's really in charge. The Koch fund is for political thuggery, pure and simple.

And what made it all possible? Why, the conservatives on the Supreme Court, of course, with their twin decision disasters: Citizens United, and eliminating all restrictions on campaign contributions. The Koch brothers are not bending the rules; the rules have been bent to them.

Result: The storm. The open floodgates. The richest, meanest, least scrupulous men in America are free to spend more money than anytime in the history of the country to shove their agenda down the throat of the nation.

And what is their agenda, exactly? That's easy: More. And less.

More power, money, influence, pollution. Less regulation, help for the poor, taxation on the rich. No minimum wage at all. This is all men of hollow arrogance ever want: more power and money. They do not need it, of course. It's just what they do; they simply know no other way. Psychology agrees: the more money you have, the less you tend to care about anything, or anyone, else. It's true for douchebag tech bros in San Francisco, it's a thousand times more true for the monsters Koch.

Will they succeed? Impossible to say. They've certainly done lots of damage already. One thing's become brutally clear: the Koch brothers are the worst ideologues America has to offer, and they have more power than they've ever had before.

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## *A Corporate Coup d'Etat*

**W**hen I was a tyke, Momma warned me not to eat anything unless I knew where it came from. That advice is so sensible that even Congress acted on it in 2002, passing a straightforward law called Country Of Origin Labeling. COOL requires meat marketers to tell us whether the meat they sell is a product of the USA, China or Whereintheworldistan.

This useful information empowers us consumers – which is why global agribusiness giants hate it and are trying to get a secretive, autocratic, plutocratic, private court in Switzerland to kill it.

This can't be, you say? But it is. Unbeknownst to most Americans, when the U.S. joined the World Trade Organization in 1999, we surrendered a big chunk of our sovereignty to this corporate court.

Here's what's happening: [1] American consumers have a basic right to know where their meat comes from, but [2] that right has been pitted against American corn flakes and ketchup in a "trade war" that [3] is being forced upon us by a handful of corporations that produce, slaughter, butcher and package meat outside of our country but [4] are allowed under trade agreements to challenge a U.S. law that had been duly enacted for the people inside our country, so [5] America was sued in an obscure, autocratic, private organization created by and for corporate interests and headquartered in Switzerland. Then [6] that corporate "court" did indeed rule that the "profit right" of foreign meat packers is superior to our people's basic right of self-determination.

Holy Tom Paine, this is corporate tyranny! But it's about to get worse, for President Obama and Congress intend to hang another bad trade deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, around our necks this spring.

What? You haven't heard of the TPP? Dubbed "a corporate coup d'etat" by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, it's a grandiose grab for power masked as a trade deal, allowing an unprecedented level of global corporate rule over Americans.

One reason we commoners don't know about it is that the corporate and governmental elites of the 12 nations that have been negotiating this momentous deal in strict secrecy, not only are keeping us in the

dark but also Congress. Another reason, however, is that the mass media has been shockingly silent, apparently even incurious about what clearly is a huge story with historic consequences.

FAIR, the excellent watchdog group that tracks media coverage, found that ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC have offered the American public practically zero to little news stories about TPP.

Even though the looming power grab has now spawned protests around the world, generated a major coalition of some 500 grassroots groups in our country loudly opposing the ripoff deal and has produced an odd-bedfellow, a rare bipartisan alignment of opponents in Congress, there's been a TV blackout.

Could it possibly be that the global conglomerates that own our so-called "news" networks don't want us knowing what's up behind TPP's closed doors?

Let's do the media's job for them and find out what's in this bad deal:

### **THE TRADE HOAX**

Of the document's 29 chapters, only five address tariffs and other actual trade matters. The other 24 consist of various ways to "free" corporations from any accountability and from any responsibility to the world community's common good.

### **BYE-BYE 'BUY AMERICAN'**

TPP dictates that all corporations based in any member nation must be given equal access to the public dollars that any government spends on equipment, food, highway projects, etc. Thus, our own national, state and local governments would no longer be free to give preference to suppliers of our choice. "Buy American" and "Buy Local" programs could be challenged by private corporations.

### **WALL STREET RIDES AGAIN!**

If anyone doubts this pact is a corporate boondoggle dressed in trade clothes, let them read its shameful financial provisions. Our nation's financial regulations would have to be "harmonized" to comply with TPP's extreme deregulation, re-creating the anything-goes Wall Street ethic that crashed the world economy in 2008.

To help stop this anti-democratic nasty, go to [www.exposethetpp.org](http://www.exposethetpp.org).



# *How Tacky Can The Golden Arches Get?*

**M**cDonald's is scrambling, and I'm not talking about eggs. You know your business has what image consultants call "quality perception issues" when you have to launch a PR initiative that publicly addresses such questions as: "Does McDonald's beef contain worms?"

Thornier yet for the world's largest burger machine is its boneheaded response to the remarkable, ongoing rebellion by fast-food workers, who're demanding a \$15-an-hour wage and the freedom to unionize without corporate retaliation.

The overpaid and clueless executives at McDonald's responded by – guess what? – retaliating against hundreds of the employees who joined the protests. Big Mac managers illegally reduced the hours [and therefore the pay] of those who joined the "Fight For 15" campaign, spied on them, interrogated and threatened them, and imposed restrictions on their freedom even to talk about unions or working conditions.

The corporation now faces federal charges on hundreds of labor law violations – as well as rising customer anger over its ham-handed tactics. Naturally, McDonald's responded by apologizing and raising worker's wages.

Ha! Just kidding. Instead, it's running a new series of TV ads that, astonishingly, tries to tap into people's emotions about such tragic events as 9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing, as well as linking its logo to people's positive feelings about veterans, birthdays, and even "love." McD's corporate marketing director explains that the ads are all about the Golden Arches shining bright in every community, being with us through the good and the bad. As she puts it, "Who better to stand up for lovin' than McDonald's?"

What a joke. For over a decade the burger behemoth has pushed its product with an advertising slogan that exuberantly proclaims, "I'm Lovin' It."

