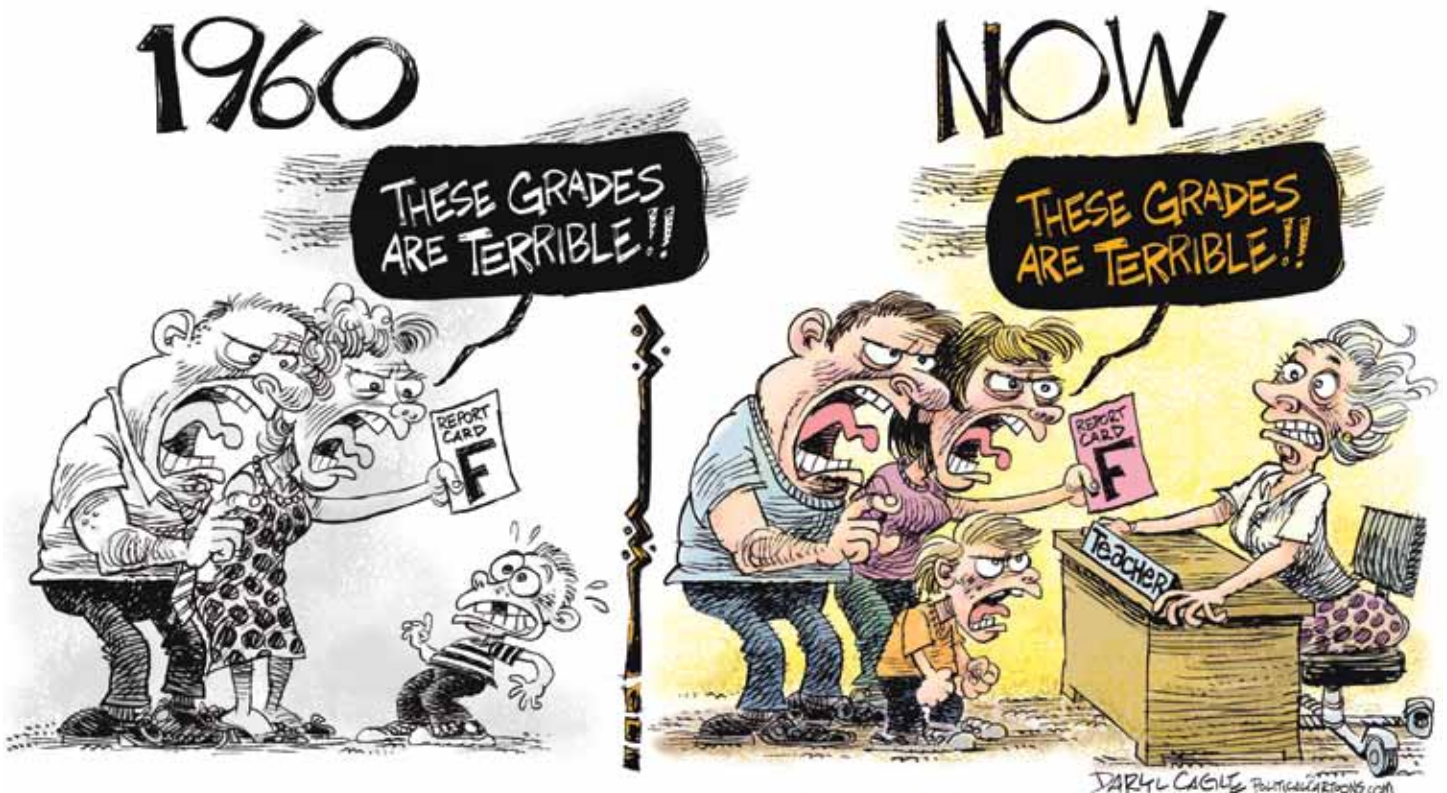


THE OKLAHOMA Observer

• ANNUAL EDUCATION ISSUE •

AUGUST 2016 • VOLUME 48 NUMBER 8 • \$5.00

‘Life In This Hallway Is Killing Me’



*A Devoted Teacher Describes
The Challenges Inside Oklahoma's
Cash-Strapped Public Schools*

Back-to-School Special Report Begins on Page 18

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OUR CREDO

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

FOUNDING PUBLISHER

Helen B. Troy
1932-2007

[ISSN 0030-1795]

The Oklahoma Observer [USPS 865-720]
is published on the first Wednesday of each
month by AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plym-
outh Crossing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma
City, OK 73113-0275. Periodicals postage
paid at Edmond, OK and additional entry
office.

POSTMASTER

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

1-Year [12 issues] \$40. Send check to The
Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275,
Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Online: Visit
www.okobserver.net to use a credit card.

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Observations

Trickle Down Trump

What is it going to take to drive a stake into the heart of the long-ago discredited theory of Supply Side economics?

It failed spectacularly during the Reagan years – so much so that George H.W. Bush referred to it as “voodoo economics.” It failed in Kansas. It’s now failed in Oklahoma.

Yet, the Koch Brothers, their stink tanks like the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs and, yes, even Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump refuse to give up the notion that cutting taxes for the wealthiest 1% somehow magically causes government coffers to overflow and fattens the bottom lines of the least among us.

Actually, it’s a theory better described as “tinkle down” economics – a reverse Robin Hood that alleged billionaire Trump wants to pursue if elected in November.

Why pursue a strategy that doesn’t work for the vast majority of Americans? Greed.

Consider this: Trump’s proposal to eliminate the federal income tax would be a \$7.1 billion boon for his family, according to Third Way, a Washington-based think tank. Moreover, Trump’s plan would add an estimated \$10 trillion to the national debt over 10 years, the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center noted.

We’ve seen this movie before. As it entertains and enriches the silk-stocking crowd, it devolves into a horror flick for the middle class and poor.

Look at Oklahoma: Billion-plus budget hole this year, at least \$600 million next. Vital state services woefully underfunded. Tax breaks and corporate welfare disproportionately benefiting the wealthy elite.

Mad-as-hell Oklahomans casting an anti-establishment vote for Trump might be well to familiarize themselves with an old, but applicable phrase: cutting off your nose to spite your face.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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HEADLINES YOU WON'T SEE FITZSIMMONS STRAZ DAILY STATE 2016



Dart: To OK County DA David Prater, endorsing preacher Paul Blair in SD 41 GOP runoff because he won't "compromise the tenets" of his faith. Blair uses his pulpit as a platform for hate speech.

State Supreme Court Justice Steven Taylor is retiring at year's end. Appointed to the high court in 2004 by Gov. Brad Henry, Taylor spent 33 years on the bench.

Laurel: To Rep. Jason Dunnington, D-OKC, and Sen. Kyle Loveless, R-OKC, announcing they will re-introduce their equal pay for women bill next session. It came oh-so-close to becoming law this year.

Former Senate President Mike Morgan now serving an 18-month sentence at federal prison in Arkansas for his bribery conviction. He also surrendered his law license.

Dart: To the Daily Disappointment, stooping to new low with its puff piece on owner Philip Anschutz's Sea Island, GA resort – solidifying its designation as America's Worst Newspaper.

We note the passing of Oklahoma's first black state senator, E. Melvin Porter. What a remarkable legacy – civil rights sit-ins, NAACP president, 22 years in Senate and passage of OK's Anti-Discrimination Act.

Laurel: To Planned Parenthood's Tamya Cox, honored recently with Oklahoma Religious Coalition on Reproductive Choice's Faith and Freedom award. Bravo!

Senate President Pro Tem-to-be Mike Shultz, beware: Theocrat-in-chief Paul Blair isn't even GOP SD 41 nominee, but Capitol insiders say he's already inquiring whether a freshman can be elected pro tem.

Aug. 11 is deadline for medical marijuana supporters to gather enough signatures – 66,000 – to get the issue on the November ballot. Visit okforhealth.org for more details.

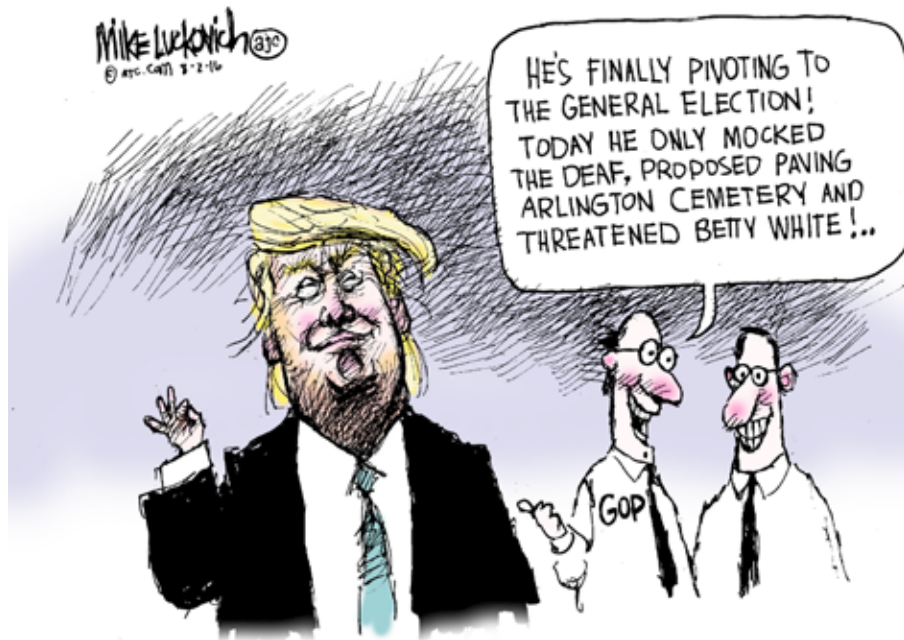
The Oklahoma Democratic Party has new digs – 3700 N. Classen Blvd. Suite 100 in OKC. Former Gov. David Walters is co-hosting a housewarming party Aug. 11 from 5-7 p.m.

"It is easy to boo, but it is harder to look your kids in the face during a Donald J. Trump presidency." – Sen. Bernie Sanders, responding to boos from California delegates when he urged they work to elect Hillary Clinton

Oklahoma carbon king Harold Hamm as Donald Trump's energy secretary? Money can buy lots of things – but not respectability.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Letters



Editor, The Observer:

To my generation: 1968 was a year of assassins, ramped up war in Vietnam, racial tension and riots, cops being shot and Czechoslovakia being invaded by the Soviet Union. We elected Richard Nixon as POTUS. That led this country to Laos and Cambodia wars, Arab oil embargo, Watergate and the loss of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Now comes 2016 and the Republican convention in Cleveland. Now comes Donald Trump, a con man with no moral values and a thousand times more narcissistic than Nixon!

Seriously old people? Have you forgotten the friends you lost? Think about the grandchildren you will lose under this insane bastard!

Steve Hoffman
Oklahoma City

Editor, the Observer:

These thoughts have been ricocheting around in my alleged mind for a while, and I wonder if they are in any way valid, rational, or make any sense. The things Donald Trump continues to say are not things that any credible, conscientious political candidate wanting

or hoping to get elected would say.

Could his original intent have been to pitch in a million dollars or so, get a lot of personal publicity, and then go back to trying to increase his bank account with some type of self-promotion, using his campaign as the focal point? If he is half as smart as he wants us to believe, he must realize he is in so deep that there is no way he could ever extract himself from the abyss he is in. Virtually all his comments are antithetical to what any valid candidate would utter in public.

Somehow, we are in the middle of a major league scam he is perpetrating – with the whole US of A set to be the victim.

If by some quirk of fate he should get elected, our governmental system would be in dire peril and subject to collapse. But who knows? If we could get through the rebuilding process successfully we possibly could get a government that actually works.

Tom Ellis
Okeene

Editor, The Observer:

Fellow Democrats, we have a problem, too! We might [inwardly

speaking] be glad that the Republicans are going through trials and tribulations of a type we need not worry about. But actually their problem is a one shot deal; if Trump loses [which is most peoples' hope], they will merely regroup and carry on as if nothing happened.

Unfortunately, our Democrats have a serious problem which is systemic in nature – and won't easily be fixed.

I see the Democrats as being broken up into two groups – I'll call the first group "True-Blue" Democrats. These are the people who believe in "Old-fashioned Politics," i.e. the average person gives a small amount to the politician of his/her choice [a la, Bernie Sanders].

This group consists of most of us Democratic voters, plus a very few at the upper levels [people like Bernie, Elizabeth Warren, and Alan Grayson – there are others who are close to this definition: Sherrod Brown, Pete Fazio, Marcy Kaptur and a few others].

The second group I'll call "Demlicans" [because in their actions they are half Democrat – half Republican]. My reasoning for this split definition occurs because they firmly believe that the only way to win elections is to do what the Republicans do – accept "super-pacs" and all other big money sources wherever you can find them. Almost all "top" Democrats fit this category [including Bill, Hillary, and Barack]. You can see the results in the 15½ years of Bill's and Barack's presidencies. Both of them followed some Republican type strategies – especially in the financial and trade areas.

Up till now, this split has been a live-and-let-live situation. But now, it has broken out into no-holds-barred warfare. Alan Grayson, running for Marco Rubio's Senate seat in Florida, has been severely attacked by retiring Senate Minor

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



Rhetoric Ignores State's Dependence On Uncle Sam

The knee-jerk conservatism that now rules Oklahoma politics was built in no small measure on around-the-clock demonizing of the federal government.

It's Ronald Reagan's "the nine most terrifying words in the English language are 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help,'" writ large.

Indeed, if state taxpayers were given a dollar for each time Republican officeholders invoked the phrase "federal overreach" this century, Oklahoma probably would have more households worth \$5 million-plus than the rest of the nation combined.

Though the anti-fed fervor is predictable – Okie DNA always has included a healthy suspicion of the powers-that-be – it's no less mind-boggling when considering how dependent the state is on a federal government it seemingly loves to hate.

Think about it: What would Oklahoma look like without Tinker, Vance or Altus Air Force bases or Fort Sill? Or without its 48,000 federal workers [civilian and active duty personnel], most earning better-than-average salaries and benefits?

Consider the impact on state services: The Oklahoma Legislature appropriates about \$7 billion a year in state tax revenues. The feds kick in more than twice that much, bolstering funding for everything from education to transportation.

It's classic political disconnect, similar to ObamaCare protesters wielding signs declaring: Keep the government's hands off my Medicare.

It's why Attorney General Scott Pruitt gets away with squandering precious state tax dollars filing specious lawsuit after specious lawsuit against the federal government – most losers in court, but winners with the voters.

It's why Gov. Mary Fallin and legislative leaders get away with shunning Medicaid expansion because it's – *gasp!* – ObamaCare, when what they're really ensuring is that federal taxes paid by Oklahomans are spent on the working poor in other states.

When will enough rank-and-file Oklahomans awaken to the reality that sticking a metaphorical thumb in Uncle Sam's eye doesn't really help solve the state's

growing list of problems?

Actually, there are signs the anti-fed demagoguery may be waning.

In late June, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that Oklahoma City was among six U.S. cities selected to receive design assistance under the agency's Greening America's Communities program.

"Oklahoma City is one of EPA's premier partners in building healthy neighborhoods and strengthening local economies," said Regional Administrator Ron Curry. "By emphasizing sustainability in their efforts, Oklahoma City shows protecting the environment and helping communities thrive go hand-in-hand."

No doubt eyeballs are rolling among the anti-fed cabal. But the truth is, this is smart public policy – and good politics.

The EPA's technical expertise will help Oklahoma City reduce flooding in areas just north of downtown and enhance neighborhoods from Edgemere Park to the Paseo through beautification and improved streets and sidewalks.

It's quite a contrast: While Pruitt repeatedly challenges the EPA legally, Oklahoma City officials court the agency's help to improve the quality of life of its residents – an effort supported by Democratic state Rep. Jason Dunnington, whose legislative district includes the affected neighborhoods.

"It's the opposite of what our attorney general has done," Dunnington noted. "We're working with the EPA to do something positive for Oklahoma City" while Pruitt sues the EPA because "it's politically convenient to make it look like he opposed the big, bad federal government."

The Oklahoma City-EPA partnership is a small example of what could happen if state officials quit playing boogeyman politics and focus instead on good public policy.

It also might help reduce hypocrisy at NE 23rd and Lincoln Boulevard, where it's OK politically to accept federal funds in the aftermath of tornadoes or wildfires or ice storms, but not Medicaid to improve health outcomes for the least among us.



Theocrat-In-Chief

Bircher-Preacher-Candidate Blair Wants To Take State Where Sally Kern Couldn't

Anti-LGBT pastor and former OSU/NFL player Paul Blair – who once said that Communism, the “radical homosexual agenda,” and the “secularist movement” are all inspired by Satan – is running for state Senate in Oklahoma’s hotly contested District 41 [Edmond area].

Blair first ran in 2012, claiming that he was motivated to do so after allegedly receiving death threats for opposing the addition of sexual orientation to an Oklahoma City anti-discrimination ordinance. He lost in the primary that year.

This time around, he’s seeking the same Senate seat and claiming he’ll work to improve education and diversify Oklahoma’s economy. His website also states that he will “always stand on the side of the unborn” and “will always stand for the individual right to religious liberty,” and also “fight against federal regulators who want to get in the way of our domestic

public policies.”

What his campaign website doesn’t mention is his membership in the John Birch Society [JBS], a far-right conspiracy-mongering organization that has spent decades warning about the dangers of Communism, “big government,” multiculturalism, and secret global plots that will ultimately destroy freedom.

Blair has referenced Communism as a threat, comparing it in a 2011 broadcast from the anti-LGBT hate group Americans for Truth About Homosexuality [AF-TAH] to biblical evil.

“You look at some of the things going on in America and you would think we’ve moved into the Twilight Zone. But ultimately, all of these forces – the force of Communism, the force of the radical homosexual agenda, the secularist movement in America – they all have the same source, the same ultimate conspirator, and that is Satan.”

It's not that big a secret that Blair supports the JBS. While at The Awakening in March, a gathering sponsored by the anti-LGBT hate group Liberty Counsel, Blair handed out reprints of a 2015 interview he did with the New American magazine, JBS' primary publication.

In that interview, Blair lambasted the Supreme Court's decision to legalize marriage equality nationwide and said that states should be encouraged to ignore federal court decisions "that are outside the proper rule of law as defined in the Constitution." Furthermore, Blair said, "God grants rights, not government," and said of homosexuality that, "it is by definition an abnormal and perverse behavior."

Blair was also interviewed in the New American in 2009 – his JBS membership came up then, too – and claimed that American students have been "taught wrong" for years, and that "our schools teach atheism and call it science" and "Christian heritage" is being erased from history.

"We have abandoned human government to the devil," he said. "And now the devil is using human government to attack the home and the church through ungodly legislation like legalizing homosexual marriage and hate crimes."

Blair claimed at The Awakening that a group he founded, Reclaiming America for Christ, has 980 pastors and 20,000 supporters and is working with lawmakers to promote a nullification strategy. He said that people supporting state-led resistance are working through different channels in Kentucky, Alabama, Texas, and Tennessee.