But it turns out that putting words of praise in customers' mouths doesn't sell more burgers – in fact, customers have been putting fewer Big Macs, Chicken McNuggets, and other McEdibles in their mouths, causing sales to sag. This decline in affection has to do with the corporation's boring burger, unappetizing news reports that some of its suppliers have been re-packaging expired meat, its corporate-wide policy of paying poverty wages, its ruthless anti-union tactics

and its cynical strategy of having tax payers subsidize its labor costs by directing employees to go on food stamps and Medicaid.

Not to worry, though, for new CEO Don Thompson [the second replacement in the top slot in only two years] is all over these boo-boos. Is he offering real improvements in quality, wages and benefits, and corporate attitude?

Come on – get serious! This is McDonalds, and its investors and bankers don't fritter away profit-taking on real solutions. Instead, Don is doubling down on that McLovin' feeling.

McD's new ad campaign is specifically designed to link the corporate brand to the healing power of love. The ads show Batman and the Joker breaking bread together over a Happy Meal, a mailman and a dog finding peace under the Golden Arches, and – how's this for seriously clever? – a blue donkey and a red elephant sharing common ground at a McDonald's formica table. Each ad closes with the lovely thought that you, I and everyone everywhere should "Choose Lovin'."

Get it? Choose McDonald's, for it's the source of love, and you'll truly be "Lovin' It." Not for nothing is CEO Thompson, who is paid \$9.5 million a year, plus full health coverage, a platinum pension and private use of the corporate jet. Where else but America can you be so enriched for preaching Lovin', while directing your corporate lobbyists to kill any increase in the poverty wages of your employees?

Just ask protesting workers about the "love" they're getting from McDonald's. Oh, to be fair, the bosses did make one change for workers – new uniforms, supposedly to buff-up the corporation's public image. That's not just boneheaded, it's pathetic! I forgot to mention that most of these low-wage employees were forced to buy the uniforms themselves.

How's that for McLove? – *Jim Hightower*

## *Bowling For Dollars*

**G**rowing up in Texas, I learned that God and guns were important, but football – well, football was the real religion, the essence of life itself.

So I can understand the hyperbolic exuberance of a radio hypester in Montgomery, AL, who declared that the Dec. 20 Camellia Bowl was "going to be the biggest event Montgomery has ever had." Really – bigger even than Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on one of the city's buses in 1955, igniting America's historic civil rights movement? Maybe not that big, but still, this game must be a rich part of Montgomery's history, a product of civic pride and the flowering culture, right?

Not exactly. It's actually a TV production, created and owned by ESPN, the all-sports channel based in Connecticut. The bowl's less-than-historic debut drew two low-tier teams, one with a mediocre 7-6 season record, and the other with a more-mediocre record of six wins and six losses. Even Montgomery's mayor admitted that the town was hardly awash in excitement about the Camellia Bowl. But the game had a corporate sponsor and could count on bulk purchases of tickets by other corporations. So who needs fans, when the real play is about programming for ESPN, TV exposure for the corporate sponsor and tax-deductible entertainment for corporate ticket buyers?

The Camellia fabrication is hardly unusual in today's galaxy of corporate bowl games. Of this season's holiday matchups, 11 were owned by ESPN. And forget team spirit – corporate sponsors were in it for themselves, promiscuously hopping from one bowl to another. In the latest go-round, 12 bowl games found themselves in the arms of different corporate partners less than a year ago.

From Dec. 20 through Jan. 12, a record 39 football "classics" were televised, allowing bleary-eyed, beer-sedated gridiron fanatics to binge on what amounts to a non-stop buffet of plays, replays and sports clichés. On just the first day of the bowl blitz, there were five games on the telly, from 10 a.m. to midnight. So you could've had brunch, lunch, dinner, happy hour and midnight snacks without ever leaving your La-Z-Boy. Is this a great country or what?

Still, football tradition just isn't what it used to be. Rather than reflecting a sense of place and local pride, the new bowls are money hustles, owned by whatever no-place corporation has a few million tax-deductible ad dollars to buy the game and use it as a gaudy billboard to hype the corporate brand. Thus, we're blessed with the likes of not only the Camellia Bowl, but the GoDaddy, Bitcoin, Quick Lane, Advocate V100 and Taxslayer bowls. Then there's the Duck Commander Bowl – a made-for-TV event sponsored by a TV show! And what sense of place are we to get from the Outback Bowl, a chain of steakhouses that celebrate Australia, where "football" means soccer or rugby?

Meanwhile, the proliferation of bowls has produced an embarrassing deterioration in the level of team excellence that these contests claim to celebrate. Of the 76 teams awarded bowl slots this season, roughly half came from the deep ranks of football mediocrity – 20 barely had winning records, 11 lost as many games as they won, and one actually had a losing record. It's hard to hide the silliness of chanting, "We're the champs," when your team has six wins and seven losses.

Bowl games these days are redefining the concept of "hustle" in sports. They no longer exist for the game itself, the players, the schools or the ideal of sportsmanship. Rather, they're just another piece of our culture that's been purchased for the enrichment

and self-aggrandizement of corporate interests. Instead of sponsors simply bringing the games to us, the games now bring us to the sponsors. – *Jim Hightower*

## *Whining Wall Street Banker Pleas For Pity*

**J**.P. Morgan was recently socked in the wallet by financial regulators who levied yet another multi-billion dollar fine against the Wall Street baron for massive illegalities.

Well, not a fine against John Pierpont Morgan, the man. This 19th Century robber baron was born to a great banking fortune and, by hook and crook, leveraged it to become the "King of American Finance." During the Gilded Age, Morgan cornered the U.S. financial markets, gained monopoly ownership of railroads, amassed a vast supply of the nation's gold and used his investment power to create U.S. Steel and take control of that market.

From his earliest days in high finance, Morgan was a hustler who often traded on the shady side. In the Civil War, for example, his family bought his way out of military duty, but he saw another way to serve. Himself, that is.

Morgan bought defective rifles for \$3.50 each and sold them to a Union general for \$22 each. The rifles blew off soldiers' thumbs, but Morgan pleaded ignorance, and government investigators graciously absolved the young, wealthy, well-connected financier of any fault.

That seems to have set a pattern for his lifetime of antitrust violations, union busting and other over-the-edge profiteering practices. He drew numerous official charges – but of course, he never did any jail time.