Blair has vowed to "nullify" marriage equality in Oklahoma through Reclaiming America for Christ. Nullification is the belief that states have the right to disregard and disobey any federal law based on a spurious interpretation of the Tenth Amendment, which reserves to the states and people any power not explicitly given to the federal government.

Blair has also run into trouble over accusations that his group, originally known as Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ, endorsed political candidates in violation of federal restrictions on churches engaging in political endorsements.

In 2008, Blair stated in a sermon that he was voting for John McCain at a "Pulpit Freedom Sunday," an event started by the right-wing anti-LGBT legal group Alliance Defending Freedom to purposely defy federal restrictions on religious groups and churches offering political endorsements. In 2010, Blair appeared at a rally in support of virulently anti-LGBT legislator Sally Kern [who is term-limited and unable to seek re-election this year], which drew a complaint to the IRS from Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

The website for Blair's Reclaiming America for Christ includes the JBS's video "Overview of America" as part of its "Worldview Training," though the site doesn't specifically say it's a JBS product. The site also links to The New American in its "News"

section of the sidebar. It touts "Patriot pastors" and, under its "homosexuality" sidebar topic, links to First Stone Ministries, which supports harmful "ex-gay" therapy [the false belief that people can turn from gay to straight] and also AFTAH, whose director, Peter LaBarbera, has defended the criminalization of homosexuality and linked it to pedophilia.

The anti-Muslim hate groups ACT! for America, Center for Security Policy, Christian Action Network, and The United West are listed among the organizations linked to under "Islam" while under "Activism," several hate groups are linked to, including the anti-LGBT Faith2Action, Liberty Counsel, and Family Research Council as well as ACT! for America.

Blair has picked up endorsements from Republican Oklahoma U.S. Reps. Steve Russell and Jim Bridenstine; retired Lt. Gen. Jerry Boykin, the anti-Islam executive vice president of the Family Research Council; and Gun Owners of America, headed by Larry Pratt, a Christian Reconstructionist who advocated for armed citizen militias in the U.S. to model themselves on Central American death squads, known for torturing and killing civilians.

Blair faces an Aug. 23 primary runoff election against fellow Republican Adam Pugh, an Air Force veteran. The winner will face Democratic challenger, Edmond teacher Kevin McDonald, in November.

© Hatewatch/Southern Poverty Law Center

College Fair Set For Aug. 27 In OKC

Fifty colleges and universities from across the region are expected to participate in the 3rd annual Oklahoma County Black Elected Officials College Fair Aug. 27 at MetroTech's Business Conference Center, 1900 Springlake Drive, in OKC.

All OKC-area middle- and high-school students, grades 7-12, and their families are encouraged to attend the 9 a.m.-noon event, designed to show how college is attainable, affordable, and should be a part of students' career plans.

Along with colleges and universities from Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Arkansas and other states, MetroTech representatives will be available to speak with students about professional licensing and career paths.

Several breakout sessions are planned where experts will discuss various topics; those will include applying for scholarships and other financial aid, test-taking skills, how to apply for college, how students can attend college tuition-free with an Oklahoma's Promise scholarship, and "discovering your path."

For more information, call Rep. Mike Shelton's Capitol office at 405.557.7367.

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TRIBUTE



THE ODDS IN LIFE'S ARENA WHEN YOU'RE BORN POOR

Frozen Child Care Subsidy Thaws But Remains On Thin Ice

BY CARLY PUTNAM

In welcome news for working families, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services [DHS] announced recently it would lift the freeze on child care subsidy enrollment by Aug. 1.

In any given month, more than 30,000 Oklahoma kids get child care through the subsidy program. It's a crucial help for these children and working parents. It's good that the freeze has been thawed – but that a freeze was necessary highlights how Oklahoma's revenue gaps directly harm working families.

In May, following two mid-year budget cuts, the state's child care subsidy program ran out of money. In response, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services [DHS] froze enrollment in the program for most children effective June 1, just as schools were getting out for summer.

DHS made it clear that freezing the subsidy was not a decision it wanted to make, but substantial cuts

going into FY 2017 combined with the successive revenue failures left DHS without options.

A DHS spokesperson told reporters, "We're really concerned about the effects this will have. We just simply have no choice."

Even before the freeze, affordable child care had been getting less accessible for Oklahoma families. The number of children receiving the subsidy has declined by one-third over the past decade, in part because the program's eligibility levels haven't been adjusted since 2004.

The eligibility cutoff for a single mother with one child was \$2,426 per month in 2004 – and in 2016, it's still \$2,246 per month, despite three minimum wage increases and a decade of inflation.

Subsidized child care is a common-sense measure for a state that values strong families and work. When small children can attend quality child care, they are

more likely to be ready to learn and make the most of their education when they start school.

The subsidy also allows very low-income parents to work or go to school, helping them to rise out of poverty.

Access to affordable child care increases labor force participation, narrows the gender wage gap, and boosts family earnings over their working lives.

Freezing the subsidy jeopardized all of this – as one child care provider said, “It tells families you can either have children or have a job. Not both.”

The temporarily frozen subsidy is just one more entry in a long list of ways in which the Legislature’s failure to adequately fund crucial programs harms Oklahoma families.

It should be unthinkable that this critical work support could run out of money – but that’s exactly what happened. And the child care subsidy’s future is by no means guaranteed.

In a press release, DHS Director Ed Lake said that the program had been able to restart because the freeze allowed DHS to save enough funds to sustain the program through the end of the year – “barring any future or unforeseen reductions to DHS funding.”

In other words, another revenue failure could mean another freeze or worse, and that means another costly, last-minute scramble for families struggling to keep their kids safe while making ends meet.

Carly Putnam is a policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

Lexicon Tricks: Half Big Lies

BY JOSEPH H. CARTER SR.

The latest political trick phrase designed to sway, fool or half-lie to Oklahoma voters is “Right to Farm.” Cleverly and deceitfully invented, the slogan bridges truth about SQ 777 that joins other referendum questions that besmirch the Nov. 8 presidential election ballot.

In reality, in the plain words of former Attorney General Drew Edmondson, the SQ 777 constitutional amendment choice would grant a far-reaching license for agri-business operators to pollute streams and rivers and commit other atrocities.

Mainly it would shield ruthless agribusiness operators from civil penalties or paying for damages they cause.

Edmondson strongly advises: “Vote No!”

“Right to Farm,” while hugely deceptive, is the latest political slogan designed slightly shy of the infamous “Big Lie Technique.” Big lies repeatedly chanted were most famously employed by Adolph Hitler to launch a world war that devastated Germany and killed thousands. That included people who believed Hitler’s lies and elected the fascist.

Likewise, if Oklahoma voters approve SQ 777, they can expect that they and their grandchildren will reap the wrath of agribusiness’s untethered operations with immunity. If you vote for the “Right to Farm” expect Guymon’s pig farm stench rolling statewide.

Be assured, SQ 777 has little to do with the right to farm or to properly produce quality food.

“Right to Work” was another tricky slogan. Used to cloak another truth, it was championed by ex-Gov. Frank Keating. In reality, the law outlawed unions that covered everyone in a shop under a union contract voted into force by a majority vote of the affected workers. RTW ended “union shops.” Still legal are open shops, where all workers get union benefits but paying dues is a choice.

Effectively, “Right to Work” denied effective collective bargaining for fair pay for thousands of hourly

workers in Oklahoma. Despite enactment of “Right to Work” laws, the most powerful “closed shop” labor union – the American Medical Association – thrives and health care costs soar. Why?

“Right to Life” is another trick slogan. It is the anti-abortionists’ jaded term to rouse hatred toward women who desire personal freedom to control their bodies and lives concerning unwanted pregnancies. Abortions are a major issue in 2016 campaigns and RTL is chanted by a sector of voters who claim to otherwise defend individual liberty. We ask: where does freedom end?

“Death tax” is a misleading term employed and beloved by right-wingers who wish to protect the fortunes of rich folks. There are many ways to preserve wealth and transfer wealth to younger generations – try corporations, trusts and planned gifts to heirs. The “death tax” slogan misleads voters. It simply ends inheritance taxes that largely impact rich folks.

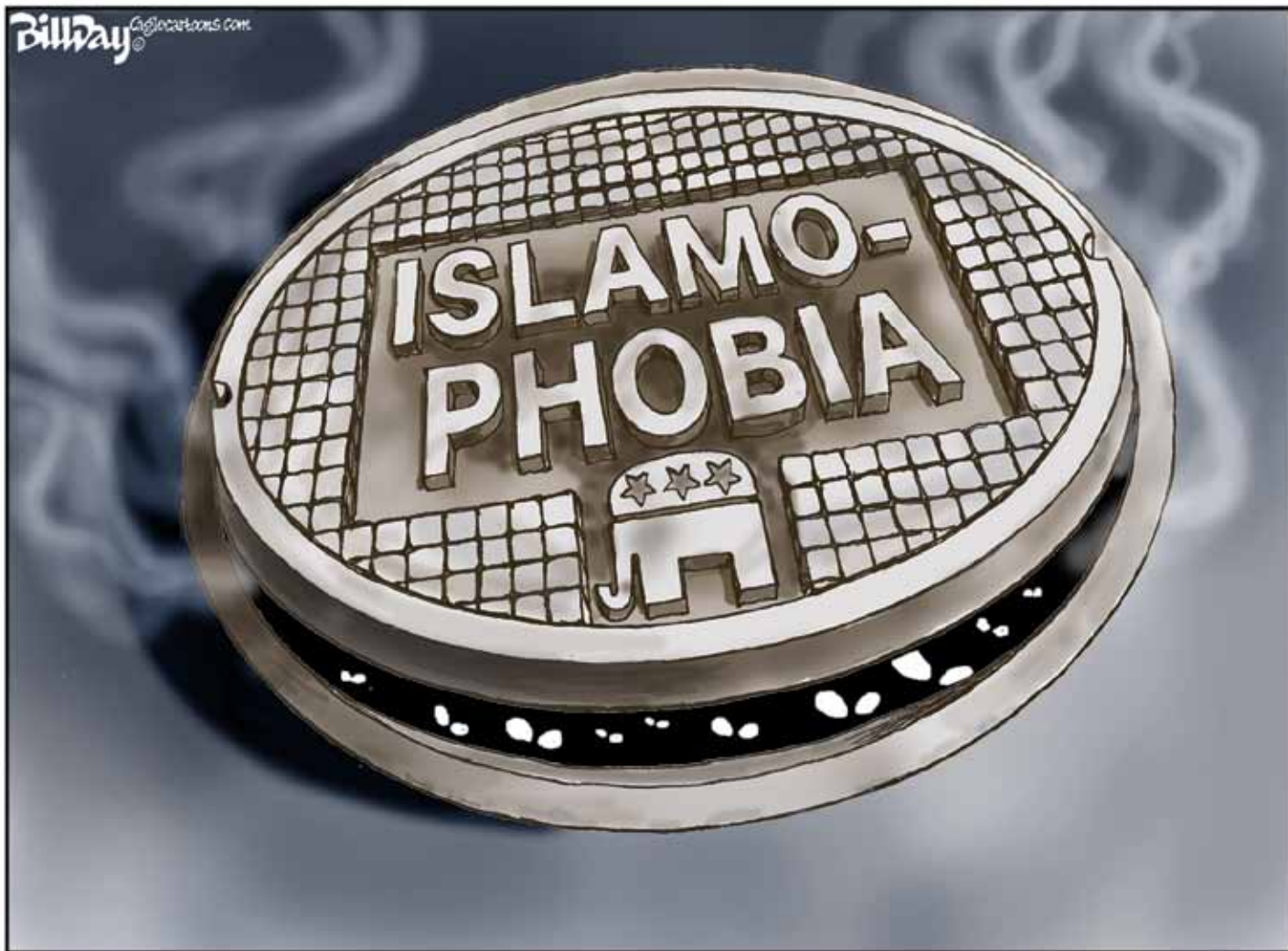
“Government schools” is a brand new use of wording to trick.

After demeaning basic democratic government to the point of creating anarchy, supporters believe the term “Government Schools” is an ugly political wedge justifying draconian cuts in funding of state colleges and public schools. That mission in Oklahoma is led by the Republican Oklahoma Legislature and GOP Gov. Mary Fallin.

In essence, these five examples of word pollution all have been Republican tools.

Democrats also are guilty of slogans: FDR’s “New Deal,” Truman’s “Fair Deal” and LBJ’s “Great Society.” Each, in contrast to the Republicans, were honest slogans and sparkling descriptions of what each of those administrations actually wrought.

Joseph H. Carter Sr. is author of Never Met A Man I Didn’t Like: The Life and Writings of Will Rogers [HarperCollins] and The Quotable Will Rogers [Gibbs Smith Publishers].



Speaker Gives Bennett Platform To Spew Hate

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

Thanks to outgoing House Speaker Jeff Hickman, Oklahoma yet again is poised for national embarrassment this fall.

In case you missed it, Hickman recently authorized state Rep. John Bennett's between-sessions study into whether "radical Islam" is a problem in the state.

Think about it: Oklahoma is mired in perhaps its worst fiscal crisis ever, yet precious tax dollars will be squandered on a witch-hunt that affords a bigoted lawmaker a platform to spew anti-Muslim hate.

That should burnish the speaker's legacy, eh?

It's bad enough eastern Oklahoma voters gave Bennett an elected title. It's even worse that the adults in the room at NE 23rd and Lincoln Boulevard. failed to protect the state's reputation against the ranting of a

radical fringer.

When Bennett filed his interim study request June 8, it was so alternate-universe that it didn't seem possible Hickman would give it serious consideration. It was a synopsis of Bennett's list of grievances against his favorite target – "radical Islam" and "Shariah Law," "Muslim Brotherhood" and "jihadist indoctrination." He also cited the September 2014 beheading of a Moore woman as reason for a "growing concern about the safety of Oklahoma citizens."

"It is time," the Sallisaw Republican asserted, "for our leaders to understand radical Islam and how American citizens are being radicalized here in Oklahoma as well as the rest of America."

Bennett's paranoia caught the attention of clear-eyed, 21st Century thinkers who quickly dispatched

History In The Making

BY LINDA JAMES

As at previous conventions, excitement filled the air at the Wells Fargo Convention Center as Democrats from across the nation came together for a momentous event: the 2016 Democratic National Convention. But this convention was different as the first woman would be nominated president of the United States. Opening remarks by Donna Brazile, interim DNC chair, marked the beginning of four days of historical, optimistic and inspiring speeches.

Delegates listened to First Lady Michelle Obama, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Sen. Elizabeth Warren [originally from Oklahoma City], Sen. Al Franken, former President

Bill Clinton, Vice President Joe Biden, President Barack Obama, and, the last night, Chelsea Clinton introduced her mother, the Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

Each day of the convention started at the Cherokee Nation tent, where lunch was provided by the Chickasaw Nation. All four days delegates and guests were treated to speeches from notable Democrats from across the nation.

Cherokee Chief Bill John Baker spoke about what Hillary and Bill Clinton had done for Indians throughout the years. "We need a president who knows about sovereignty. The Cherokee Nation has helped change the lives of the people in Oklahoma."

The next speaker was Fred Harris, former Oklahoma senator, former DNC chair and former candidate for president. Harris spoke about our "need to live up to the name Democrat, and that we need to spread the news that people we trust, trust Hillary Clinton. She wants to raise the minimum wage; re-structure taxation; supports education and health care of early childhood; improve the infrastructure, and promote alternative energy. Hillary has a special skill: negotiation. We have to work together, to negotiate, to get anything done."

Tuesday, the day of voting for the presidential nominee, again began at the tent.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

a letter to Hickman, urging he deny the request.

Among the opponents – who recognized the potential for such a "hearing" to be used to demonize "others" and embarrass the state – were the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, the Interfaith Alliance Foundation of Oklahoma, the Jewish Federation of Tulsa and the Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice.

The study "concerns issues that are already being studied under the jurisdiction of the federal government," the letter said. It also made the case that "focusing on possible radicalization within only one group may be counterproductive and encourage the very radicalization intended to prevent."

The letter fell on deaf ears. Hickman approved the study. Now Bennett gets his moment to invite so-called experts to spout their xenophobia and religious bigotry at a Capitol hearing that undoubtedly will attract widespread media coverage.

There can be no viable reason to give an outlier like Bennett such a platform.

Hickman is term-limited, so his speakership ends later this year. He no longer needs to mollify the noisiest elements of an increasingly fractured GOP caucus. No reason to risk a black eye for the state.

There could be political logic, however, behind

Hickman's decision.

Bennett is in a tough re-election fight against a well-known, highly-regarded, well-funded Sallisaw Democrat, Tom Stites, whose father J.T. Stites II previously held the seat.

Bennett has done something that few back-benchers manage to do – he's united factions on both sides of the political aisle against him. When the State Chamber and GOP leadership are on the same page as organized labor and mainstream Protestants, it's a sign you've made far more enemies than friends.

So, did anti-Bennett Republican forces view the interim study as an opportunity for Bennett to embarrass himself and damage his re-election chances? Perhaps. But this hardly seems a winning strategy.

First, you can bet many uber-conservative fundamentalist preachers in HD 2 spread the same view on "radical Islam" as Bennett – meaning many of the district's voters might not be turned off by such a hearing.

Second, the State Chamber and GOP elite haven't proved successful at knocking off outliers in recent elections. See, Sen. Josh Brecheen, R-Coalgate, as a prime example.

Bottom line: we're stuck paying for an anti-Islam, wingnut extravaganza sometime this fall.



Confront The 'Parasite Economy' By Raising The Minimum Wage

BY DAVID BLATT

Every quarter, the ADP Research Institute releases its Workforce Vitality Index, a measure of private sector job and wage growth. For the past two quarters, Washington state has led the nation in growing jobs and boosting wages, far outpacing the national average and such states as Texas, Florida, and California.

Why does this matter? Because Washington state has one of the highest minimum wages in the nation at \$9.47 an hour.

And since April 2015, the city of Seattle has been moving towards a \$15 minimum wage, with the current minimum ranging from \$10.50 to \$13 depending on employer size.

As the Workforce Vitality Index shows, businesses in Seattle and Washington state are thriving and generating more employment. Seattle's restaurant industry – which fought the wage laws fiercely – is continuing to add jobs.

The simple explanation is laid out by Nick Hanau-

er, a successful entrepreneur and venture capitalist from Washington state, in an insightful article in The American Prospect magazine titled "Confronting the Parasite Economy."

Hanauer argues that paying workers decent wages is good for business and good for the economy. He writes, "When workers have more money, businesses have more customers. And when businesses have more customers, they create more jobs."

To take the restaurant industry as an example, higher wages lead to more disposable income that workers and their families can spend on eating out in restaurants.

Some prominent companies, such as Costco, Nordstrom, and QuikTrip, have voluntarily opted to pay their employees higher wages and offer full benefits. They've been rewarded by higher employee productivity and reduced turnover while remaining profitable.

Yet in highly competitive sectors with low profit margins, many businesses calculate that they cannot voluntarily pay their workers a living wage.

The result is a race to the bottom in what Hanauer dubs "the parasite economy" – where businesses cut costs by paying poverty-level wages, subsidized by billions in taxpayer-funded assistance to keep the working poor afloat.

Escaping this race to the bottom requires leveling the playing field upwards, so that businesses are not penalized for paying a living wage. Decent wages, along with basic benefits and greater scheduling certainty, would mean that all jobs are good jobs – jobs that provide security and opportunity for everyone willing to work hard, without reliance on public benefits or private charity.

Thirty states now have minimum wages above the federal minimum of

\$7.25 an hour. In 2014, initiative petitions to raise the minimum wage passed decisively in the conservative strongholds of Arkansas, Nebraska, Alaska, and South Dakota.

Unfortunately, the minimum wage is stuck below subsistence levels in Oklahoma. Our \$7.25 an hour minimum wage hasn't been raised in seven years and has lost 30% in inflation-adjusted value since 1979.

Thirty percent of jobs in Oklahoma are in occupations where the median pay is below the poverty level for a family of four.

Rather than support even a modest increase in the minimum wage, Oklahoma lawmakers instead opted to block cities from even considering adopting a higher minimum wage.

Raising the minimum wage would be a win for the Oklahomans who work hard preparing our food, cleaning our offices, and caring for our loved ones.

Just as importantly, by putting more money in the pockets of the customers who shop in our stores, travel our roads, and eat in our restaurants, it would be a win for all of us.

David Blatt is executive director of Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.



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Diary

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Minnesota Sen. Franken, an advocate for Indian affairs, commented that "more Indians have volunteered for the military than any other minority in the country. Everyone needs to get behind Hillary because Donald Trump is so insulting to individual groups."

Although still a strong supporter of Sanders, Stillwater Democrat Jacob Waugh commented that "Bernie support-

ers must now support Hillary now that she is the nominee. We need a Democrat in the White House."

Park Hill, OK delegate, Zachary Rogers' impression of the convention was that it was "awesome." Concerning the Bernie vs. Hillary campaigns, Rogers stated, "We are a progressive party, and we will work through it. If you have any reason to complain, you are the only one who can change that. Everyone will need to be engaged. Find something in Hillary Clinton you are passionate about and

then do your part to make a difference. You won't be sorry you did, but you will regret not being engaged."

Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico spoke about the STOP ACT – a bi-partisan act whose purpose is to stop the theft of native artifacts, which are illegal to steal or export overseas:

"We have struggled century after century. Our country can move forward for Indian sovereignty. Together we are stronger."

Former U.S. Rep. Dan Boren brought greetings from Gov.

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Bill Anaotubby of the Chickasaw Nation.

Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii – the first Hawaiian-Asian-Japanese member of the U.S. Senate – recognized the codetalkers and their help in ending discrimination against native languages. She thanked Americans for supporting the indigenous groups in Hawaii, Alaska and across the nation.

She commented, “We need a president who will listen because one person can make a difference.”

Mike McElderry of Purcell commented that he liked hearing the stories the speakers told inside the convention hall about the many things Hillary has done throughout her life to help people.

Tim Mauldin, a delegate from Norman, noted, “The best part of this year’s convention is voting for Hillary and signing the nomination petition for Hillary.”

Due to security, the hardest part for convention attendees involved the logistics of transportation.

This was a most inspirational convention. From the 80-year-old woman from Florida who had attended past



From left, Arturo Delgado, Kenneth Corn, Debbie Hogue Downing and former state Democratic Party Executive Director Trav Robertson

conventions to the young man from South Africa who had just become a U.S. citizen 2½ weeks before the convention, everyone seemed aware they were a part of history in the making.

“I am very excited because the first woman is being nominated as president,” said delegate Debbie Hogue Downing. “As a woman, I am proud and honored to be a part of this historical event.”

Philadelphia, where so many

historical events have occurred, was the perfect place to hold the 2016 Democratic National Convention. From the First Continental Congress to the Declaration of Independence to the nomination of the first woman for president, Philadelphia could be considered the home of the future of America.

Linda James owns an OKC-based printing company that serves “Democrats, unions and friends.”

Remembering Sen. E. Melvin Porter

BY FANNIE PASCHALL BATES

I met E. Melvin Porter in 1972 when we were both campaigning for Clara Luper for the U.S. Congress. He quickly saw how naive I was.

By the end of that first road trip to Tulsa with Clara and Marilyn Luper, our relationship was firmly established as big brother and little sister. In the summer of 1975, I did an internship in his law office on NE 23rd Street in Oklahoma City.

One Friday afternoon at 3 p.m., a judge called the office and asked for E. Melvin Porter.

“Sen. Porter is gone fishing and there is no way to reach him, Your Honor,” I replied. [I have been taught in law school to never lie to a judge.]

“Well, he is supposed to be in my courtroom,” the judge replied.

The next week, Sen. Porter received a Contempt of

Court Citation from that judge and had to pay a \$300 fine.

Here is the cool part: Sen. Porter never mentioned it to me. A lesser man would have fired me or at least chewed me out.

I figure he thought that the story was worth more than \$300. It was something to add to the long list of stories with which he loved to regale a wide variety of audiences.

W.B. Parker used to say that the senator reminded him of David in the Bible. You know, the one who killed Goliath. I’ll let you figure that one out for yourself.

RIP, E. Melvin Porter, a trailblazer and my old friend. *Sen. Porter, Oklahoma’s first black senator, died July 26 at 86. Fannie Bates lives in Fort Worth.*

Renewables Set To Eclipse Coal, Nuclear

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

The annual energy outlook report issued by the Energy Information Administration [EIA] is about the fast emerging renewable energy.

Renewables are about to pull ahead of dirtier energy in usage: wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and hydropower are in the EIA list of renewables; coal and oil and gas are fossil fuels. By 2020 they will surpass nuclear and by 2028, coal. Renewables thus become the second largest source of U.S. electricity generation after natural gas.

Fast growth of renewables is somewhat astonishing, considering the relatively low gas price. [This article is largely based on Steve Clemmer's article online at Ecowatch.]

What's driving this incredible pace of the utilization of renewables as electricity generation source? Last year Congress passed a five-year extension of the federal production and investment tax credits for both wind and solar and EPA proposed the Clean Power Plan [CPP]. Note, however, that the U.S. Supreme Court has put a hold on implementing CPP. But the tax credits and the CPP together are already stimulating a heretofore unheard of growth pace for the major renewables.

In addition, state renewable electricity standards [RES] and continued cost reductions for wind and solar costs continue driving growth in renewables through 2021, according to EIA. Actually projected is a slight decline in natural gas generation because wind and solar are more cost-effective with the tax credits.

When CPP targets kick in by 2022, both renewables and natural gas will be the two most cost-effective sources, accompanied by a modest increase in energy efficiency. States will then begin replacing coal and comply with the CPP. By the way, an analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists agrees with the EIA assessment.

With both wind and solar leading the growth in renewables in U.S. electricity generation, renewables share will jump from 13% to 24% in 2030 and 27% in 2040 with most of the growth coming from the two leaders.

Energy investors, have you known of this projection?

Specifically, driving the growth trend in both wind and solar is the continuation of cost reductions,

which have been 60%-70% since 2009. With the continued combination of federal tax credits and CPP requirements, the EIA sees U.S. wind capacity nearly doubling by 2022, reaching 144 gigawatts, while U.S. solar capacity continues its incredible growth rate increasing fivefold to 125GW by 2030.

Although geothermal will increase significantly in California and the Southwest, it will remain small nationwide. There's very little growth in hydro or biomass during this time frame. It appears that U.S. energy growth in the near term will primarily be from wind and solar energy, with the latter providing much more than the former.

RENEWABLES CONTINUE REMARKABLE GROWTH

Significantly, renewable energy sources are well on their way to dominating the field of energy growth. The EIA projections are for growth of 13% to 24% to 27% of renewables [wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and hydropower] share of the American electricity generations till 2040. Almost all the growth will come from the two sources of wind and solar with most of it being solar.

Conceivable is faster growth of solar power than this estimate. In the works are many projects. One of the most exciting is the potential for solar panel highways. In 2014 Scott and Julie Brusaw started Solar Roadways in Idaho. They plan to test their concept on historic Route 66 with the nation's first solar roadway at a welcome center in Conway, MO.

The Missouri Department of Transportation [MoDot] will first display a 12- by 20-foot patch of solar panels on a sidewalk leading to the main entrance. According to Laurel McKean, assistant district engineer, the test strip will be the first phase. In the near future a second phase might be tested in the parking lot and then perhaps on a travel area of road.

The solar panels will generate electric power for the center, as well as prevent snow and ice accumulation. "What's so appealing from the revenue side ... if we don't have to treat roads or sidewalks anymore, that's less material, less chloride, less things that go into the environment and also the aspect of getting energy," McKean says. And not to be forgotten is high labor cost.

According to EIA, the biggest increases in renewables will occur in the West and Plains states as they have abundant supply of low cost wind, solar

and geothermal. The Southeast also will see a big increase in solar as costs continue their fall. The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic areas will see a smaller increase in renewables and a bigger increase in natural gas.

Interesting is the EIA observation of a modest increase in nuclear generation in the Southeast due to five new reactors currently under construction or operating in Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee. It should also be noted that the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California will be replaced by renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Using this EIA analysis suggests some good news for our future. The world is not facing an energy resources shortage. Taking into consideration the effects of global warming/climate change, there is plenty of renewable energy, sufficient to keep fossil fuels in the ground, Mother Nature's very own wind and solar exist for us to use, if we do it properly and judiciously.

It's reasonable to assume that our energy future is bright and should not cost more than we can afford. Even more important, people can begin to implement more measures to reduce the egregious effects of climate change and to safeguard future generations for some time to come. Indeed EIA's projections should inspire us to take the measures necessary for such a future.

Bob D. Rounsavell lives in Oologah and is president of the Carrie Dickerson Foundation. His wife, Maria S. Rounsavell, serves as his editor.

My Leaf Year

BY HAL SPAKE

A year ago my wife and I bought a 100% electric car – a Nissan Leaf – the world's most popular electric car. It had been a lease car, had less than 8,000 miles on it, and, thanks to my wife's bargaining skills, we got it for under \$10,000.

It has an 86-mile range on a single charge according to the manufacturer, but I frequently go over 100 miles. Only once has the remaining charge indicator dropped below 20 miles.

Experts assure us that an all-electric car reduces one's carbon footprint, even if your electricity is produced with coal. As more electricity is produced with solar and wind power, electric cars become even cleaner.

It is an exceptional car for commuting, and maintenance is a snap: It uses no gasoline, oil, fan belts or engine coolant. The only real maintenance is keeping the tires inflated and occasionally changing the cabin

filter.

The big advantage is the low cost of fuel. Charging the battery with typical home electricity [110-volts] takes about 18 hours. Electricity in Oklahoma averages 9.5 cents per kilowatt hour. At that rate, a full charge costs \$2.28. Off-peak hour electricity costs only five cents per kilowatt hour, so a full charge in off-peak hours costs \$1.20. That means the "fuel cost" for 86 miles of driving \$1.20 to \$2.28. Not bad. [Charging with 220-volt electricity takes only six to seven hours.]

This past year I put 6,000 miles on my Leaf. That means it has been fully charged roughly 66 times. At the 9.5-cents/kilowatt-hour rate, my fuel cost would be \$160.50 for 6,000 miles driving. Using the off-peak hour rate of five cents/kilowatt-hour brings the cost down to \$79 – roughly the cost of two oil changes for those driving gasoline-powered cars.

Driving a total electric car has some drawbacks. There is the limited driving range. In the winter, using the cabin heater can dramatically shorten the driving range, but the car does have a heated steering wheel and heated seats that don't consume much electricity, and which readily compensate for a chilly cabin. Driving with a "lead foot" also shortens the range. The air conditioner does not seem to have much impact on the car's range. Unlike other small cars, whose engines struggle at stop lights, the A/C doesn't strain the car's motor.

When merging onto highway traffic, the Leaf has more than enough acceleration to pin you to the seat. It has plenty of legroom, a stylish interior, and lots of gauges for the inner geek. My early morning drives are wonderfully quiet and tranquil – no engine noise.

After a year of driving, I say it's a great car, great fun, and economical. The added bonus is that its environmental footprint is half that of a car with an internal combustion engine and would be even lower if solar panels were used for the charge.

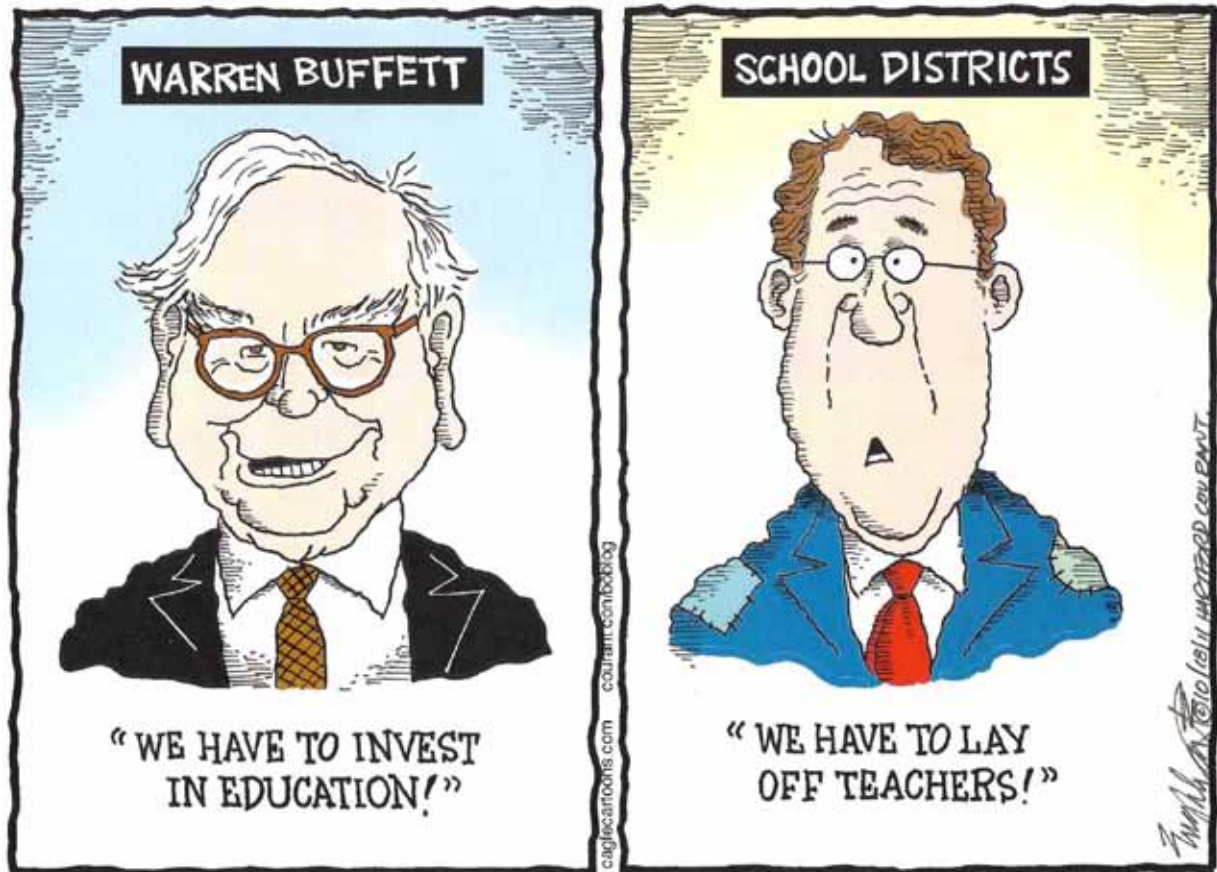
Norman resident Hal Spake is chairman of Common Cause Oklahoma, a retired U.S. diplomat and a former National Security Agency employee.

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Inside A Teacher's World

BY ASHLEY FESLER

Life in this hallway is killing me. How is it that I can be this far in, with 11 years of service, a business degree earned with honors, a master's degree in education for which I earned a 4.0 and graduated with top honors, still be earning just over \$36,000 a year, and not respected as the professional I am?

We talk about the students' rights and the parents' rights – oh, we love to talk about the right to a free public education – but the real truth is that *nothing* is free. We teachers know that better than anyone in this fallen world.

This didn't start with budget cuts, although I can and will eventually address that as well. The fall of education began when we started messing with a system that wasn't really broken.

Someone, somewhere thought it would be a great idea to make some changes so they could make some money, and that they did. We are creating standards and tests for accountability only to change them as often as possible realizing that we are accomplishing

nothing. We pay out the rear to get this done but then never have a consistent standard by which to truly gauge understanding of content; therefore, money is just being wasted, students and teachers frustrated, and the general population is full of complaints about the fall of the public school system despite the fact that they have no real understanding of why things are out of control.

They blame the schools. They blame the teachers. They jump on the nearest bandwagon about how much public education has gone down the tubes, all the while demanding that their child have access to that very free public education they complain about.

To make matters worse, they do nothing to try and help make things better for the students or teachers. Teachers are expected to do as much as possible for each individual student while each year receiving fewer and fewer resources to actually accommodate such requests. That is where the budget cuts come into play.

Wake up people! There is not enough money to

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provide that for which you are looking. It's time our state leaders swallow their pride and take notes from a state that knows how to manage money and how to take care of their children and teachers. It's called mentoring, and any teacher not doing well at their job would be expected to learn from one who does or else be fired. Why should it be any different for our state leaders?

Why is it that schools/teachers must be held accountable to ensure that their job is done effectively, but there is no grading system in place for state leaders? If there were such a system, they would be receiving an F, and we all know it!

They are ruining education for your children. They refuse to pay teachers a reasonable salary and continue cutting per pupil spending, all the while expecting more productivity, quality, and success amongst the student body.

Most lawmakers never step foot in a classroom. They have no idea what we face, yet they think they can understand because they were once students in a classroom. Wrong again! Times have changed.

Let's take a walk. As teachers, we give our own money to provide items for our classrooms, we spend countless extra hours working on school-related tasks to ensure that your child is taken care of and receiving the best we have to offer. In addition to spending our own time and money, we rely on our own families to volunteer their time and money as well.

I am so sick of hearing people say that we get off early, have summers off, chose this profession – blah, blah, blah. It is nonsense. When I chose this profession, I did so because I felt called to be a teacher. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people.

I went in knowing that I would go above and beyond to help my students experience success. I went in knowing I would most definitely at some point be called to give up some personal time and even perhaps provide some supplies.