Moving the clock forward, we come to JPMorgan Chase, today's financial powerhouse bearing J.P.'s name. The bank also inherited his pattern of committing multiple illegalities – and walking away scot-free.

Oh, sure, the bank was hit with big fines, but not a single one of the top bankers who committed gross wrongdoings were charged or even fired – much less sent to jail.

With this long history of crime-does-pay for America's largest Wall Street empire, you have to wonder why Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan's CEO, is so P.O.'d. He's fed up to the tippy-top of his \$100 haircut with all of this populist attitude that's sweeping the country, and he's not going to take it anymore!

Dimon recently bleated to reporters that, "Banks

are under assault.” Well, he really doesn’t mean or care about most banks – just his bank. Government regulators, snarls Jamie, are pandering to grassroots populist anger at Wall Street excesses by squeezing the life out of the JPMorgan casino.

But wait – didn’t JPMorgan score a \$22 billion profit last year, a 20% increase over 2013 and the highest in its history? And didn’t those Big Bad Oppressive Government Regulators provide a \$25 billion taxpayer bailout in 2008 to save Jamie’s conglomerate from its own reckless excess? And isn’t his Wall Street Highness raking in some \$20 million in personal pay to suffer the indignity of this “assault” on his bank. Yes, yes and yes.

Still, Jamie says that regulators and bank industry analysts are piling on JPMorgan Chase: “In the old days,” he whined, “you dealt with one regulator when you had an issue. Now it’s five or six. You should all ask the question about how American that is,” the

\$20-million-a-year man lectured reporters, “how fair that is.”

Well, golly, one reason Chase has half a dozen regulators on its case is because it doesn’t have “an issue” of illegality, but beaucoup illegalities, including deceiving its own investors, cheating more than two million of its credit card customers, gaming the rules to overcharge electricity users in California and the Midwest, overcharging active-duty military families on their mortgages, illegally foreclosing on troubled homeowners and ... well, so much more.

So Jamie, you should ask yourself the question about “how fair” is all of the above. Then you should shut up, count your millions and be grateful you’re not in jail.

From John Pierpont Morgan to Jamie Dimon, the legacy continues. Banks don’t commit crimes. Bankers do. And they won’t ever stop if they don’t have to pay for their crimes. – *Jim Hightower*

# ***What Rich Don’t Worry About***

**BY KENNETH QUINNELL**

A recent Internet thread discussed experiences people had while experiencing poverty, with a particular focus on those things that people are forced to buy or do that people who aren’t poor never have to think about, much less worry about.

In thousands of comments, people recounted hundreds upon hundreds of stories of trying to find ways to maintain a minimal lifestyle in the face of extreme poverty.

One of the things that labor unions were created to do, and a key focus of the AFL-CIO’s Raising Wages campaign, was to prevent workers from having to suffer through these hardships. And in states where union density is higher, wages for both union and nonunion workers are higher, meaning fewer people have to live through such experiences.

Here are 23 examples of things that people in the discussion described having to worry about that wealthier Americans never even have to think about. These are some of the key things that working families and labor unions are fighting to reduce:

1. Staying in an extended stay housing, a motel, or a hotel [and paying the higher rate] because you can’t qualify to get an apartment because you don’t have proof of income.
2. Digging through the trash to find uneaten food.
3. Scavenging the ground for change to buy a meal.
4. Searching everywhere for coupons to make necessities affordable.
5. Stealing products like toilet paper from public restrooms so you can actually have them at home.
6. Selling plasma in order to afford groceries or pay rent.
7. Buying clothes on layaway.

8. Driving on tires so bald they could cause an accident at any moment.

9. Pulling your own tooth rather than pay for a dental visit.

10. Doing laundry in the sink with dish soap.

11. Buying antibiotics and other medicines meant for animals because you couldn’t afford the pharmacy.

12. Learning when things like meat, fish and bread get marked down in price because they are going to spoil soon, so they are reduced for quicker sale.

13. Living in pain because you can’t afford prescriptions.

14. Paying hundreds of extra dollars to obtain furniture through rent-to-own stores.

15. Buying cheap plastic toys at the dollar store so your children have birthday presents.

16. Stretching peanut butter or other staples by diluting them.

17. Washing and re-using plastic spoons, forks, knives and storage bags.

18. Visiting a store or public building to get a few minutes of air conditioning in the summer or heat in the winter.

19. Enduring the seemingly never-ending cycle of payday loans with exorbitant interest rates that are hard to repay.

20. Dropping out of school to help your family pay the bills.

21. Using candles to keep electricity bills low.

22. Splitting two-ply toilet paper to make two rolls.

23. Buying lottery tickets to have some hope of a better future.

*AFL-CIO Blog*

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TOLD YOU TO CAST  
A WHITE MLK !...



## *'Selma' As Cinema*

BY RAY PEARCEY

**I**s *Selma* a powerful theatrical and artistic representation of the 1965, Martin Luther King Jr.-led civil rights marches in Alabama?

Is it something akin to a great movie?

While there is real controversy about director Ava DuVernay's propulsive new film, only a rigid, ultra linear observer would claim that the project is other than an excellent, if far from perfect, offering. *Selma* is a gripping, tightly crafted art/historical movie that makes it clear that "perfection" and great work needn't be precisely the same.

The Selma marches have been diminished a bit by the fog of contemporary history, but the modern civil rights movement resembled a series of pitched, battle-like encounters, retreats and epic counter responses – all across the arguably seamless borders of '60s America's South and North.

DuVernay's lucid depictions of same, fused with English performer David Oyelowo's powerful evoca-

tion of King, has no peer in recent American film history – part of its impact comes from the fact that the movie is a peerless representation, in micro, of the whole of the modern American civil rights struggle. We see electrifying, hard to watch instances of the events and deeply personal dynamics that animated Dr. King, his immediate cadre, the sometimes friendly [to King], sometimes hypercritical Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC], a fevered black student civil rights player, Malcolm X, and President Lyndon Johnson.

The often highly choreographed civic disobedience and epic marches that defined Selma were nearly all non-violent: the protesters were overwhelmingly non-violent, even though they were often violently received by hecklers, southern cops and by often sadistic state troopers managed by a racist southern governor, George Wallace. And we get a grand, if monstrous, "fly on the wall" insight into deeply racist



cops, white provocateurs, hyper-opportunistic southern politicians and highly energized white counter-demonstrators.