I didn't, however, sign up to be disrespected, lied to, stressed out, and underpaid to the point of struggling to pay my own bills. I didn't sign up to babysit children whose parents have taught them absolutely no respect for authority. I didn't sign up for giving in to student behavior simply because they get away with that nonsense at home. I didn't sign up to constantly have to defend myself to parents due to their precious child being held accountable for poor choices.

It has gotten beyond ridiculous! Do we as a society truly want a solid public school system that offers opportunity for students to receive an education, all the while providing them with a safe environment and teaching them life skills that will enable them to be productive members of society? I

can tell you, as a teacher, it appears not.

I know, I know ... many of you will say a *definite* yes, that is what we want, but be careful what you say and think.

Let me first explain what that would mean: It would mean that we start at home teaching kids to be respectful to other children as well as to respect authority. Oops, I just said authority. I already lost some people because that is an awful word in today's society. No one really wants to have an authority figure over them. Whether you like hearing it or not, it is a reality, and once realized, people are better off. Just to be clear, authority does not mean that someone is better than you or that they should be mean to you, etc. It is simply life. Someone is going to be in charge, and it will not always be you or me.

In life, there are rules, and we must be respectful and follow those rules to truly enjoy all that life has to offer.

OK, now that we have that squared away, let me move on to consequences. It is a *must* for children to understand that choices have consequences. Why is this a problem these days?

You are *not* a bad parent for allowing your child to suffer the consequences of his or her actions. In fact, if you are not teaching them this reality, you are setting them up to fail, and the real life "adult" consequences they will face in the future will be much harsher than any "childhood" consequence you could allow them to suffer now. At least they have you there to pick them up when they fall, but fall they must if they are to learn about this thing we call life.

This brings me back to the classroom. I am the teacher, it is my classroom, and I am trying to create an environment where everyone feels respected and accepted. That being said, there will be consequences for actions in my classroom. I will hold your child accountable for his/her actions, and I will then find myself justifying my actions to you when you call upset because your child is sad for being held responsible.

If they don't do the work, they may receive a zero. If I don't do my job, I don't get paid. Period. If they don't complete their work by the due date, they may receive partial credit resulting in a lower than average grade overall. If I don't complete my work/reports by the due date, I will be written up, reprimanded, or fired. Period.

If they mouth off, talk back, or behave disrespectfully, this could result in detention, being sent to the office, ISD, etc. For the record, as a kid, I would have had my butt whipped and that would have been after getting swats at school. My, how times have changed. As an adult, defiant disrespect could result in me not having a job. Period.

If your child gets into a fight, destroys school property, etc., they could be suspended. I would be sent to jail and facing charges. Period. This is life, folks!

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I do my best as a teacher to help build your child up, set high expectations for them, and then give them the tools they need to reach those goals. But I am just their teacher. I also hold them accountable, do not accept their pitiful excuses, and require more from them than most have ever before been asked.

Is it because I am a bully? No. Is it because I am mean and simply enjoy making them miserable? No. Is it because I am on a power trip? No.

Could it simply be because I care about kids? Could it be because I want your child to know that they can reach for the stars and achieve goals if they will simply set them and work hard? Is it because I see great potential in your child and know that with that little extra push, they can do great things?

I am not a teacher for the money. I am not a teacher for the benefits and summers off. I am not a teacher simply to earn respect as a professional; sadly, that is not awarded us in this profession much anymore.

I am a teacher because God called me here. He called me to touch the lives of these youngsters. He called me to be a warrior for him in these days when so many children are suffering. I will do my part to live as He has called me for as long as He calls me, but I tell you I feel that life in this hallway is killing me.

I am not sure how long I will have the strength to continue in this profession. I question if I am still being called or if I have done all I can here. I'm still seeking God's will in that.

The days of teaching content, loving on kids, and then going home are over. School is not the same. Children are not the same. Is the school responsible for this change? Are the teachers responsible for the change? How about parents? Lawmakers? Think about this before you choose your final answer.

A teacher's job is a tough one. We are not only expected to create our lesson plans and teach our classes. We also must ensure that every child gets his/her needs met at their level. We do this in large class sizes with a mix of regular and special education students. We modify and make accommodations and have a whopping 55 minutes per class period with these kids.

We don't just grade papers and record data. We test and collect data, go back to the drawing board, create additional instructional tools, remediate based on collected data, attend more meetings than one can imagine [and during our planning period or after school which is typically when we are off the clock, I might add], and spend a great deal of time tracking down students who need to come complete work because they are failing and will *not* do their work at home.

We contact parents on a regular basis [again, off the clock many times], only to find that we will still be the ones responsible for ensuring that the child

is caught up because we often get no support from home. This means that we will make arrangements on our planning period or before and after school to provide additional one-on-one time with that child.

This is just a small fraction of what the education side of teaching entails in relation to content. There is a whole other side that many fail to realize when assuming they know what goes on at school or what responsibilities fall on a teacher's shoulders.

I am a mom and that factors in when considering what I do as a teacher. I love my students. I have spent countless hours counseling a heartbroken child who simply needed someone to be there for them. I have sat on the floor during lunch to listen to a young child suffering abuse at home and worried about what was to come with DHS involved. And I have witnessed more than one child bang their head against walls and done my best to talk them down from self-destructive behavior.

I have purchased clothing, provided and cooked breakfast, given money for lunch, and even opened my home to a student for two years. This required going through parenting classes and my entire family making sacrifices so that we could be a foster placement for this child.

I have been a safe home through DHS for another one of my students due to a difficult situation at home, provided a place to spend the holidays, and even brought them along on vacations when they had nowhere else to turn. I have had students with life experiences that no adult should have to go through, and I have cried with them and for them. I will not get into the particulars for privacy reasons, but suffice it to say that the details are haunting.

We have students whose parents introduce them to drugs, students whose parents are in prison, students whose parents are strung out, and students who are neglected to say the very least. We have students come to school hungry, dirty, and completely exhausted and barely able to stay awake.

Yet, despite all of these things, I am to educate them. My responsibility as a teacher is to provide that free public education I mentioned earlier. I am to make sure that each child is educated equally, that they can pass a state test regardless of the ever changing standards or what the child is dealing with outside of school, that they have a safe environment in which to learn [but remember, I should do this without using consequences for behavior; that would be mean], and that I do all of this with limited resources, no money, large class sizes, and a plethora of learning levels and behaviors amongst each group.

I must be able to maintain classroom control but "get over" the occasional dropping of the "F bomb," one student flipping off another, or even the student who flat out tells me that, "My parents won't do any-

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thing, so just call home.”

I get called into the office and informed that parents have made false allegations about how I am treating their child only to later receive apologies from students who admit they made it all up because they were upset about something totally unrelated to me. Of course, it is nice to have the record set straight, but it doesn't change the stress I already endured while trying to defend myself or the heartache I felt when falsely accused. It is exhausting!

I am to create an atmosphere in which each student can achieve success but do so without holding the student accountable for their own choices. Unbelievable, yet true!

Oh, it is not my district or my administration. They are supportive of us. This is a much deeper societal issue. We have people in positions at the state level who are making rules about testing and accountability who themselves have never been held accountable, let alone been in the actual classroom and worked in the trenches alongside teachers.

Perhaps this is why they have no problem holding me accountable for a student's test score when that child chose to take less than 30 minutes on a 2½ hour test. That would be like holding an employee responsible for the lack of productivity or success of a coworker in the next cubicle. Even a manager in that position would have the liberty of firing an employee holding him back.

Not teachers! We teach *all* students and *all* must be successful, according to standards put in place by state leaders who have never even taught in a classroom and who do not even know the first thing about the child upon whom they are basing our success or failure.

We also have parents who want to call the shots “because that is their kid” but do nothing at home to actually help their child. Instead, they just hold them back from reaching their full potential. Then we have the parents who really do want their child to succeed but not by accomplishing things on their own. We live in a world where parents want to reach the goals for their child rather than helping their child attain something for themselves. It is heartbreaking!

How can you do all the work and then give the child the ribbon? How can you do their homework and then reward them for the grade? Seriously?

I love my children. I love them enough to let them try. I love them enough to inspire them to work hard. I love them enough to show them that to try and fail is better than never having tried at all. I love them enough to hold them accountable for their choices and catch them when they fall. I love them enough to raise them in a way that allows them to grow up to be responsible, successful adults. I love them with everything in me. That is the motivation for what I do.

I also care about my students and their future. That

is why I chose this profession, but I feel like life in this hallway is killing me. I am beyond stressed and exhausted. I am overwhelmed by the daily tasks assigned to me and the ever changing requirements for state testing, accountability, etc.

I am concerned for the future of education, the budget cuts, and what this is going to do to children all across Oklahoma. I know there are parents out there who adore their children and want the best for them. I know this, I do. But I feel that many of you do not realize that while we are trying to love on your child and provide them the best education possible, we are dealing with all of the above-mentioned things that you may or may not be aware of.

If you are supportive of teachers and our profession as a whole, *thank you*. Your support is crucial, and I appreciate all the parents who entrust their children to me and know that I am doing what is best for their child.

There is so much I could not mention in this letter. So many more tedious tasks put on teachers in the midst of the daily struggle just to survive another day.

I am thankful for the student who returns to me years after having my class to tell me the impact I made on their life. I am thankful for the hugs and the occasional note stating that a student thinks I'm great. I am just not sure it is enough to balance things out anymore.

Is it enough to compensate for the health problems? Is it enough to make up for the anxiety attacks while trying to wind down after a long day? Is it enough to get through those nights when I lie awake worrying about a certain student or about what will happen next? I just don't know.

Sometimes, I feel like this hallway is killing me. Yet, I will stay in the trenches for as long as I can because I care. I respect this profession; I am proud of it. I just wish the rest of the world understood what it means to be a teacher and would get behind us instead of standing in the way!

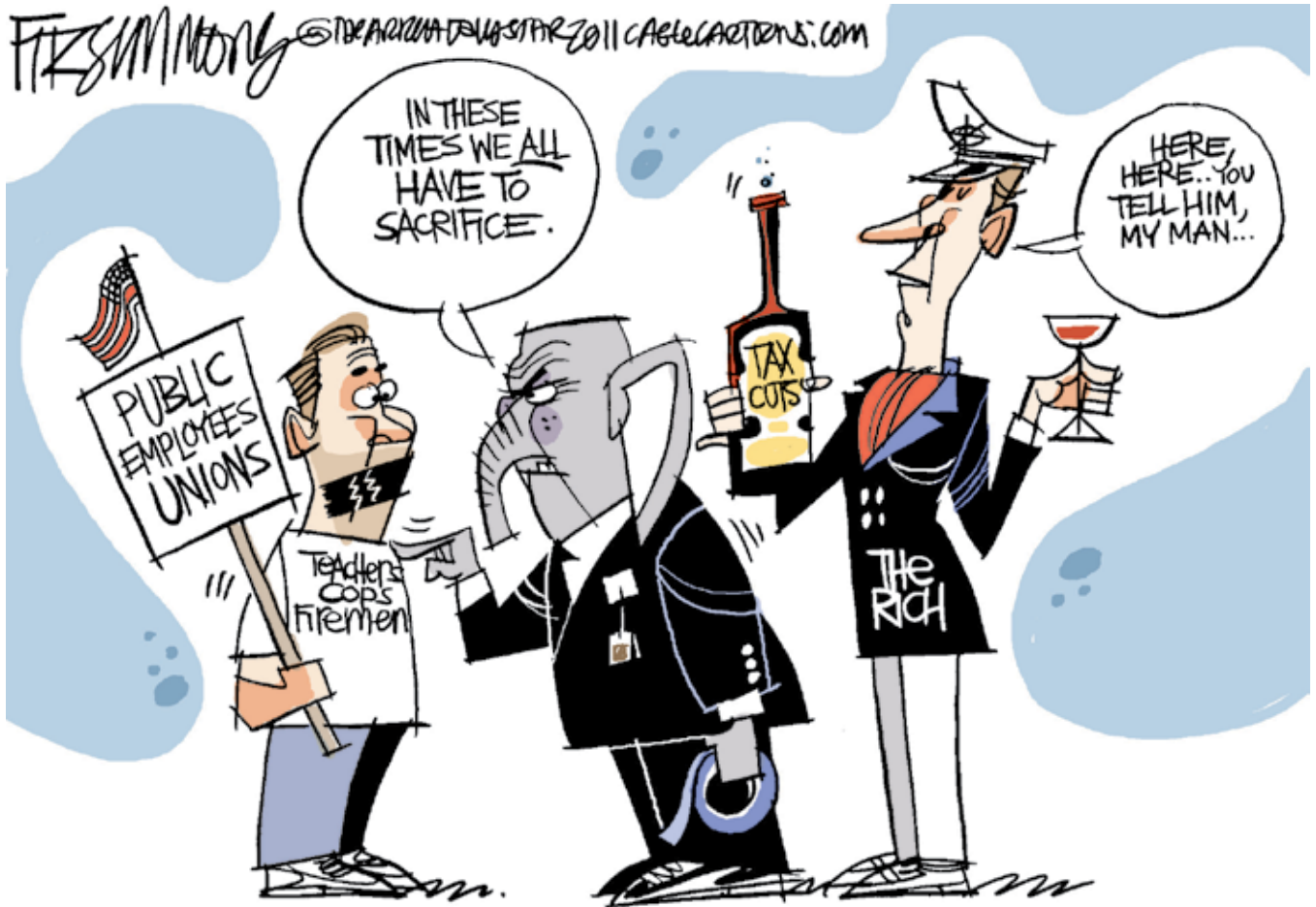
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Unfinished Business

BY CLAUDIA SWISHER

The beginning of a school year is time to reflect on the previous year and to move forward into the new one. Even though I'm retired, I still answer that school bell when stores display their "Back to School" specials.

So, weeks before the run-off elections, months before the general election, and nearly half a year before the new legislative session begins, I'm thinking back on our work last session, the surge of pro-education candidates who are running for office, and I am thinking about upcoming challenges.

All my legislative challenges for the 2016-17 school year, and the 2017 legislative session are old business ... unfinished business. Thinking like a teacher, I know we must often revisit issues, start from a new place, and keep working.

I'm ready, and I think there's an army of parents and educators who are also ready.

TEACHER SHORTAGE AND SALARIES

Are these two challenges related? Of course they

are. Just last month the Oklahoma School Board approved 300 emergency teaching certificates for districts around the state.

Let me explain: many teachers who get emergency certificates are trained, certified teachers, but their certificate and position do not match. I taught four of my first five years with emergencies, in elementary and special education classes. But 300 emergencies is a symptom of a larger problem that our state is addressing by loosening standards for alternative certification and emergency certification.

I'd love to see us go in the other direction and make traditional teacher education paths more attractive, more challenging, more supportive, more professional.

Every child in our state deserves a highly-qualified, competitively-paid teacher in his or her public school.

A beginning teacher, paid at the state minimum, will earn \$31,600. Interestingly, an Oklahoma legislator will earn \$38,400. Policymakers had ample oppor-

ANNUAL EDUCATION ISSUE

tunities in the last session to raise teachers' salaries. They didn't do a thing. The governor said she had a plan. Legislative leaders said they had a plan.

President David Boren has a plan, and it's on the ballot: SQ 779. The only game in town. The only possible option for teachers. Can we expect other solutions next session, given the revenue failures, income tax cuts, one-time use of funds to balance this year's budget, and the hefty tax credits to corporations?

READING SUFFICIENCY ACT

This is my pet project. I'm a reading specialist. I know how students learn as youngsters, and how they learn as adolescents. Reading Sufficiency Act, or "Test and Flunk Third Graders" is a monumentally bad idea.

It seems to have been born in Jeb Bush's Foundation for Education Excellence. His state school superintendents, Chiefs for Change, unquestioningly accepted his theories and hunches. Our former superintendent was a Chief for Change, and enthusiastically promoted test-and-flunk.

I have been active with this issue for years. I have two granddaughters who are living through this policy. I exchanged emails with the original author, Rep. Sally Kern; and I advocated for Rep. Katie Henke's bill that allowed teachers and parents some say-so in the promotion or retention decision. The test being used was flawed, not a reading test at all, and scores do not give a reading level.

There is no research to support retaining nine-year-olds because they don't reach an arbitrary score one day in April. Fans of RSA say all kids must read by third grade.

If they ever walked into a third grade class, they would see every child DOES read ... at his or her level. They've only been reading for, perhaps, four years. There are vast differences in their abilities. But they all read.

RSA must be changed: no high stakes, tests that measure reading levels, funding for remediation, support for students and families and classrooms. I am all in.

VOUCHERS

Or as their supporters like to call them, Education Savings Accounts – really public education funding given to parents for private school tuition. There is no savings account; parents don't earn it. It is MY money. Yours, our tax investment in public schools.

We will continue to fight vouchers. We've heard the rhetoric about choice and family rights – from the same legislators who want to take all choice away from parents through RSA.

It is a wretched scheme that ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, is keen on. Our recent bills were copied-and-pasted from ALEC model legislation, with a few twists.

Research from other states is mounting, and it all

points to vouchers being prohibitively expensive, and ineffective.

It is a constitutional responsibility for the state of Oklahoma to provide a free education to every child in our state. That cannot happen if voucher students take more and more funding.

I'm ready and willing to fight vouchers...again. #ES-AisNotOK.

Honorable Mention, because I can never settle on just a few challenges: Standards and assessment; deregulation; consolidation, and expansion of charter school law. See you at the Capitol!

Norman resident Claudia Swisher is a retired National Board Certified Teacher and regional coordinator for Education Leadership Oklahoma.

Not-So-Special Session

Gov. Mary Fallin's special session proposal to consider teacher pay raises is not serious.

First, the \$140.8 million that magically appeared at the end of last fiscal year is a one-time pot of gold.

With the state already facing a minimum \$600 million budget hole for FY 2018, it defies logic to think serious budget writers would hike salaries now and pray there would be enough money to fund them in the future.

Second, Fallin is radioactive to many in the Republican legislative majority. By session's end this year, almost anything she proposed was DOA on the Capitol's fourth floor.

Why would lawmakers risk returning to special session with a contentious Nov. 8 general election looming, one in which incumbent Republicans are in the crosshairs because of their fiscal mismanagement?

Imagine the political heat if legislators favored one vital state service over another.

Third, Fallin's proposal looks all the world like a not-so-clever diversion, an attempt to undermine strong public support for SQ 779, the one-cent sales tax proposal that could generate more than \$600 million annually for education – including a \$5,000-per-year raise for teachers.

The GOP Powers-That-Be at the Capitol hate the sales-tax proposal. They even went so far as to cut higher ed nearly 16% – retaliation against OU President David Boren, who spearheaded the signature drive that put SQ 779 on the ballot.

Even if, by some political miracle, lawmakers agreed to a special session – and to give all \$140.8 million to teacher pay raises – it would be the equivalent of fool's gold. There's no way for the state continue the higher salaries next year without further gutting other vital state services – or raising income taxes.

– Arnold Hamilton



Heil To The Wannabe Chief

BY CAL HOBSON

Before I roll back Father Time 60 years, to my comfy confines of 10 p.m. bedtime with cold milk, warm cookies and television that only offered three channels, let me bring up an equally boring subject: the definition of the word “prescient.”

According to the dictionary, it means “having prescience or knowledge of things or events before they exist or happen; have foresight.”

My much older sister, Leslie, has always told me that our mother used a similar sounding word – precious – to describe me shortly after my birth. No surprise there. Most parents utter such banalities until they get to know their little bundles of joy better.

For example, in my case, other “P” words soon became more prevalent, such as problematic, preposterous, pestering, peculiar and, used most often, pee, as in, “He’s peed his pants again.”

But prescient? Never ... until in this column ... and guess who says I am? Me!

Now, before you have an acid reflux attack and turn the page, please let this formerly humble scribe explain the origins of my savant-like soothsaying. A year ago, I opined in the September 2015 edition of this very publication the following pearls of wisdom

about a fellow American and wannabe politician. For your convenience and probable disbelief, they are reprinted verbatim below:

1. “Even for a casual observer, the unthinkable of a few months ago has morphed into the possible. Thrice married Donald John Trump, blowhard billionaire, equal opportunity offender of all, could soon be addressed as Mr. President.”

2. “He is arrogant, angry, bigoted, pushy, profane, preeminently profitable, probably paranoid, certainly charismatic, Teflon-coated, much admired and therefore electable.”

3. “This guy is a brilliant verbal puncher who gives much better than he gets and thus is perfectly suited for what passes as political debate today.”

4. “Trump understands how television conveys its message: brief, dramatic, theatrical bursts of information, accurate or otherwise, delivered with smiles, frowns, scowls and gestures is what works on the boob tube.”

Like him or not, you gotta admit The Donald has stayed on message. For his legions of loyal listeners, he is hitting all the right – and sometimes, far right – notes. Build a tall wall, temporarily ban all Muslim immigrants, repeal ObamaCare, cancel stupid trade

Hillary Clinton Is Best Choice

BY BILL JOHN BAKER

Hillary Clinton is our best choice to serve as president of the United States. Having served in the roles of Secretary of State, U.S. Senator and the sometime under-appreciated role of First Lady, she has unprecedented experience in international and domestic policy, which includes tribal sovereignty. As the elected leader of the largest tribal government in America, that level of experience is invaluable to Indian Country.

Hillary Clinton will continue the legacy of meaningful government-to-government consultations between tribal nations and the United States established by Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, and will build on that foundation. She truly grasps the federal trust responsibility to our tribal nations, while being empathetic to the problems facing Indian Country.

Secretary Clinton has heard the call of tribal

leaders and will take action on the issues most important to our people. She will ensure the issues facing the First Americans will not be the last to be addressed.

I had the pleasure of attending a tribal leaders meeting at the White House many years ago when I served on the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council and it was then-First Lady Hillary Clinton who led our discussion. This was an historic moment, as there was direct engagement between tribal leaders and the White House like never before in modern history. She promised a true government-to-government relationship and a real partnership to address our unique needs and the result of that meeting was Executive Order 13175 on tribal consultation that was issued by President Clinton. Secretary Clinton understands Indian people must have a seat at the table with

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deals, appoint only clones of Justice Antonin Scalia to the courts, nix NATO, cut taxes, slash spending – and he says he'll do it all by himself.

Meet Superman 2.0.

To say the least, this task to "Make America Great Again" appears to be huge – really, really huge. However, the conqueror of Manhattan, Atlantic City, West Palm Beach, Scotland and most of the rest of the civilized world has singlehandedly swatted away 16 Republican opponents in his relentless race to the White House.

Only an unpopular and untrustworthy little lady from the Land of Lincoln stands between Trump gaining the keys to the White House, unquestioned leadership of the Free World, and sole ownership of America's nuclear codes.

Apparently prescience is a rare human trait. Except for me, a lay-about liberal from Lexington; his mesmerizing model-turned-wife Melania; the tantalizing troika of Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric; arch-conservative Alabama U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions; Trump's two former but still very rich and loyal spouses; and previous campaign director Corey Lewandowski, few imagined 11 months ago the Trumpster would ever hear the Marine Corps' trumpets play "Hail to the Chief" in his honor when he walked in the door.

Perhaps you can hear them tooting now. According to the CNN-ABC Poll, conducted just days after the close of the Cleveland Coronation, a majority of likely voters in November sure do. Following are the results in that head-to-head nationwide contest: Trump 48%, Clinton 45%. Just one week earlier it was Clinton 49%, Trump 42% and – even worse for Hillary – her

untrustworthy number has jumped to almost 70%.

Of course, here in the reddest of red states, that abysmal dishonesty score is even higher, almost touching unanimity. In the spirit of full disclosure, the Okie number reflects not a scientific poll finding; rather, only the dispassionate, objective and clearly informed opinions of my six coffee drinking buddies at Ruby's Café in Purcell.

Just so you know, these lifelong pals of mine are also of one mind in their belief that President Barack Hussein Obama really is a Muslim, was delivered by a witchdoctor in Kenya, has never even been to Hawaii, and recently via an illegal executive order commandeered empty super-sized oil tankers in which to store soon-to-be confiscated guns, bazookas, mortars and framed photos of Rush Limbaugh.

I was too intimidated by itchy fingers stroking their sidearms to tell them the part about the pictures isn't true. After all, these dudes right now are very fragile, a bit unbalanced and some might say unhinged about a prospect of the pant-suited Hillary running the White House – and the Free World.

Fear, fright, bombs, bullets, things that go bump in the night and, of course, Mexicans. Makes you want to crawl under a bed and not even venture out searching for Pokemon, let alone select who on Nov. 8 will become the most powerful human being on the planet.

The Lady wants to be. The Gentleman already thinks he is.

Cal Hobson, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore.



"HOW DOES TRUMP CONTINUE TO LEAD IN THE POLLS AFTER HIS LATEST COMMENTS? OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS WILL DISCUSS THAT FOR THE NEXT 72 HOURS STRAIGHT! ...OR UNTIL HE SAYS SOMETHING ELSE..."

CNN's Revolving Door Of Political Hackery

BY MICHAEL CORCORAN

Widespread outrage erupted in late June over CNN's hiring of Corey Lewandowski, just four days after he was fired as Donald Trump's chief of staff. Lewandowski is a controversial figure, and not merely because he was heading up a campaign fueled by bigotry and fear. In March he was charged with simple battery for making physical contact with a reporter [though these charges were later dropped]. Moreover, his utility as a CNN contributor is clearly limited – if not worthless – since he is reported to have signed a non-disclosure agreement that bars him from saying anything disparaging about Trump or discussing anything he did during the campaign.

CNN staffers were said to be enraged – but within a week, CNN's newest contributor was on television

using his soapbox to explain away another one of Trump's very public and obvious appeals to bigotry. That CNN felt it needed to hire an election commentator who can't say anything critical about Trump may seem strange, but it corresponds with CNN Worldwide President Jeff Zucker's stated desire to push CNN to the right. Even Fox News has taken the moral "high ground" in this situation: It blasted CNN and the decision at least twice.

But hiring Lewandowski is not an anomaly – it is business as usual for CNN and other cable news networks. When covering elections, CNN and its competitors rely largely on former political hacks as paid contributors. They also commonly employ active lobbyists with inherent conflicts of interest that are rarely disclosed.

What we are dealing with is a Revolving Door of Political Hackery between campaigns, the media and lobbyists. As we enter the final stretch of the 2016 election season, this revolving door has been spinning rapidly, especially with GOP staffers heading to CNN. This reliance on beltway insiders and industry surrogates is among the many reasons why campaign coverage is so often woefully lacking in substance.

The Revolving Door of Political Hackery does a disservice to the public as it further compromises the dominant media, which is already failing the public with its numerous institutional biases. This method of staffing a news organization during the presidential election contributes to a near-constant focus on horse-race politics, rarely offering any discussion of how policies impact human beings [let alone the environment]. It allows paid contributors to shill for their friends and former bosses, or worse, it lets active lobbyists do the same for their current employers, usually without disclosure.

Further, it adds to the media's already jarring lack of diversity by limiting the discussion to those in the DC bubble, while organizers, activists and even academics are left out. In this sense, the Lewandowski hiring is entirely predictable.

THE LEWANDOWSKI BACKLASH

Lewandowski's hiring was understandably troublesome to many. In addition to his battery charge – for which Trump defended him vigorously – he was the political leader of the most openly bigoted campaign America has seen in half a century. He was a “fierce defender of Mr. Trump's idiosyncratic approach to the presidential race,” wrote the New York Times, “at a time when many in the party have pressed Mr. Trump to soften his message and build a more conventional political operation.”

What news value does CNN derive from hiring an angry Trump staffer who is contractually unable to criticize the candidate, nor speak about his time working for him? Effectively, he will just be a pro-Trump mouthpiece, as he was when he worked for Trump, but now he will be getting paid by CNN to do it [while also getting severance checks from Trump]. “I have never heard of a bigger conflict of interest in media history!” Cenk Uygur said on the Young Turks.

For all the antipathy toward Lewandowski from the left, the controversial figure was also disliked by those on the other side of the ideological spectrum. “Mr. Trump had faced increasing concerns from allies and donors, as well as his children, over whether Mr. Lewandowski, who had never before worked on a national race, was able to direct a battle against Mrs. Clinton,” the Times reported on June 20. Reince Priebus, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, was among these critics and told the presumptive nominee that “relations between his committee and Mr. Lewandowski had become increasingly strained, and that a change would be welcome.”

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Lewandowski's firing was supported by the DC establishment and his

subsequent hiring by CNN drew so much negative attention. A USA Today article called the hire “horrendous,” while Slate described him as a “pundit/goon.” And, as noted above, two Fox News anchors attacked the hiring. Howard Kurtz called the hiring “sad,” and Megyn Kelly noted that he was “the same guy who has threatened more than one journalist” and said “very ugly things” about women. It is rare that the Young Turks and Fox News anchors find themselves in agreement, but CNN made it possible in this case.

SEEKING FIRED GOP HACKS AND MILITANT TRUMP APOLOGISTS

While the hiring of Lewandowski is shameful, it shouldn't come as a huge surprise. As CNN seeks to move right, it has been snatching up recently fired GOP campaign staffers and other single-minded enthusiasts for particular right-wing candidates at a dizzying pace.

Consider the case of Amanda Carpenter, who left her job as Ted Cruz's communications director in July 2015. About two months later she would be hired as a paid contributor by CNN. Her job, for all practical purposes, was to advocate for Ted Cruz during the duration of his time in the campaign. Sure enough, at every turn Carpenter was there to talk up Cruz and deflect criticism toward him after every debate.

Carpenter's unceasing advocacy for Cruz has since been outmatched. On July 6, just a couple of weeks after the Lewandowski controversy, CNN invited Scottie Nell Hughes to join the fray. Hughes's public efforts to defend Trump – no matter how indefensible his behavior – were so cartoonish she became the subject of mockery in a Saturday Night Live [SNL] skit. While she never officially worked on the Trump campaign staff, she might as well have. She was a one-trick pony as a frequent guest on cable, defending Trump in virtually every appearance and even telling Wolf Blitzer that riots at the Republican National Convention “aren't necessarily a bad thing.”

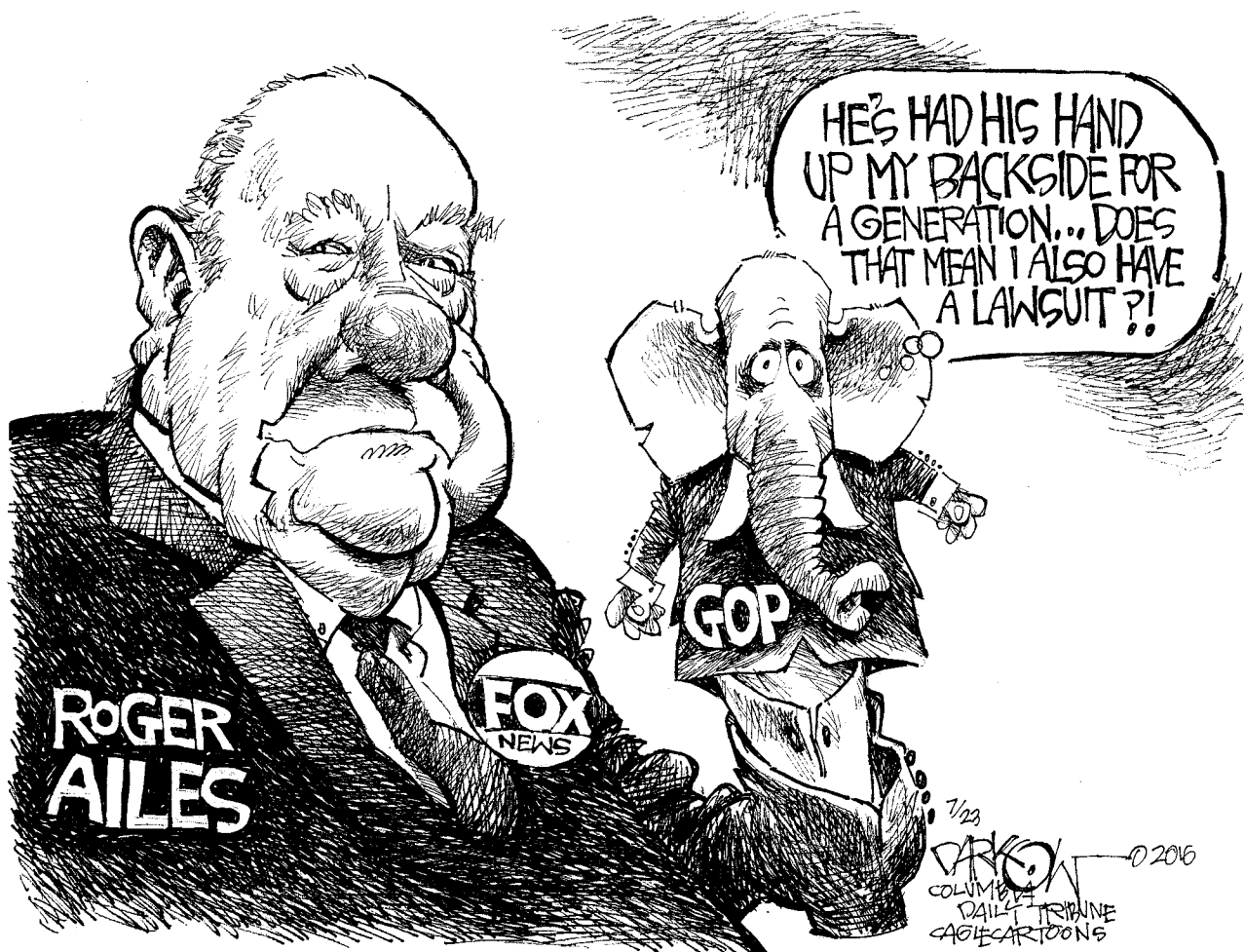
Months after the SNL skit had cemented Hughes' reputation as a sheepish Trump apologist, she continued to live up to the reputation. On July 3, she appeared on CNN as a guest defending Trump's use of an anti-Semitic symbol on Twitter. Her efforts were so lacking in sense that the exasperated anchor who interviewed Hughes, Brianna Keilar, could not manage to hide her contempt.

The interview, described by the Washington Post's Eric Wemple as “painful to behold,” was mocked endlessly. So how did CNN handle the aftermath of these embarrassing interviews? They hired her a day later. “CNN's management is determined to torture its anchors,” quipped Wemple. That Hughes announced her hire in a [since-deleted] tweet saying, “YUGE annem 4 me today,” only adds to the mystery of this personnel decision.

CNN'S ATTEMPTS TO TRUMP FOX NEWS

Why is CNN going so hard after conservative campaign staff, and especially militant Trump support-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



Farewell, Roger Ailes. Take Trump With You?

BY MARK MORFORD

Never doubt there is a divine and fearful symmetry afoot, usually for the better but then again, these days, who can say?

Behold! It is entirely appropriate that on the same, enormously humiliating day last month that the Republican Party officially nominated Donald Trump for president, AKA the day that America hung its head in shame, one Roger Ailes, the famously turgid, unapologetically biased media mastermind who made Fox News into the billion-dollar bastion of giddy racism and shameless ignorance it so very much is, was on his way to being strategically ousted from the network for allegedly sexually harassing enough women to earn him a nice gift basket from Bill Cosby.

Do you see the symmetry? The weirdly magical, oddly proper cosmic confluence? Sure you do.

It all makes wicked – and maybe even slightly reas-

suring – sense. See, Ailes reached his nadir. Sauron installed his doppelganger. Trump got the GOP nod and the Fates threw up in their mouths a little as all those years of Ailes-approved, Fox-led fearmongering, misogyny, lying, homophobia, bashing of the environment and women and science et al, resulted in a success far wilder, far nastier than even Ailes, in his most sexually inappropriate fever dream, could possibly imagine.

Let history decry: It was Fox News – with Ailes at the helm – that essentially invented Trump the candidate, paved the way, set the tone, made it all kinds of brutally easy for an orange-faced, sociopathic mattress salesman to manipulate/abuse the media and the electoral system alike, flooding them both with fear and childish authoritarianism like nuclear waste into a river.

Make no mistake: Fox News, with its GOP lackeys, made Trump happen. He is their most perfect inbred spawn. His ascent and ruthless takeover of the decaying GOP is entirely deserved: After all, you can't attack the immune system of the nation for all those years and not expect a virus to ooze on through.

It remains, however, rather amazing to witness: The moment Trump ascends, Ailes flounders. It's as though the system can only handle so much poison at any given time. It's as though the gods are saying "Look, you can't have the Satan and Moloch on the same playbill. Even the cockroaches are in retreat. Someone's gotta go." And right now, blessed be the heavens, that means Ailes.

Of course, the Fates are far from done. What will happen after Trump loses the election, and badly? Will he start his own news company, as he once threatened? Will he take over Fox News? Shut it down? Will Ailes then become the next Karl Rove, a sad, mealy troll for the GOP? Will there be some bizarre role-reversal nightmare comedy to witness? Will Melania get her own reality show? Which of Trump's sons will be first to reveal his wish to become transgender? And how calmly will President Hillary let them all slither into the footnotes of history, and eat each other alive?

Only the Fates know for sure – and truly, they're a little nauseous right now.

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Hackery

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

ers? It is not as though there were a shortage of such contributors. Before the most recent additions, CNN already employed vocal Trump supporters, such as contributors Kayleigh McEnany and Jeffrey Lord.

McEnany has been praising the candidate on the air and in writing at CNN.com. Lord, who recently published a book advocating for a Trump presidency, is even more extreme in his defenses of the candidate. One of his colleagues told the Post that his job was "to carry Donald Trump's decidedly fetid water every day." Lord's controversial defense of Trump's refusal to distance himself from David Duke and the KKK drew plenty of controversy and was covered by the New York Times. Lord, according to the Daily Beast, has publicly said that Trump had requested CNN to rely more on him for election coverage.