In March 1965, marchers in Selma, a group composed of folks from the town itself and from a larger group of people from across the country, decided to do a mass walk to Montgomery – the capital of Alabama. Several dozen civil rights marchers left Selma on U.S. Highway 80 and marched east. At the infamous Edmond Pettus Bridge, only about six blocks outside Selma, they were confronted by a sea of state troopers, police officers and local sheriff's deputies and assaulted with tear gas, billy clubs and terrible taunts.

Many people were injured in a calamitous tumult – which was widely covered by national television. A host of historians/analysts believe, in retrospect, that it was this first march, followed by second and third walk events, some days later, [both led by Martin Luther King], that was the final impetus that President Johnson used to galvanize Congress and enact the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

It is now almost forgotten that Selma was an unbelievably intense, under-a-month ordeal in which several demonstrators were killed, including Jimmy Lee Jackson, a 26-year-old protester – he was struck down for being a party to a precession that would traverse a sick badland in Alabama. The march was through a strange land, but then hardly atypical realm, called Lowndes County, where not a single African-American voter had been registered in almost 60 years.

And in a striking scene at the beginning of the film, Oprah Winfrey, who has a tiny but surprisingly compelling role, tries [in what looks to have been one of several attempts] to register to vote. She has to submit to an “improv” literacy test, which on the day she came required her to recite the preamble of the Constitution, recall the number of presiding county judges in Alabama and, finally, to name all 67 of these judges, after having aced the first two queries.

The Winfrey character – a real black Alabamian/Selma march veteran, Annie Lee Cooper – can't name the judges; one wonders how many 'Bama voter could – then or now.

In another unforgettable sequence in *Selma*, we witness the killings of four little black girls in Birmingham. Spike Lee does a good job, in his little watched, now 17-year-old documentary film *Four Little Girls*, highlighting this grim instance of American domestic terror. Lee chronicles this fulsome outrage; one that isn't unique to a town that came to be called “Bombingham.”

The frequency of dynamite laden assaults, often linked to civil rights activities in this town in the '50s and '60s, was striking. But DuVernay captures this horrible episode in a frightening, mercifully brief set of scenes – in a way I've never witnessed.

But through dialogue, she also has Oyelowo's King make a critical connection to this event and Jimmy Lee Jackson's death. Black Alabama citizens, exclud-

ed overwhelmingly from voting, were also fully excluded from Alabama juries – juries that failed, again and again, to convict white suspect terrorists of the deaths of protesters and black citizens of any variety.

## THE CONTROVERSY

*Selma* has been included as a candidate for best picture – it is one of nine films that Hollywood will wade thorough before handing off its highest annual award Feb. 22. In what is surely an outrage, DuVernay was not nominated for best director – maybe her film actually directed, created itself?

But there is a bigger controversy that hobbles *Selma*. Elizabeth Drew, a longtime Washingtonian and sometimes writer for the New York Review of Books, summed up the complaint:

*By distorting an essential truth about the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Dr. Martin Luther King over the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Selma has opened a very large and overdue debate over whether and how much truth the movie industry owes to the public. The film suggests that there was a struggle between King and Johnson over whether such a bill should be pushed following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, signed into law in July of that year. The clear implication is that Johnson was opposed to a voting rights bill, period, and that he had to be persuaded by King. This story has now been propagated to millions of viewers, to the point where young people in movie houses boo Johnson's name ... But there was no struggle. This is pure fiction. The remarkable story of the relationship between Johnson and King was that two such different men, from such different backgrounds, with such different constituencies, and responsibilities, formed a partnership to get the voting rights bill through. This is not to say that the two became pals: they were understandably wary of each other but managed to overcome that as well as other possible sources of tensions to get the job done. Ultimately, they had fallings out over King's efforts to carry his civil rights campaign into*



*the north, in particular Chicago, and his open opposition to the Vietnam War. But so far as the scope of the movie goes, Martin Luther King's glorious role in the civil rights movement could have been kept intact without having to make Lyndon Johnson the heavy – a pure fabrication ...*

Interestingly, *Selma* shares this kind of complaint along with a whole range of Hollywood's best pictures or near best projects, including last year's winner, *Argo*, an interesting, if sometimes predictable piece on the rescue of a dozen or so American diplomats/staff from the U.S. embassy in Iran during the epic 1979-80 hostage crisis. Many of the events in *Argo* are fully consistent with what we know about the true history – except for a dramatic airport escape caper that never happened.

Likewise, one of this year's other best picture candidates, *The Imitation Game*, the story of Alan Turing, the World War II British computer/artificial intelligence pioneer, has more than a few off-base depictions that tarnish an otherwise fantastic effort.

One observer, Chris Hayes, of MSNBC fame, theorizes that a part of the assault on *Selma* comes from other 2015 best movie contenders and their award lobby crews. But there have also been hard to ignore comments about *Selma*'s "Johnson" from King aides who were in some of the discussions King had with LBJ – including Andrew Young.

But know this – you make a mistake of the first order if you and older children you're connected to don't go out as soon as possible to see *Selma*. It is an incredibly moving and compelling film – and it has usefully reanimated all kinds of needed discussions about "agency" and the signal role that black folks played in the genesis of the public accommodations and voting right acts.

See *Selma*, break out some of the excellent books, oral histories and documentaries on *Selma* and civil rights – and join the dialogue.

*Ray Pearcey is managing editor of the Oklahoma Eagle, a columnist for the Tulsa Voice and a frequent contributor to The Oklahoma Observer.*

# *What 'Je Suis Charlie' Should Mean To Us*

BY JOE CONASON

**N**ot long after 9/11, the leading figures in France's Champagne industry decided that they would hold their 2002 annual awards gala in New York rather than Paris. At no small expense, they displayed solidarity with New Yorkers – and America – at a time of sorrow and fury, like so many of their compatriots.

It was one more instance when the French renewed the bond that has existed since this country's founding.