Nonetheless, CNN continues to hire more Trump supporters. But if you consider Zucker's public comments about his goals at the network, things become clearer. In early May, Zucker told the Wall Street Journal that it "was a legitimate criticism of CNN that it was a little too liberal," and that the network has added "many more middle-of-the-road conservative voices."

Whether Zucker actually believes that CNN has a leftist bias – a dubious claim, to be sure – there is a clear financial incentive for him to move right. "CNN craves Fox News' Conservative Viewers," observed the Post. Indeed, while studies have repeatedly shown Fox News viewers to be far less informed than the rest of the country, there is no doubting its aging viewership watches the channel in droves. For years, Fox News has tended to dominate the ratings battle vs. CNN and MSNBC. And data from a Pew Research Center study in 2014 showed conservatives were "somewhat underrepresented" within CNN's audience.

This helps explain the hires of Lewandowski, Hughes, Carpenter and many other conservative pundits. CNN's concerted attempt at an ideological shift has been noticeable in the debates it has hosted. As Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [FAIR] observed, CNN has invited movement conservative Hugh Hewitt to debates to question Republicans from the right. It was an interesting approach. Yet, when the Democratic debate was scheduled, the presence of an "unabashed progressive advocate" was "glaringly missing."

It is also fascinating that as CNN moves right in an effort to grab Fox viewers, it is relying on an excessive number of pro-Trump voices. This could be a shrewd play for Fox News viewers. Fox News is indeed a conservative network, but it has faced a lot of conflict with the GOP nominee, most notably due to his disgusting remarks about anchor Megyn Kelly's menstrual cycle and his decision to skip out on a Fox News debate. Given how loyal Fox News' audience has been over the years, CNN's attempt to appeal to conservative Trump fans is a clever way to differentiate itself from its rival network. "I will say CNN treats me better than Fox News," said Trump in a Fox News interview.

CNN did not respond by press time to Truthout's request for comment.

MSNBC'S OWN REVOLVING DOOR

While CNN has been subjected to a great deal of criticism for hiring Lewandowski, it is not often mentioned that MSNBC also strongly considered hiring the Trump staffer. The network even met with him after he left the Trump campaign. So, CNN's egregious hiring practices notwithstanding, other networks should not be left off the hook. Obviously, Fox News has a long history of being a GOP mouthpiece, but MSNBC is not immune to the revolving door phenomenon, either.

For instance, while CNN waited about three days to hire Trump's fired chief of staff, MSNBC worked with similar haste to hire a Ted Cruz staffer who lost his job. Four days after Cruz asked for the resignation of his national spokesman Rick Tyler, MSNBC hired him. Tyler had been let go for allegedly promoting a false rumor about Marco Rubio, causing a controversy. This didn't stop MSNBC from rushing to employ him. Tyler proceeded to spend his airtime criticizing Trump and suggesting Rubio drop out of the race.

Tyler is not MSNBC's first hire to come through the revolving door of political hackery, and he won't be the last. Karen Finney is a good example. Finney served as Hillary Clinton's press secretary when she was First Lady and worked in various other roles in Washington politics in between. After all those years as a partisan Democratic Party staffer and a Clinton loyalist, she became a long-time MSNBC contributor and eventually even got her own [short-lived] show. During her five-year tenure at MSNBC she regularly defended Clinton, whom she had worked for before, and would soon work for again. [She is now a key figure in the 2016 Clinton campaign.] Could Finney possibly have served as an objective voice when Clinton's name came up in the news?

As of this writing the home page for Finney's old show, *Disrupt*, features excerpts from a Clinton book and features a video of Finney defending Clinton against GOP attacks. Surely, Finney was often right to critique some of the most dubious GOP attacks on Clinton, but it can hardly be surprising that conservatives took notice of her conflict of interest. Conservative groups are quick to point out that at least 30 people have gone from the Obama Administration to MSNBC or vice versa – that tendency should trouble anyone who cares about journalism, whether the revolving door at hand is propelling conservatives into CNN, or Democrats into MSNBC.

Since her days at MSNBC, Finney has gone from attacking Republicans as a talk-show host to disparaging the Sanders campaign as a Clinton staffer. Imagine, if in a year, she returns to MSNBC. How could any progressive trust her ability to objectively cover Clinton [whether she is president or not] or Sen. Sanders?

LESSONS LEARNED AND LOST:

THE LOBBYING-MEDIA COMPLEX PERSISTS

Howard Dean is another Clinton supporter who has been frequently featured on MSNBC in the last year or so. When he goes on the air he has always been introduced as a "Clinton supporter," a proper disclosure from MSNBC. The problem is that Dean is also currently a paid health care lobbyist for the law firm Dentons, a fact that is rarely disclosed. This fact was, significantly, not acknowledged when Dean went on the air to attack single-payer health care – a policy he supported just a few years earlier – on behalf of Hillary Clinton.

MSNBC is no stranger to such practices. In 2009, former *Newsweek* reporter Richard Wolffe was a frequent contributor and guest host on MSNBC and gave his opinion on a wide variety of issues. The problem: he was concurrently working for the lobbying group Public Strategies, which has worked with Lockheed Martin and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Gallingly, Public Strategies even touted Wolffe's access to MSNBC in his bio on its website. MSNBC did not disclose this conflict of interest until it was critiqued by several journalists and activists. Among these journalists was Glenn Greenwald who said MSNBC was effec-

tively "turning over an hour every night to a corporate lobbyist" and portraying "paid corporate hacks" as objective commentators.

Eventually, MSNBC admitted its error and while it didn't stop using Wolffe as a contributor, it did begin disclosing his job at Public Strategies. In 2012, he was hired full-time as an editor for MSNBC.com, although his Twitter account indicates he has since moved on. Meanwhile, Howard Dean and MSNBC are still effectively engaging in the same appalling dance, as if the Wolffe incident had never occurred. Of course, Dean and MSNBC are not alone in this practice. As FAIR documented in 2013, the problem is still widespread, across networks and political parties. NBC's Mike Murphy, CNN's Stephanie Cutter, David Axelrod [currently at CNN, formerly of MSNBC] and Robert Gibbs [who was at MSNBC until 2015, when he left for a job with McDonalds] are just a handful of names FAIR reported as having recently worked as lobbyists while also appearing [without disclosure] as media commentators.

MSNBC did not respond by press time to Truthout's request for comment.

This problem with lobbyists has been rampant for years. In 2010, the *Nation* published the results of an investigation called "The Media-Lobbying Complex." It concluded that in less than three years, "at least 75 registered lobbyists, public relations representatives and corporate officials – people paid by companies and trade groups to manage their public image and promote their financial and political interests – have appeared on MSNBC, Fox News, CNN, CNBC and Fox Business Network with no disclosure of the corporate interests that had paid them."

The *Nation* investigation found such complicity occurring at virtually all of the cable networks, demonstrating that the revolving door is not merely between political hacks and the media, but between corporate hacks and the media as well.

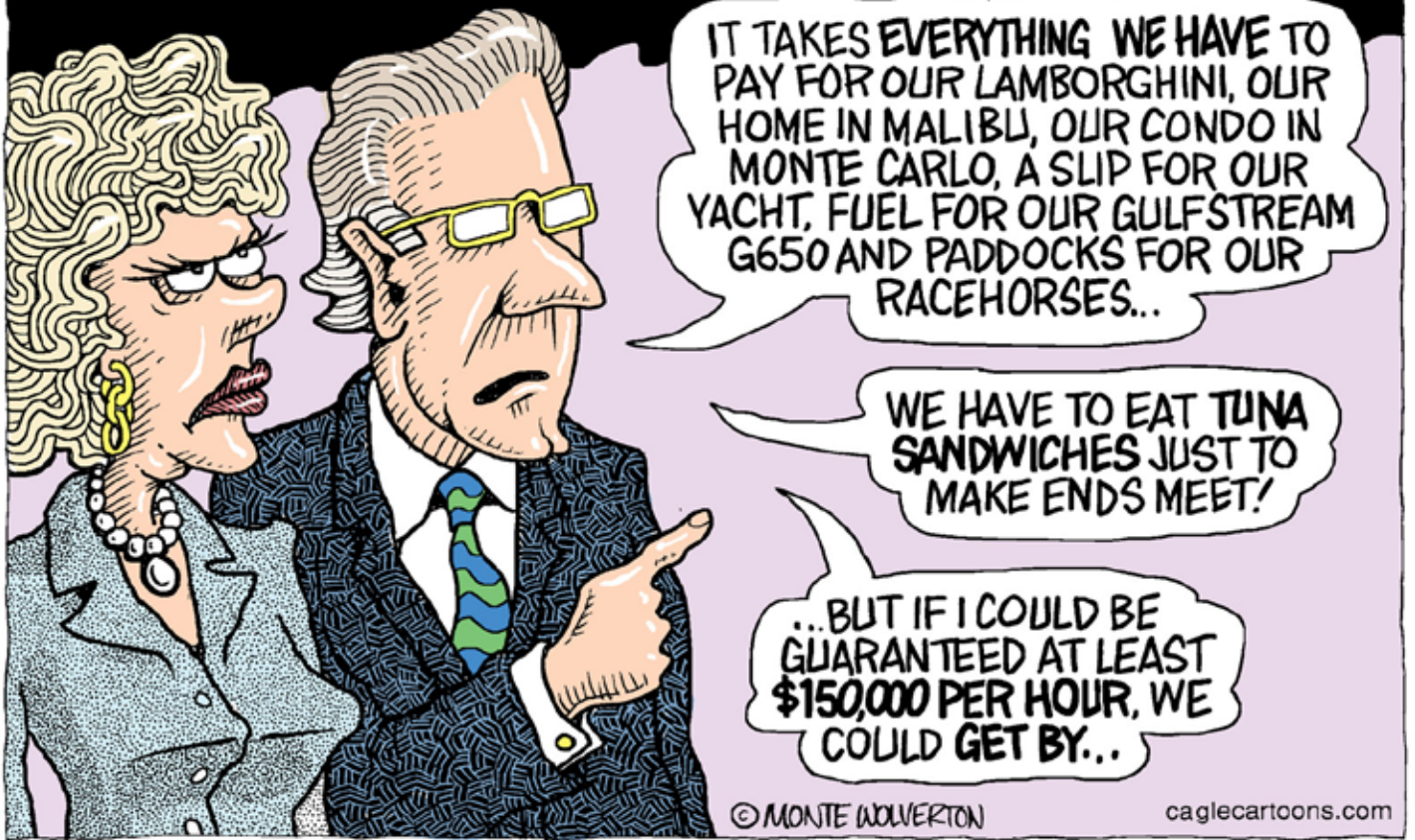
WHY THE REVOLVING DOOR KEEPS SPINNING

The revolving door metaphor is typically used to describe how politicians so often go from public service to corporate lobbying. This has always been a problem. But for the media to become another stop in this revolving door complicates the picture even further. Americans are supposed to be able to depend on members of the media to vigorously investigate corporate lobbyists and politicians. But now all three of these sectors, like George Orwell's pigs in *Animal Farm*, have become, in some ways, indistinguishable from one another.

And so the revolving door continues to spin. As a result, broadcast media – from which most Americans still get their news – is a haven for privileged voices with personal, political and corporate agendas. This is a byproduct of most of the media being owned just a few multi-national conglomerates and shows why media reform should be a big priority for advocates of social justice and democracy.

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At last... a minimum wage for the wealthy..



Republican Platform Eviscerates Workers' Rights

BY VICTORIA ALBERT

The Republican Party's official 2016 platform proudly states "the greatest asset of the American economy is the hard working American."

The writers must have a twisted sense of humor.

In a not particularly unexpected move, the party platform eviscerates the "hard working American," denying workers of their right to unionize while targeting their most vulnerable communities.

GRAND OLD UNION BUSTERS

Perhaps the strongest anti-union feature of the Republican Party's platform is the call for national right-to-work [RTW] legislation. RTW laws – the bane of unions nationwide, including Oklahoma – prevent unions from collecting fees from non-members, who nevertheless benefit from unions' grievance and bargaining services.

The platform claims that these laws will "protect the economic liberty of the modern workforce," but in fact, they do just the opposite. According to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, workers in RTW states make \$5,791 [12%] less per year than workers without RTW, and are far less likely to be insured.

More importantly, RTW weakens unions by forcing them to serve those who don't pay for their services. When Michigan approved a right-to-work law in 2012, its union membership dropped by 48,000, despite the addition of 44,000 new jobs.

The platform also targets both unionized Transportation Security Administration employees and the National Labor Relations Board's presence in Native American communities, with Republicans pledging to "correct [the] mistake" of permitting TSA employ-

ees to organize, and claiming to defend tribal governments from the Democrats' "egregious" pro-union influence.

A GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

"We pledge to make the government work for the people," reads the platform, "not the other way around." Yet for the country's most financially vulnerable – the 3.9% working for minimum wage – the Republicans offer neither support nor protection.

The platform dismisses the widespread call for a nationwide minimum wage, asserting that the matter "should be handled on a state and local level," and pledges to repeal Davis-Bacon, a 1931 act mandating that federal construction projects pay union-level [read: living] wages.

It has even less mercy for the undocumented. The platform echoes Donald Trump's racist rhetoric with its total rejection of amnesty for undocumented workers. It also supports his proposal for building a wall between the U.S.-Mexico border, with the intent of "keep[ing] dangerous aliens off our streets."

In the preamble to the platform, Republicans claim their plan "lays out – in clear language – the path to making America great and united again." Yet if the Republicans' path to greatness is to be built on the backs of American workers, it is a greatness of which we should all be wary.

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Why Mike Pence Terrifies Me

BY SHANE PHIPPS

Ihesitate to post this blog simply because it is political ... and I hate politics. But I have to speak my mind here, knowing full well that I may risk offending a lot of my dear friends. I have many friends on the right and left side of the political spectrum. That is a side effect of living near the center, as I do.

In the interest of full disclosure, I am no fan of Hillary Clinton. I just don't trust her and I don't think I ever will. That said, I am in a state of disbelief that the Republican candidate is Donald Trump. The fact that there are so many intelligent people that I know who are actually going to vote for Trump is a clear indication that we have come to a very scary crossroads in our nation's history.

A lot of very fine Americans are completely fed up with the status quo offerings from Washington. I understand that. But I don't even know what to say about Donald Trump. I still can't believe that he is going to be a viable candidate for president.

As a history teacher, I can't fathom a day where

Trump's portrait might be alongside those of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln in the history books.

I don't feel qualified to write about him because ... well, just because. But I do know something about his running mate, and that is where I will focus my thoughts for this essay. Frankly, I feel the need to expose Mike Pence for what he has done with public education in my state.

Again, in the interest of full disclosure, I am an Indiana citizen and, by trade, a teacher. That job title automatically gives me a bad name among many Hoosiers on the far right. I understand and accept that. It's just the way it is.

Many on the far right around these parts see that I am a teacher and automatically label me a lefty. That is simply not accurate. I am a dyed-in-the-wool centrist. There are several issues about which I agree with the right. There are several issues about which I agree with the left. It is endlessly frustrating for me when it comes time to vote.

However, when it comes down to the issue where my bread is buttered, as it were, Mike Pence and I could not be further apart. In my opinion, and in the opinion of most other educators I know, Mike Pence has been a detriment to education. Since education is among the most important issues to me, as it should be to you, I feel compelled to lay out the reasons why I can't support any ticket with which Mike Pence is associated.

This goes back to the previous Indiana governor, Mitch Daniels. His education plan was hostile to public education. It was very transparent, to all who would see, that Daniels was no friend to public education. He implemented a plan that, by its nature, pits high-income schools against low-income schools and judges them based on an A to F grading scale. These grades are given on the basis of scores on a standardized test which requires all students to "clear the same bar" regardless of their starting point.

This has resulted in a predictable gap in achievement where the affluent school districts tend to "outperform" the high poverty districts.

As a result of the Daniels program, the lower performing districts get less funding than the higher performing districts. This, coupled with the voucher system, which allows people to take advantage of government assistance to move their students from one district to another, or to a state sponsored "charter school," results in widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots even further than before.

The voucher system sounds great to many people [perhaps to you, too], but in reality, it only exacerbates the achievement gap. For the most part, only those families who can afford transportation to other schools take advantage of it. This creates a situation where some of the better students in "under performing" districts move out to other districts or to charter schools.

Of course, this often results in lower test scores in



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the schools those students vacated. That means no pay raises for teachers in those schools. That eventually leads to teachers leaving the profession which leads to teacher shortages. We are beginning to deal with this problem now, big time! We need the best and brightest teachers to be attracted to the students who need them most, not driven away.

Another problem with vouchers that most outside education don't understand is that, sometimes, you can't just pick and choose any school to which you want to sent your child. School districts can, and do, close enrollment. Don't think for a moment that this is done equitably.

I will just say this: if the most affluent school districts in the state [you know who I am talking about] suddenly were overrun with voucher applicants from Indianapolis Public Schools [or numerous other urban districts around the state] who have had a history of low academic achievement or high risk behaviors, you can bet that the voucher system would go away quickly!

In 2012, the same year Mike Pence was elected as governor, many thousands of Indiana educators began a grass roots campaign to remove Gov. Daniels' buddy, the superintendent of public education, Tony Bennett, from office. Incredibly, the effort was successful and a previously unknown educator and librarian, Glenda Ritz, was elected as the new superintendent.

The ousted Bennett went on to be named to a similar position under Gov. Jeb Bush in Florida. While in that position, it was learned that Bennett, while in his previous position in Indiana, with Daniels' support, had been guilty of corruption when he illegally helped one of his pet charter schools, Chrystal House, by changing the grade for the school when it

did not perform as well as he would have liked.

Mitch Daniels went on to become president of Purdue University. Shortly thereafter, it was revealed that he had attempted to ban books by famed historian, Howard Zinn, from public schools in Indiana. Why, you may ask, did he object to Zinn? Because Zinn dared view history through the perspective of the defeated. That's right, Mitch Daniels was trying to deny Indiana students the opportunity to view history from multiple perspectives. That, in my book, is despicable!

Back to Pence ...

Mike Pence entered the office vacated by Daniels on the heels of the shocking victory achieved by Glenda Ritz. He had an opportunity to step back and assess the clear message from the voters that we were not happy with the direction public education had taken.

Instead of honoring the will of the voters of Indiana who, by the way, incredibly, gave Ritz more votes as a superintendent [normally an office that is an afterthought and doesn't garner a lot of voters' attention] than Pence got in his victory as state governor, Pence immediately began to look for ways to undermine the power of Ritz's office.

Pence, a champion of "small government," formed an entirely new state board of education! That's right, he created a second board of education, thumbing his nose at the will of the electorate and effectively stripping Glenda Ritz of much of her power! This actually happened in in my state, Indiana ... AMERICA!

He then went on to further attempt to abuse the democratic spirit by trying to start a state controlled media outlet! That's right, Mike Pence not only created a new government agency to try to circumvent the will of the electorate, he then tried to control the story by creating a state-run news agency! This happened in Indiana ... In America!

Gov. Pence loves to cite the statistic that, under his leadership, Indiana has a budget surplus, a large "rainy day fund." Yet, many school districts across the state have been forced to beg their communities for financial help through local tax referendums just to stay afloat. Districts have slashed budgets to the bone. Class sizes are way up and many things beneficial to students, like extra-curricular activities and field trip opportunities, are way down.

How can Pence claim a surplus when so many school districts are suffering financially?

Pence is infamous for other things that got more negative press for Indiana that I won't even go into here. You will, no doubt, read plenty about those things in the national press in the coming weeks if you aren't already familiar with them. But I wanted to shine a light on the things that don't get mentioned as much. These are the things that, as an educator, first made me terrified of Mike Pence.

Shane Phipps is a middle school history teacher in Indianapolis and author of the young adult historical fiction The Carter Journals: Time Travels in Early U.S. History [Indiana Historical Society Press, 2015].

What's Next For Sanders Revolution?



As we exit the Democratic convention, let's look back at the primary race ... and forward to the future.

The mainstream media tried to reduce the two Democratic campaigns as a Hillary v. Bernie war. The reality, though, is that most Sanders backers were enthusiastic precisely because his campaign's purpose was far bigger than the usual personality politics. Supporters were signing up for a revolution against corporate rule.

To achieve this, we have to keep mobilizing for a truly democratic movement, and this is much harder than one presidential run. Sanders and close advisors are strategizing to help grow the grassroots rebellion – from school boards to Congress. This new coordinating effort will build on the framework and momentum of the campaign.

Outside of Sanders' circle, a multitude of Bernie supporters are not waiting on a smoke signal from headquarters. With the primaries over and the convention starting, a mushrooming, percolate-up creativity has already burst into new organizing projects that are advancing this energized populist movement. Here are just two examples:

The People's Summit. In the world of politics-as-usual, a losing candidate's supporters just drift away, but All-Things-Sanders tend to be unusual. So, on June 17, just three days after the final Democratic primary, some 3,000 Berniecrats from all across America gathered in a Chicago convention center to "Keep the Bern Alive." Rather than being morose or cynical about Sanders not winning the nomination, attendees were exuberant about the future and the movement that he galvanized. This extraordinary, uplifting event was a combination of tent revival and workshops for serious strategizing and organizing, and was rightly labeled a "Festival of Joyous Rebellion." The two-day summit was convened by National Nurses United [a scrappy, aggressively progressive union] and co-sponsored by more than 50 diverse and effective democracy-building groups.

This meeting had a minimum of blah-blah and a maximum of planning on how to put experienced, locally-based organizers and volunteers directly into

growing the movement – starting now. These ever-larger and broader local coalitions will: [1] be rooted in principled, anti-corporate politics; [2] launch direct grassroots initiatives and actions on a range of populist issues; [3] recruit, train, and elect thousands of movement candidates to school boards, city councils, state legislatures, and other offices; [4] deepen the relationships and sense of shared purpose in this revolutionary democratic movement. And [5] – Make it fun – putting the "party" back in politics. www.thepeoplesummit.org

Brand New Congress. What if progressive organizers and volunteers joined forces to run a nationwide campaign to replace today's corporate-owned congress – all at once? Yes, one sweeping campaign to oust all incumbents of either party who owe their jobs to the Big Money powers. Those congress critters, feeling snug in their gerrymandered rabbit holes, could be ousted by hundreds of coordinated, Brand New Congress campaigns running simultaneously in every state. Each local campaign would back candidates publicly pledged to fight for an agenda of economic, social, environmental, and political justice.

Impossible? Not in the minds of Zach Exley, Becky Bond and other former Sanders staffers who conceived and implemented this campaign's successful grassroots model that Exley calls "distributed organizing." They trained and empowered tens of thousands of far-flung volunteers to be autonomous organizers, digitally linked into a nationwide network, eliminating the need and cost of a rigid hierarchy of "leaders" to boss volunteers, recognizing instead that volunteers themselves are leaders – in churches, clubs, workplaces, community groups, etc. Now they're applying this model to Brand New Congress that will carry the message of authentic populism and a shared agenda of populist policy proposals.

BNC is to be a true bi-partisan effort, running Dems in blue districts, Repubs in solid red ones, and independents wherever that makes sense. But wait – how can BNC get Republican candidates to run on progressive values? By recognizing that true populism is neither a right or left theory, but a top vs. bottom reality that even middle-class and lower-income

Republicans can relate to. [Note: In Vermont, which often elects Republican governors, Sanders won 71% of the vote in his last Senate race]. Indeed, outside of the right-wing Congress, many rank-and-file Republicans would support stopping global trade scams and crony-capitalism corruption, as well as assuring health care for all, recognizing climate change, and standing up to bigotry.

Bernie has urged his supporters to keep pushing for their democratic ideals. “Real change never takes place from the top down. It always occurs from the bottom on up – when tens of millions of people say ‘enough is enough’ and become engaged in the fight for justice. That’s what the political revolution we helped start is all about. That’s why the political revolution must continue.”

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It's Getting Hot In Indianapolis

If the chieftains of industry and their political henchmen want to know what’s roiling the riff-raff, they could read Thomas Piketty’s landmark, 1,000-page book on inequality: *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Or, they could listen to one of Bernie Sander’s hour-long, tub-thumping speeches. Or, they could just spend three minutes and 32 seconds watching an online video showing a Carrier Corporation executive speaking to hundreds of workers in the air-conditioning giant’s Indianapolis plant this past February.

The proud Steelworker union members thought maybe they’d been called to the factory floor to hear about new orders for their quality products. After all, sales at parent company United Technologies were zooming – expected to jump at least \$2 billion to \$58 billion in 2016.

Instead of receiving praise and good news, however, they got an ugly surprise. In the fuzzy video recorded on a worker’s phone, UTC/Carrier honcho Chris Nelson doesn’t bother with any opening pleasantries. He gets right to the point, reporting in the dry tones of a corporate lifer that the bosses have decided that, “The best way to stay competitive and protect the business for the long term is to move production from our facility in Indianapolis to Monterrey, Mexico.” KABLOOEY! He couldn’t finish his sentence, for the entire assembly exploded like a human cluster bomb, with cries of disbelief, raucous booing, and a steady barrage of f-bombs.

“Please quiet down,” the obtuse functionary instructed. But the devastated workers, realizing in an instant that Carrier is kicking their families right

out of the middle-class, got rowdier. Then, as though delivering a line from *The Godfather*, Nelson assures the crowd that the corporation means nothing personal by taking their jobs: “This is strictly a business decision.”

No, it wasn’t. This was a calculated greed decision. Severing this workforce of 2,100 top-quality, experienced, and dedicated producers makes questionable business sense: The move to Mexico is expected to save UTC only \$70 million a year in labor costs [a blip on the spreadsheets of global behemoth that hauls in \$56 billion a year and has an uninterrupted 22-year record of increasing dividends].

But, UTC’s greedy Wall Street investment bankers demanded that the giant go on a cost-cutting binge aimed at generating a 17% hike in its stock price over the next two years. And what better way to please big institutional shareholders than to show a cold willingness to whack payroll. While making such cuts is “painful,” mused Carrier’s top financial executive, they are necessary for “shareholder value creation,” adding cheerfully: “We feel very good about being able to execute on that.”

So a city must suffer factory abandonment, and workers must have their decent-paying jobs taken from them so some distant, don’t-give-a-damn, rich shareholders can see a dollar rise in UTC’s stock price. “Execute” seems like the right word.

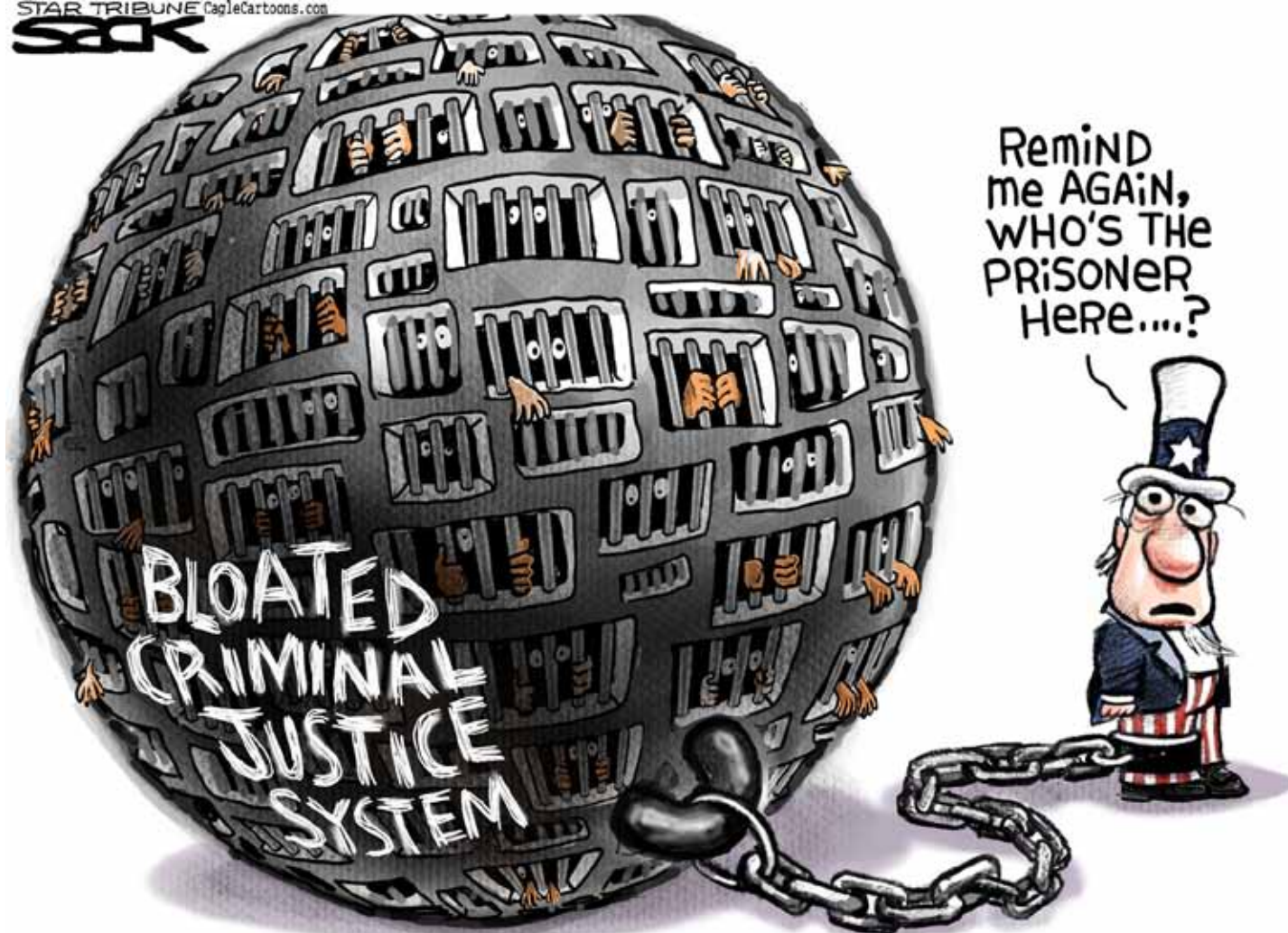
There’s also an unstated motivation in play: Gregory Hayes’s pride. The UTC chief had taken heat from a board of directors concerned that the stock price had not climbed as high as fast as Wall Street wanted. Indeed, last year, the board sliced his executive bonus in half. “It’s embarrassing,” a financial analyst noted. “He got dinged.” But no need to cry for Greg, since his 2015 paycheck still totaled \$6 million. [A typical Carrier worker would have to stay on the job 150 years to earn that much].

Welcome to the new Wild Kingdom of Corporate World, where prideful executive royals are empowered to uproot the livelihoods of commoners in a ploy to please Wall Street, manipulate corporate stock prices, collect extravagant bonuses, and save face.

Notice that such whimsy was pulled off autocratically. Despite a unionized workforce, UTC/Carrier simply commanded the workers to assemble so they could be unilaterally dispatched – there was no negotiation, consultation, or any other say-so by the workers, their community, public officials, or anyone else. This is our new norm of plutocratic rule, envisioned and implemented by the rampaging forces of corporate avarice.

This disregard for workers is not just a one-time Indiana problem. Carrier’s chief financial officer blurted out to the *New York Times* that top executives are eyeing other factories to move to Mexico. Look out Charlotte [NC], Collierville [TN], and Tyler [TX].

The carnage on working class Americans won’t stop until we actually start punishing these corporate malefactors. – *Jim Hightower*



Senate Bill Seeks To End Tax Breaks For Private Prison Companies

BY MIKE LUDWIG

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-OR, introduced legislation last month that would make it tougher for private prison companies to take advantage of federal rules that provide massive tax breaks for special real estate firms, a move that racial justice and prison divestment activists say is an important step toward confronting the corporations that control around 8% of the nation's prisons and immigrant jails.

The nation's two largest prison firms, GEO Group and Corrections Corporations of America [CCA], avoided a combined \$113 million in federal taxes in 2015 alone. Large portions of the companies are al-

lowed to file with the IRS as Real Estate Investment Trusts, or REITs, which enjoy a special tax status designed to encourage real estate investment.

The bulk of CCA and GEO Group's multibillion-dollar revenue stream comes from taxpayers, but both companies have seen their corporate tax rate plummet by 30% or more since they secured REIT status in 2012, according to annual financial reports. CCA, which owns 66 jails and prisons nationwide and runs an additional 11 facilities on behalf of the government, reported a net income tax benefit of nearly \$138 million in 2013 alone.

Federal law requires the bulk of these tax benefits

to be paid out to shareholders in the form of dividends, so the extra cash is not reinvested into programs and resources for prisoners and jailed immigrants, or to pad the salaries of private prison guards, who can earn wages as low as \$15 per hour. Activists also say these dividends encourage wealthy investors to profit from mass incarceration and lobby for the racist policies that drive it.

"Private prisons are one part of a larger system of mass criminalization that has to be fought on many fronts," said Amanda Aguilar Shank, an organizer with the racial and economic justice group, Enlace. "Part of dismantling this system is recognizing the huge economic investment we are making in criminalizing and locking up enormous sectors of our community, and finding ways to divest and reinvest those resources into life-giving services like housing, education and health care."

Established as a special tax status more than 50 years ago, REITs were originally intended to be passive investment vehicles, allowing groups of investors to put money into real estate properties without actually buying and servicing them, much like mutual funds. REITs are required to distribute 90% of their taxable income back to shareholders annually in the form of cash or stock dividends, which in turn are tax-deductible for the REIT.

REITs are supposed to stick to the real estate business, but CCA and Geo Group provide dozens of [non-real-estate-related] services and products to jails, prisons, immigrant jails and the people held captive in them. Both companies also run entire facilities.

The IRS has allowed companies to break themselves up in order to meet REIT requirements and enjoy the tax breaks, so CCA and GEO Group spun off sections of their companies that provided services, such as education and health care, or incorporated them as "subsidiaries" of the REIT.

These spin-offs are supposed to pay federal taxes, but both companies have convinced the IRS that the bulk of their business is essentially renting space out to the federal and state governments to house prisoners, so the majority of their income is now tax-exempt.

Wyden's legislation would close this loophole by preventing "active business activities" from filing as REIT subsidiaries.

"This legislation would significantly weaken the for-profit prison industry," Shank said, "and it would divest resources from tax subsidies for private prisons, freeing up millions of dollars that could be reinvested in services that actually keep our communities safe."

Wyden blamed a "broken-down tax code" for allowing private prison firms to take advantage of REIT status, but he made it clear that the bill is not just about taxes.

With the nation roiling over racist police violence, Wyden noted that the bill is part of a broader effort to reform a criminal legal system that has disproportionately negative impacts on immigrants and people

of color.

"As part of rethinking our criminal justice system, particularly as it results in the mass incarceration of low-income and minority individuals, the tax rules for REITs must be changed so that we are not encouraging companies to unjustly profit from prison detention services," Wyden said in a statement.

Meanwhile, prison corporations are not happy about the bill. CCA spokesman Steve Owen told Truthout that the "rationale for this bill is deeply misguided" and Congress has better things to do "than legislating winners and losers in an independent, IRS-driven REIT qualification process that is already time-tested, rigorous and fair."

"The fact is, we provide problem-solving alternatives that help our government partners address some of their biggest corrections challenges, such as dangerous overcrowding and skyrocketing costs," Owen said. "Our company has made significant public commitments to help inmates successfully re-enter society, including helping thousands of people earn a GED."

Critics of the industry, however, say prisons run by private companies are more violent than public prisons and have higher rates of recidivism among prisoners.

Plus, private companies that provide telecommunications and other services to prisoners make business decisions that increase the likelihood that incarcerated people will become returning customers, such as banning in-person visits with family members despite research showing that maintaining family ties reduces recidivism.