And not too long after that, disagreement between the French government and the Bush Administration over the invasion of Iraq led to a breach between us and our oldest allies. The French tried in vain to save us from a tragic mistake or worse and were rewarded with vilification from Fox News to the floor of Congress.

By now, of course, we know that the French never disagreed with us about the danger posed by Islamist jihad, only about the means and priorities in combating that adversary.

Today the French military is supporting the U.S. and other allies by conducting airstrikes against the Islamic State group in Iraq. That continuing alliance requires us all to repeat "Je suis Charlie" in the aftermath of the atrocious terror attack on Parisian satire magazine Charlie Hebdo.

Yet while we owe that gesture to our old friends, we still owe them, ourselves and the world much more.

As an assault on liberty and security, the barbaric shootings that killed five cartoonists, including the magazine's editor, two police officers and five more innocents cannot be excused or explained. The victims had every right to do what they were doing and what they had done, regardless of the violent anger they stirred among the perpetrators and their sponsors.

It is criminal warfare by an implacable enemy that will not desist until it is destroyed.

To understand what is at stake in this struggle, it is important to look closely at what we are defending. There is no equivalent to Charlie Hebdo in the United States, nor is there a tradition of the kind of anti-religious satire that has been among its specialties.

Those killed had the kind of cultural stature of Dr. Seuss, Garry Trudeau, the editors of *Mad* magazine and the producers of *The Daily Show* – except that their style was far more offensive and challenging than most Americans can imagine, not only in insulting Islam but in insulting Christianity, Judaism and every other congregation of believers in France.

Rightists who regard the defense of Charlie Hebdo as merely another opportunity to bash Muslims ought to glance back at the magazine's equally sav-





age assaults on institutions they hold dear, because its anarchic sense of humor has spared no one.

Nobody needs to approve of anything that the editors published, including the mocking cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, to reject the use of violence to suppress them.

Indeed, it is possible to reject the content of those drawings and still stand firmly with the Charlie Hebdo staff. In free societies, there will always be writers and artists who use their freedom in ways that the rest of us find obnoxious, ugly or even dangerous.

The French imam who denounced the killings clearly and called the victims “martyrs” surely doesn’t care for those cartoons.

But he knows the price of living under constitutional freedom that protects his right to worship – and to protest, without violence, words and pictures that offend.

If only the would-be persecutors of Islam in the West adequately comprehended that same principle.

Effective opposition to violent Islamists means neither denying that

this grave challenge exists nor demonizing Muslims. It means seeking to make ordinary Muslims – by far the most common victims of Islamist terrorism – our allies, as well.

And in the aftermath of the Iraq War, the Senate torture report and every other mistake and crime supposedly committed to defend liberty since 9/11, it means restoring and preserving everything decent that distinguishes us from our enemies.

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### 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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## *The End Of Male Privilege*

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**ANGRY WHITE MEN**  
*American Masculinity*  
*At The End Of An Era*  
By Michael Kimmel  
Nation Books  
336 pages, \$16.99

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BY JOHN WOOD

In Ian Haney Lopez's *Dog Whistle Politics*, Ronald Reagan manipulated middle-class white voters to support his economic policies that helped corporations and the wealthy at their expense through playing on stereotypes. This helped to misdirect the middle class to look the other direction when Reagan's presidency successfully transferred more than \$1 trillion to America's top 1% from the middle class through tax cuts they thought were aimed at cutting off undeserving minorities.

Not unlike Lopez's book, Michael Kimmel's lucid and fascinating tome laments that straight, white, middle-class men are being swindled into thinking Jews, blacks, Hispanics, feminists, and gays are to blame for their anger over losing the future they were entitled to have – an obedient wife, kids, and a life-long, well-paying job. Kimmel blames such manipulation on media's Fox News commentators and Right Wing radio jockeys, such as Michael Savage and Rush Limbaugh among others.

These men face the “end of an era,” not of men, but their privilege, or what Kimmel calls “aggrieved entitlement,” which is now a relic of the past. In response, Kimmel says that many – of course, not all – white men fail to adjust to 21st Century's realities and challenges as if they had their “fingers shoved in the crumbling dikes, trying futilely, to hold back the surging tide of greater equality and greater justice.”

White straight men, Kimmel notes, are the “beneficiaries of the single greatest affirmative action program in world history. It's called ‘world history.’”

This is a world Kimmel describes as where these men have “stacked the deck” to the point of excluding all others from the playing field. When the other players were finally allowed in the game, they were already at a huge disadvantage and everyone else had

to overcome “enormous handicaps.”

The men he interviews often refuse to admit their privilege and he says that in his observation, these men “have been running with the wind at our backs all these years,” and “what we think of as ‘fairness’ to us has been built on the backs of others.”

Kimmel, a Stony Brook University sociologist, says the real problem is much more complicated than these men proscribe. He further explains this is a populist movement expressed in the Tea Party, but it's more than mere ideology, it's emotion and that emotion is pure anger.

Kimmel says these men's anger is real and often justified, but misdirected, spending some time articulating that minorities and women are not really to blame. Instead, it is the “ideology of masculinity that we inherited from our fathers, and their fathers before them, an ideology that promises unparalleled acquisition coupled with a tragically impoverished emotional intelligence.”

This ideology makes men empty inside and requires a scapegoat: someone else.

This reminds me of my upbringing where I was often policed by being described as being “gay” by my stepfather for not acting manly enough; acting like a “girl” for my lack of interest in fixing cars; for lacking “balls” for my not wanting to fight on the school grounds, etc. It was natural for me to think that women and gays were examples I could not follow – and as a result, would naturally think of them as “second class.”

While I have adjusted to the 21st Century, Kimmel blames these men for their failure to adjust.

This entitlement of masculinity seems to blind men to the fact that real income for the middle class was flat in the 1970s and has even fallen since the 1990s

for white middle-class men. At the same time, the rich keep getting richer as the top 1%'s wealth has skyrocketed.

Kimmel interviewed men from many walks of life, from neo-Nazis to ditto heads who worship Limbaugh to divorced conservative fathers. Kimmel, who also wrote *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*, ventures off to a gun show, a batterer's intervention group, and to various bars, and schools across America.

I found Kimmel's discussion of America's schools and gun violence to be particularly interesting. Almost all of the school mass murder shootings since Columbine have been carried out by a white, male from the suburbs. The lone exception, out of around 30, is Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter.

Kimmel seems to make a strong case that these young men were either fending off violent bullies and/or otherwise had their masculinity bruised and mangled by them.

It's not clear from Kimmel's writing, though, whether this led to psychological breaks, or they were already psychotics in the first place. Either way, it does seem to point to dysfunctions in the school as the reason these shootings occur, not threats from the outside, which is what those who want guns in the classroom seem to focus on in Oklahoma and elsewhere.

Of course, Kimmel envisions that men will somehow just give up this need for entitlement and instead embrace a nicer, gentler and more tolerant existence with their wives. But to ignore that media pop culture – outside the news – also props up masculinity, over-consumption, hero worship, etc., is part of the larger problem. I think the prospect of this dramatic cultural shift of masculinity – changing outside of an organic, slow process that we are already seeing – is misguided at best.

However, I am hopeful we are seeing some changes as Kimmel points out albeit incrementally. Men are taking more of a role in

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parenting than their dads. For example, studies find that women still do two-thirds of the housework and child rearing, much better than nearly 100%, but this generational change in Millennials spells progressive change.

Regardless, Kimmel's book is

worth a read because it will likely change how you look at masculinity's pervasiveness in society, and maybe even how you, yourself, male or female, relate to it.

*John Wood, PhD, is assistant professor of political science at the University of Central Oklahoma.*

# *Malala's Powerful Story*

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## **I AM MALALA**

***The Girl Who Stood Up For Education  
And Was Shot By The Taliban***

***By Malala Yousafzai***

***Little, Brown and Co.***

***352 pages, \$26***

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## **BY WANDA JO STAPLETON**

*I Am Malala* is a powerful story about a Pakistani family which lived in northern Pakistan under Taliban rule.

The Taliban, a fundamentalist Muslim group, strongly opposed education for girls, so this group destroyed around 400 schools, mainly schools for girls. They believed the role for girls was to prepare food and give birth to children.

The leader of the Taliban announced that girls who quit school would go to heaven. Those who went to school would go to hell.

Today in Pakistan, 5.1 million children don't even go to primary school. And almost 50 million adults, mainly women, are illiterate, including Malala's own mother.

In contrast, Malala's father was passionate about education. He believed schooling should be available for all – rich and poor, boys and girls. So he used all his savings and what money he could borrow to start a school which grew from three students to 1,100 students and 70 teachers today.

Her father encouraged Malala to attend school in the face of stiff opposition. He used to say, "I will protect your freedom Malala. Carry on with your dreams."

He believed that if the Taliban came for anyone, it would be him, not a 15-year-old girl.

And carry on she did. She wrote a diary about life under the Taliban. Her diary entries were published once a week on the BBC Urdu website [Urdu is the language used by Muslims in Pakistan]. She also participated in a documentary for the New York Times website to show the world what was happening in Pakistan.

Because she was so outspoken, on Oct. 9, 2012, Malala was returning from school when a bearded man stopped the school bus and asked, "Who is Malala?" Then he shot her in the head with a bullet which, thankfully, did not pierce the brain.

Six days after the attack, she was airlifted from a hospital in Pakistan to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England where she underwent numerous surgeries during the next three months.

Malala and her family remain in Birmingham where she is still undergoing treatment. On the shelves of their rented apartment in Birmingham are awards from around the world, including the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

She recalls that on her 16th birthday, she was in New York to speak at the United Nations. There, she called on the world's leaders to provide free education to every child in the world.

She concludes by saying, "I am Malala. My world has changed, but I have not. My dream is still education for every boy and girl in the world."

*Wanda Jo Stapleton is a former Democratic state representative who represented south Oklahoma City from 1986-96.*

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# Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

salaries are worthy of comparison. It just means he knows first-hand how hard most teachers work, how poorly they are paid, and what their work means for Oklahoma's future.

Jones' idea is an excellent starting point for lawmakers interested in addressing the state's miserly teacher pay scale. He deserves credit for shooting straight and not tap-dancing around a salary discrepancy that is indefensible.

## *Family Feud*

Facing a \$300 million-plus budget hole of their own making, it didn't take the Legislature's uber conservatives long to zero in on a favorite whipping post: Oklahoma's nearly 520 public school districts.

Sen. Kyle Loveless, R-OKC, has introduced SB 15 that would force small school districts losing their superintendents to consolidate administrative functions with other nearby districts.

This is a serious issue worthy of thoughtful, sober debate, yet one guaranteed to ignite a fierce intra-Republican battle over whether the savings are worth the cost to small communities whose identities are often indistinguishable from their schools.

Some rural lawmakers already are manning the barricades, vowing to prevent the city slickers – Loveless' co-author is Tulsa's Mike Mazzei – from imposing any consolidation on rural school districts.

It's a real problem for a GOP-dominated Legislature – and not just because of the urban-rural split, most pronounced in the 101-member House.

How can Republicans continue to sell themselves as the party of local control when they keep big-footing municipalities and school districts?

Last year, the Legislature blocked cities from raising the minimum wage. This year, lawmakers could take away cities' authority to ban fracking. Loveless' bill would obliterate a school board's power to hire a new superintendent – and remain totally independent – if their district had fewer than 250 students.

Loveless attempts to soften the blow by mandating the administrative savings be spent on technology, advanced placement programs, students with disabilities, even reimbursing teachers for National Board Certification expenses.

Of course, anyone who even casually follows school finance knows the Legislature often plays a shell game – giving with one hand, taking with the other. A decade ago the state lottery began with its promise to provide public education icing on its regular budget cake. The lottery has delivered, dispatching \$650 million-plus into education coffers – but in the last five years state lawmakers have imposed the nation's deepest budget cuts on public schools.

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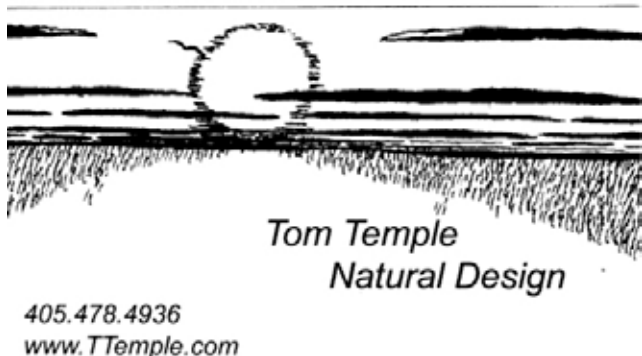
School consolidation is a volatile enough issue without duplicity muddying the public policy debate. Republicans are going to have to decide whether local control is more than a campaign slogan. Or whether they're willing to face the political consequences of making tough fiscal decisions that could cost some Oklahoma towns their identities.



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# Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

**Dart:** To Oklahoma Ethics Commission, writing off \$200,000-plus in unpaid fees from candidates and political groups. Yes, it's impossible to track down some scofflaws, but it sends a bad signal not to try.

**Oops!** We misidentified Public Forum essayist Marion Hill's hometown – it's Durant, not Duncan.

**Laurel:** To UCO Business Dean Mickey Hepner, penning an Oklahoman op-ed that refuted lies spread by ex-Gov. Keating and public ed hater Brandon Dutcher about Oklahoma's colleges. Keating and Dutcher never let the facts stand in the way of a good story.

There are more registered Republicans now in Oklahoma than Democrats – making official what has been happening at the ballot box for half a century.

**Dart:** To the Koch Brothers, vowing to spend nearly \$1 billion via their wingnut network to influence the 2016 elections. You can thank the U.S. Supreme Court for hanging a For Sale sign on democracy.

The state CareerTech board finally removed the “interim” tag from director Marcie Mack's title. She replaces Robert Sommers who resigned last summer.

**Laurel:** To state Supreme Court Justice Norma Gu-rich, the only justice to get it right on Harold Hamm's divorce records. They are public record – period.

President Obama hoped to reform the 529 college savings program because it disproportionately helps the rich – 80% of benefits go to families earning more than \$150k, 70% to families making \$200k-plus. Care to guess who blocked the reforms?

Ponder this: 50% of the world's wealth in 2016 will be held by the world's wealthiest 1%. – Oxfam

Oklahoma budget writers lament plunging oil prices, but it's good news nationally for consumers – equivalent to a \$125 billion tax cut. Average savings in oil-heating bills this winter: \$767.

Attention, Sen. Inhofe: The polar bear population in the southern Beaufort Sea has declined 40% thanks to loss of sea ice. – World Wildlife Fund

# Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

economy. And we must also look at the recent past.

When President Bill Clinton left office In January 2001, 20 million new jobs had been created, the economy was in good shape, the unemployment rate was below 6%, and we were at peace.

In the next eight years, the economy was shattered with the huge expenses of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as the primary cause. And the unemployment rate began to rise and eventually reached more than 10% just as President Obama took office in January 2009.

We were deep in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, so bad that it has come to be called "the Great Recession." The new president did not drag us there. It was the direct result of the preceding eight years of war.

Recovering from such a bad economy does not just happen. It does not come from wishful thinking or political expectations. It comes from years of hard work. In the past, it has taken an average of about 10 years for any nation anywhere in the world to pull out of such a depth.

With President Obama at the helm, often with fierce resistance from some members of Congress, over the next few years, the federal government began to pull us out of the dumps. President Obama persisted in the face of opposition.

And, today, the economy is healthy again, the only healthy economy among all the economies of the world's major nations.

And the unemployment rate has fallen back to the level it was at the end of the Clinton Administration, 5.8%, the lowest rate since 1999. The government has in six years brought about a robust recovery.

These are the facts. And the new Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell's saying that the "uptick" is due to "the expectation of a new Republican Congress" is not a fact. To be blunt, it is a lie.

This is America we live in, and it's OK to disagree with the president about various issues. But it is not OK to lie about what he has accomplished. We have the facts, and the facts tell us to give him credit for leading us out of a deep recession.

And it would be nice for people who know the facts to say, "Thank you, Mr. President."

Joe Littlejohn  
Durant

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Editor, The Observer:

Thank you so much for all the breaking news. Wish it was good news – but we need to know what's going on.

What about the Trans-Pacific Partnership? Scary.

Gilbert Spears  
Anderson, MO

Editor, The Observer:

What made 2014 memorable was 10 Okies who think and cause others to think:

10. "Raise my taxes." – oil baron George Kaiser.

9. "You have the widow-maker. Your main artery is 92% blocked. Get surgery this afternoon." – Dr. Chris Higgins.

8. "Plain and simple. Mean people need Jesus. They will be in my prayers tonight. 1 Peter 21-25." – Carrie Underwood, singing star.

7. "I wear it as a badge of courage that I survived 18 months in prison for something I didn't do." – David Hall, former governor, convicted of bribery and extortion.

6. "I used to go to evangelical meetings with my father, a minister. It was my first look at show business. It was a performance and you didn't want to make a mistake." – Jimmy Webb, songwriter [*Wichita Lineman, By the Time I Get to Phoenix*]

5. In the musical *Oklahoma!*, the part about wind coming right behind the rain, what rain? That is a lie." – Blake Shelton, coach on NBC's *Voice*.

4. "I have done 2,135 things that have been on my bucket list. It gives me a great thrill to mark things off my list." – Dr. Jim Higgins.

3. "You'll get buffaloed, bullied and strong-armed without a union." – Nancy Leonard, Tulsa Public Schools bus driver.

2. "America's middle class has been hammered over income, education, housing, and retirement.

It's bang-bang-bang where the big guys keep pulling in more of the profit and leaving families struggling. This system is rigged." – Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, an Oklahoma City native.

1. "The odds were stacked against us. A single parent with two boys by the time you were 21 years old. You kept us off the streets. You made sure we ate. You went to bed hungry. You are the real MVP." – Kevin Durant, the Oklahoma City Thunder's 2014 NBA Most Valuable Player, saluting his mama, Wanda Pratt.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
Wagoner

Editor, The Observer:

Jan. 22 was the 42nd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling, in *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion. On Jan. 22, 1973, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger's court ruled that "a Texas law making it a crime to assist a woman to get an abortion violates her due-process right." That Texas case began when Jane Roe, et al sued Henry Wade, district attorney of Dallas County. Jane Roe won in the Supreme Court.

Regarding abortion, who can forget the photo in the May 1973 issue of *Ms.* magazine – a 1964 photo of Gerri Santoro, dead from a botched, illegal abortion, abandoned in a motel room, sprawled face down. Santoro's bloody, nude, abandoned corpse became a powerful symbol of the pro-choice movement, of which I am a part and have been since I saw that photo in *Ms.* magazine.

Nevertheless, some of our state and national members of Congress, mainly Republicans, would outlaw abortion, thus taking us back to the Dark Ages.

Wanda Jo Stapleton  
Oklahoma City

*Editor's Note: Wanda Jo Stapleton is a former Democratic state representative who represented south Oklahoma City from 1986-96.*

## Random Thoughts As We Age ...

The biggest lie I tell myself is ... "I don't need to write that down, I'll remember it."

Wouldn't it be great if we could put ourselves in the dryer for 10 minutes – come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller!

Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet!

I don't trip over things, I do random gravity checks!

I don't need anger management. I need people to stop pissing me off!

Old age is coming at a really bad time!

Lord grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the friends to post my bail when I finally snap!

I don't have gray hair. I have "wisdom highlights." I'm just very wise.

My people skills are just fine. It's my tolerance for idiots that needs work.

If God wanted me to touch my toes, he would've put them on my knees.

The kids text me "plz" which is shorter than please. I text back "no" which is shorter than "yes."

I'm going to retire and live off of my savings. Not sure what I'll do that second week.

Even duct tape can't fix stupid ... but it can muffle the sound!

Of course I talk to myself, sometimes I need expert advice.

At my age "Getting lucky" means walking into a room and remembering what I came in there for.

Chocolate comes from cocoa which is a tree ... that makes it a plant, which means ... chocolate is salad!

# Support Oklahoma Libraries And Education

Grappling with deep budget cuts, Oklahoma's public libraries and public schools are being forced to make tough financial decisions. Many are electing to cut subscriptions to publications like The Observer. You can help ensure that educators, students, parents and library patrons continue to have access to facts and viewpoints the state's rightwing mainstream media suppress. Your tax-deductible \$35 gift to the Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation will provide a one-year Observer subscription to a library or school in your area.

*This month, these libraries and schools need your support in order to continue receiving The Observer:*

Central Middle School Library/Bartlesville  
Washington Schools  
Waynoka Public Schools  
Beaver County Library  
Stillwater High School Library  
Cushing Public Library  
Stillwater Middle School Library  
Cushing High School Library  
Purcell High School Library  
Eufaula Elementary School  
Mulhall-Orlando High School Library  
Eufaula High School  
Northern College Tonkawa/Faculty-Admin Work Rm  
Houchin School/Moore  
Hominy Public Schools  
Harrah High School Library  
Lawton High School Library  
Lindsay High School Library  
Carl Albert State College Library  
Blackwell Public Library  
Western State Hospital Library/Fort Supply  
Langston University Harrison Library  
Stillwater Middle School Library  
Stratford School Board

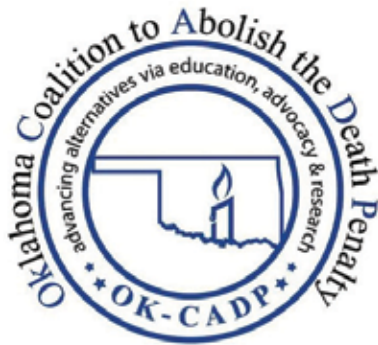
Broken Arrow High School Library  
Meridian Tech Center  
Parker Memorial Library/Sulphur  
Mid-Del Classroom Teachers  
Tyler Memorial Library/Dewey  
Indian Capital Tech Center Library  
Enid High School Library  
Soutar Memorial Library/Boise City  
Brink Middle School Library/Moore  
Buffalo Public Library  
Westmoore High School Library  
Watonga Public Library  
Eufaula Public Library  
Fredrick High School Library  
Dewey High School Library  
Lexington Schools  
Purcell Elementary School  
Checotah High School Library  
Nicoma Park Intermediate School  
Grant Public School Library  
Miami High School  
Cushing Public Schools  
Taft Middle School/Oklahoma City

Yes! I want to support Oklahoma's public libraries and schools with gift subscriptions to The Observer. Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to the Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation for \_\_\_\_\_ gift subscriptions for libraries and schools.



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Libraries/Schools \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mail checks to:**  
**Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation**  
**PO Box 14275**  
**Oklahoma City, OK 73113**  
**The Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. All donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.**



**OK-CADP urges all citizens  
who care about exorbitant costs  
of the death penalty vs. life in prison, and  
who yearn for a society that  
supports victims, justice  
and real crime prevention,  
to join OK-CADP in demanding that**

## **OKLAHOMA HALT ALL EXECUTIONS NOW!**

*Call the Governor now to ask her to lead by instituting a moratorium on executions – 405-521-2342*

**150 people have been exonerated & freed from death row since 1973**

**10 OF THESE IN OKLAHOMA**

**HELP RICHARD GLOSSIP BE NO. 11**

*Read his heart-wrenching story at [www.richardglossip.com](http://www.richardglossip.com)*

**Write letters to the Governor and your legislators about replacing vengeance with mercy.**

**Gov. Mary Fallin, 2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 212, OKC 73105**

**Representative/Senator, 2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., OKC 73105**

### **HOLD THIS DATE**

**April 4, 2015**

**6:30 p.m.**

**24th Annual**

**Dinner**

**UCO Edmond**

**Ballrooms A & B**

**Oregon**

**Former Prison**

**Superintendent, now**

**anti-death penalty**

**Speaker**

**Frank Thompson**



**Vigils are held outside the Governor's Mansion, 820 NE 23rd, at 5:15 p.m. for each state killing. The public is invited! Watch all media for dates as they are scheduled.**

**OK-CADP'S MISSION IS TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY IN OKLAHOMA.  
JOIN US!**

**[www.okcadp.org](http://www.okcadp.org)**

**Follow us on Facebook & Twitter**

**P. O. Box 713, Oklahoma City, OK 73101**

**405-948-1645**