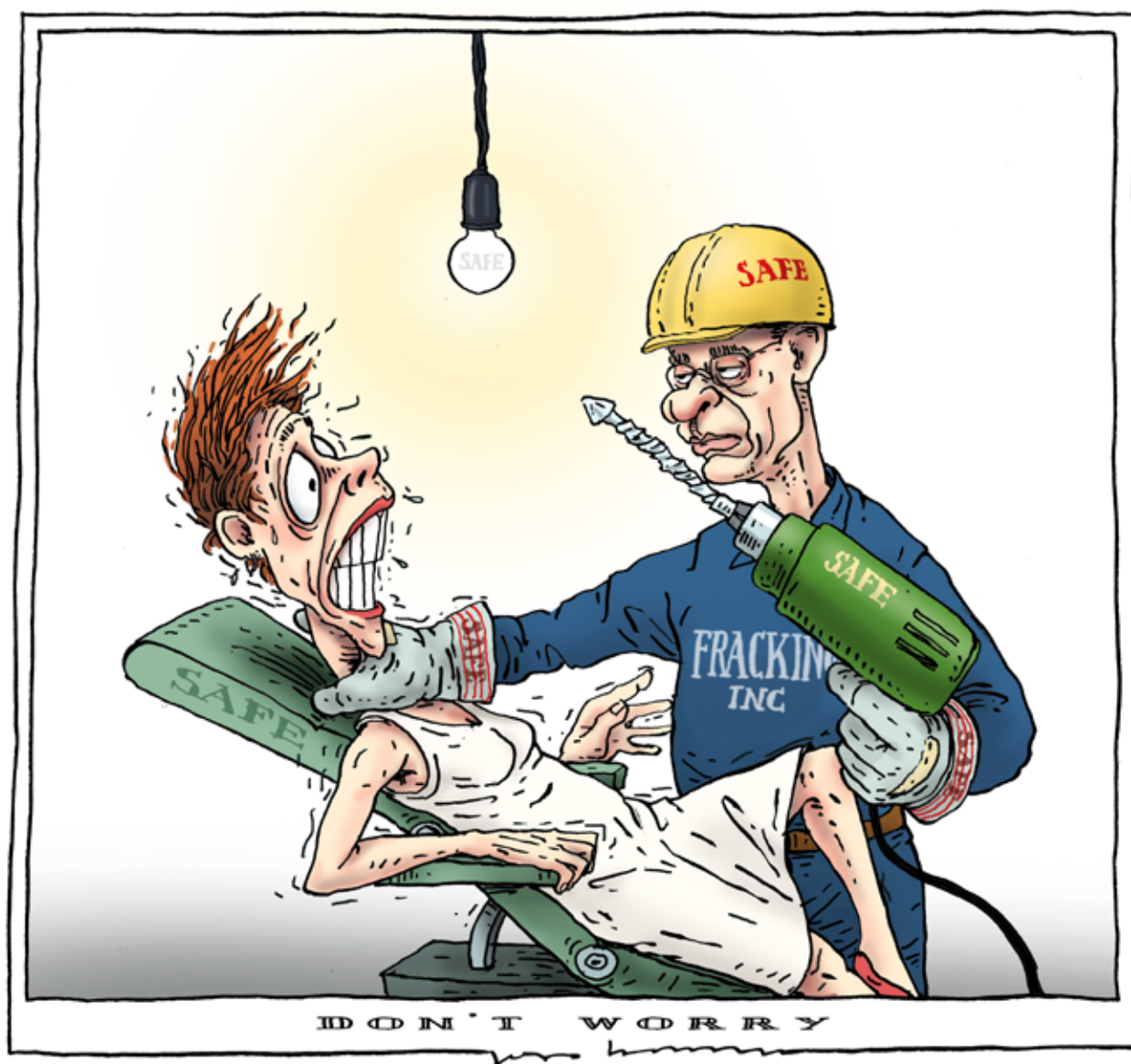
"Because private prison profits come from people spending time behind bars, it's no surprise the companies make business decisions resulting in higher recidivism," said Donald Cohen, executive director of In the Public Interest, a watchdog group that recently published a brief on the subject.

It's unclear at this point whether Wyden's bill will make it out of committee, but Shank said that grassroots pressure to reform the criminal legal system and abolish private prison is only building, so lawmakers should decide whether they want to be on the right side of history, or not.

"We are living in an era of mass incarceration, immigration detention and police brutality," Shank said. "Grassroots movements like Black Lives Matter and Not1More deportation have exposed this violence and provided a unified direction for a growing number of people of all races that are committed to fighting criminalization in all of its forms."

The push to end the REIT tax breaks is just one part of the National Prison Divestment Campaign, an effort spearheaded by Enlace, community groups, and unions seeking to divest public resources from prisons and reinvest them into services that prevent poverty and violence, such as housing, health care, education and community-based safety strategies.

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Study Links Fracking To Asthma Attacks

BY LORRAINE CHOW

Another study has further cemented how fracking can be a human health hazard. People who live close to fracking wells have a higher risk of asthma attacks among asthma patients, according to a Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health study.

The paper, published last month in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, focused on Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale, one of the country's most active and notorious fracking regions. In the years between 2005 and 2013, the area has seen 6,253 unconventional natural gas wells spudded [the start of drilling] on 2,710

pads. Another 4,728 wells were stimulated and 3,706 were in production.

For the study, lead author and PhD candidate Sara G. Rasmussen, MHS, and her colleagues analyzed health records from 2005 through 2012 from the Geisinger Health System, a health care provider that covers 40 counties in north and central Pennsylvania. The researchers identified more than 35,000 asthma patients between the ages of five and 90 years, identifying 20,749 mild attacks, 1,870 moderate ones and 4,782 severe attacks. They then mapped where these patients lived relative to nearby well activity.

The data revealed that people who live nearby a large number or bigger active natural gas wells were 1½ to four times more likely to suffer from asthma attacks compared to those who live farther away. The risk also showed up in all four phases of well development: pad preparation, drilling, stimulation – the actual fracturing – and production.

While the exact cause of the trend was not identified, the authors of the paper suggested that exposure to air pollution and psychosocial stress – increased truck traffic, loud noises and bright lights disrupting sleep – from drilling operation can exacerbate asthma.

“Ours is the first to look at asthma but we now have several studies suggesting adverse health outcomes related to the drilling of unconventional natural gas wells,” Rasmussen said. “Going forward, we need to focus on the exact reasons why these things are happening, because if we know why, we can help make the industry safer.”

Fracking can induce asthma attacks in three ways, as Barbara Gottlieb, the Environment and Health program director at Physicians for Social Responsibility who was not involved in the study explained to USA Today.

As USA Today writes, “The release of volatile organic compounds can interact with other chemicals in the fracking sites to form ground-level ozone, an asthma-inducing pollutant. Increased industrial activity near fracking sites, such as transportation, also aggravates asthma symptoms. And natural gas, or methane, leaks that occur at fracking sites add to asthma exacerbation as well by accelerating climate change and increasing temperatures which increases ground-level ozone.”

This paper adds to the mounting research linking the fracking industry to various health impacts. Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting water and silica sand, and a slurry of toxic chemicals at high pressures into the ground to release gas deposits.

“We are concerned with the growing number of studies that have observed health effects associated with this industry,” said Brian S. Schwartz, MD, MS, an author of the study and professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the Bloomberg School. “We believe it is time to take a more cautious approach to well development with an eye on environmental and public health impacts.”

“Asthma is a common disease with large individual and societal burdens, so the possibility that UNGD [Unconventional natural gas development] may increase risk for asthma exacerbations requires public health attention,” the authors concluded. “As ours is the first study to our knowledge of UNGD and objective respiratory outcomes, and several other health outcomes have not been investigated to date, there is an urgent need for more health studies. These should include more detailed exposure assessment to better characterize pathways and to identify the phases of

development that present the most risk.”

Earlier this year, researchers found that at least five chemicals associated with unconventional oil and gas operations are linked to respiratory health issues on infants and children, including asthma, reduced lung and pulmonary function, increased susceptibility to infection, chest discomfort, difficulty breathing, lung inflammation and other adverse outcomes.

For environmental advocates, this study is further evidence why fracking is unsafe.

“This study’s findings confirm what we have known for years—that fracking is an inherently hazardous process that threatens human health and safety every day,” Wenonah Hauter, founder and executive director of Food & Water Watch said. “More than 17 million Americans live within a mile of a fracking site, and they are all at risk. Despite countless dollars spent by the oil and gas industry in numerous attempts to sway public opinion, the truth is winning out. As recent polling proves, the more Americans hear about fracking, the more they oppose it.”

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Firmly Planted In The Stone Age, Politically

POLITICAL ANIMALS

How Our Stone-Age Brain Gets In The Way Of Smart Politics

By Rick Shenkman

Basic Books

336 pages, \$26.99

BY JOHN WOOD

Rick Shenkman writes a compelling book about our political system and our relation to it. Shenkman gives us insight into how someone like Donald Trump could win the Republican nomination.

To do so, the author takes us back 100 years to New Jersey's four freak shark attacks in 1916. That year, Woodrow Wilson won handily, but not in those NJ counties where the shark attacks happened, even though he was that state's governor just four years earlier. Seems strange for constituents to go against the incumbent in his home state, but it also appears that the people there wanted to lash out against anyone and they took it out on Wilson as the incumbent.

In this case, our instincts went against us, because reasonably, no one could blame Wilson for shark attacks. So, Shenkman asks: "Why don't our instincts work all the time?"

He answers his own question, which is central to the book: We are essentially still in the Stone Age!

Our brains were designed to solve problems as hunter-gatherers. This design fails as we face the incredibly complex problems of the 21st Century. Shenkman says we can't trust our instincts anymore.

When it comes to politics, you can't unquestionably go with your instincts because of the four failures of our human condition: Apathy, not reading politicians properly, not rewarding politicians for truth-telling, and failure to show empathy when it is called for.

Apathy is revealed when we have a population of low-information voters at the highest rates ever.

Shenkman relates that we are driven by gossip, which worked well in tribes of less than Malcolm Gladwell's "magic number" of 150. Since we live in a world of millions, though, this leads to apathy and paralysis. Our brains can't handle too many people.

On top of this, we have hard time reading politicians. Whether it was Ronald Reagan or Richard Nixon, Shenkman finds that our ability to read people is pretty good, but it's rather shallow, especially in large populations.

Shenkman says our brains play tricks on us. For example, in a Harvard study, students watched 10-second videos of people running for governor. They were asked who had won. Fifty-eight percent of time they were right on who won. Instantaneous assessment seems to influence what people favor.

An awful lot of voters are doing this instantaneous selection, which says something about how we assess candidates.

In a study at Princeton, students were shown mug shots of U.S. senators for a measly one second. They correctly identified the winner at a 70% rate, which is much higher than most politicians.

We tend to spend little time deciding to vote for with almost no real information. Our brains fail us.

We all want to feel good about our situations, so Shenkman argues that we fail to reward politicians who tell us the truth. That undermines our abilities to ultimately respond whatever the situation. Example: We hated Jimmy Carter's Malaise speech because we felt bad about ourselves.

Shenkman argues that our bodies and brains are still stuck in the Stone Age. Seeing what we see on TV, we think we know familiar faces. In the Stone Age, we knew three people in our community. We could read faces because we had context, we knew their character. We see people on TV, we think they are familiar.

In addition Shenkman argues that we fail to show empathy. He finds that 1% of the population is psychopathic and one-fourth of those in jail are as well. This is true in politics, as well. Consider the case of Rob Portman, a rabidly, anti-gay U.S. senator. It took Portman's son, coming out as gay, to give the senator

a new perspective. It took empathy, going against abstraction.

Likewise, we unfortunately find it easy to bomb other countries when those people live far away and speak a different language. In those cases, we think in abstractions and empathy fades away.

Shenkman spends some time talking about Linda Taylor, who became Ronald Reagan's political foil – she made \$150,000 a year on welfare, falsely claiming multiple identities. While she in no way represented the average welfare recipient, Reagan found her useful to trigger our natural anger toward freeloaders.

Shenkman argues that we think we can rely on our empathy, but we can't – and it skews debates, because we end up siding with those we most know. For example, in a debate where someone promotes the idea that we need to carpet-bomb ISIS, that person has an advantage over someone who holds the opposite the view and is empathetic. This is because it is difficult to have empathy when people look, speak and even think differently.

Why did Trump win? It's not about him. He instead makes his supporters feel good about themselves and not guilty for their anger toward minorities. They can feel free to be their bigoted selves, a dark side they long felt the need to hide.

Shenkman's book synthesizes a lot of emerging research, integrating the brain with evolution, in a very readable fashion. Unfortunately, the human condition detailed in two-thirds of the book may cause the reader to despair.

Even so, Shenkman is surprisingly optimistic. He finds that education indeed works with low information voters who are the most prone to the type of fear promoted by candidates like Trump.

Luckily, while biological evolution is slow-moving, cultural revolution is rather fast-paced, and we are not slaves to our instincts. We can tell stories to humanize those who are not immediately familiar to us. We need to stay away from

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anger because it paralyzes our thinking, but being anxious opens it up.

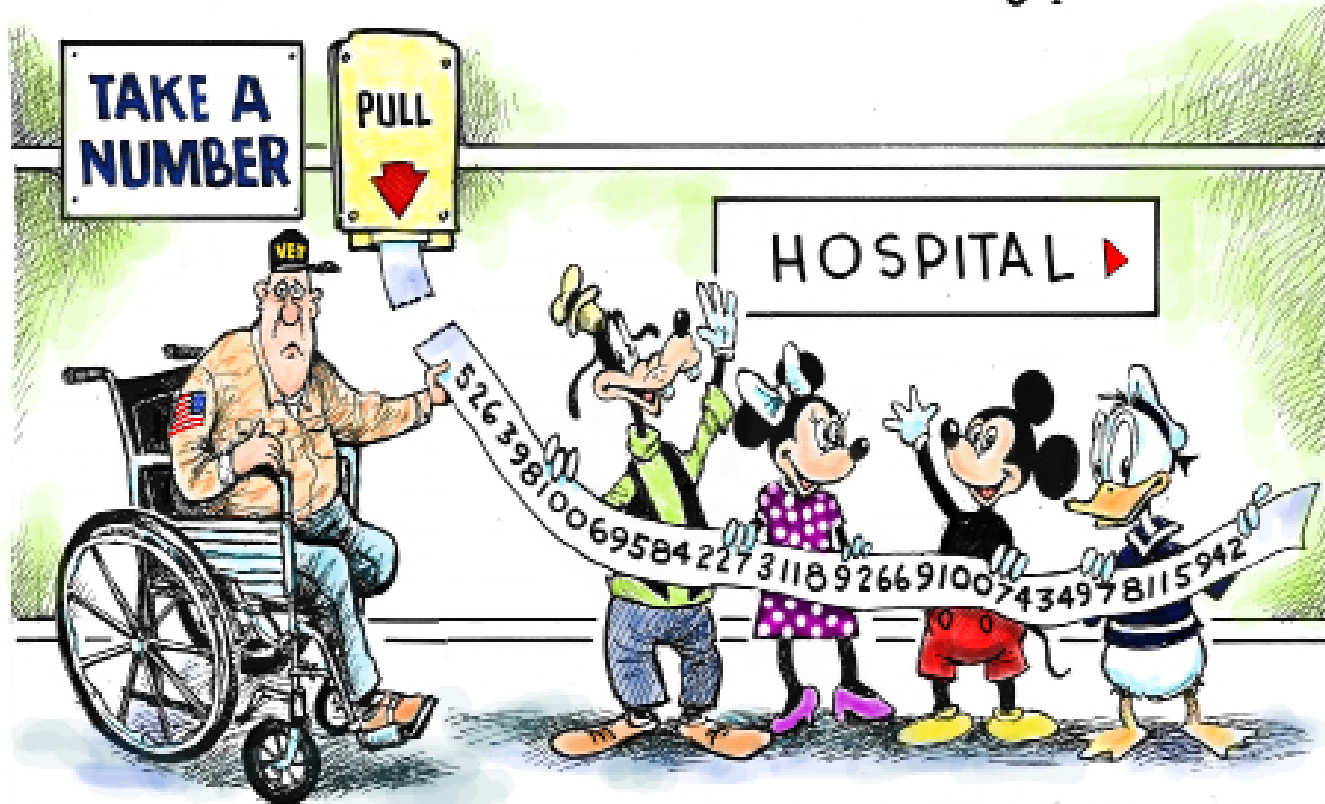
When the world doesn't fit our stories, we can go either way – to fear, anger and war or to hope, ambiguity, anxiousness and open up to science and what is not so fa-

miliar.

We can grow and evolve. We always have and always will.

John Wood, PhD, is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Central Oklahoma and a regular contributor to The Oklahoma Observer.

VA Chief likens veteran care wait times to Disney park lines...



Cure To Some VA Waits Creates New Ills

BY FROMA HARROP

Who oppose calls to privatize the work of the Veterans Affairs Department are sorely tested at times. Complaints two years ago of unreasonably long waits for care at VA health facilities led to “reforms” in several VA programs.

In 2013, applications for VA disability benefits were piling up, with some claims languishing for over a year. The remedy – streamlining the process for judging disability claims – was not done carefully.

The new computerized system demanded less evidence to prove disability. Examiners were given less time to spend with the applicants, forcing them to make rushed evaluations. It was inevitable that some veterans would exploit these weaknesses to obtain unwarranted disability payments or pad their checks.

As a result, the plan to unclog the pipeline for disability claims has ended up re-clogging it with fraud-

ulent ones. Veterans with great needs are bumped out of appointments by fakers. And money that could go to those too disabled to work a regular job gets diverted to the well-bodied.

Veterans themselves are complaining about the scams. Here are two stories as reported in The Wall Street Journal:

Brian Jacobson spent more than year on roadside patrol in Iraq’s Diyala province. He justly receives disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

But when he was applying for the benefit, a clinic staffer advised him thus: Act “like you have a screw loose in your head. Wear clothes with holes that haven’t been washed in a while. And act like you’ve been homeless.” Jacobson knew he was fully qualified for disability compensation, but the coaching, he

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Think things are bad in Oklahoma now? Wait until a Trump Administration gets ahold of the U.S. government purse. In a state so dependent on its military installations and federal civilian jobs, it could make the Dust Bowl-Depression era look like boom times.

Local Control

Big Ag is promoting SQ 777 – the cleverly, but inaptly named “Right to Farm” proposition on November’s ballot – because it wants to enshrine in the state Constitution the ability to do whatever the hell it wants.

No local say. No state government oversight. No way to ensure water isn’t poisoned, air isn’t polluted and neighborhoods aren’t protected from feedlots.

SQ 777 is up for statewide vote because the Republican-dominated Legislature heeded its Big Ag masters and, yet again, broke its promises to rank-and-file Oklahomans that local control was best. Sacrosanct. Inviolable.

Remember, the GOP majority rammed through legislation blocking cities from setting a higher minimum wage and expanding worker rights. It also thwarted municipal authority to ban hydraulic fracturing and other oil and gas activities.

Now it wants the voters to give Big Ag license to operate unfettered – claiming it would protect farmers and ranchers from wild-eyed, liberal, out-of-state animal rights groups like the Humane Society and PETA.

Other states seem to be operating just fine, thank you, by allowing local governments to set standards that work best for them. For example, five counties in California have now banned fracking. Two other counties also are considering such prohibitions.

Interestingly, Colorado voters will decide two initiatives in November that would enhance local control over fracking – one that would give cities authority to impose stricter health and safety regulations than the state and another that would create 2,500-foot buffer zones between new oil-gas drilling and homes, schools, playgrounds, water sources and other sensitive areas.

Not surprising, the drilling industry – including such companies as Anadarko Petroleum Corp., Noble Energy and Whiting Petroleum – is spending millions in hopes of killing the initiatives.

No doubt SQ 777 is a pre-emptive strike against a similar pro-environmental movement here. Oklahomans headed to the polls Nov. 8 would be wise not to vote away their rights to protect their backyards.

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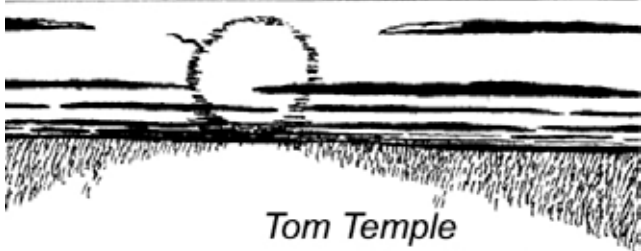
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Observerscope



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Laurel: To Journal Record Editor Ted Streuli, to be honored Aug. 10 at the Voice Awards in Los Angeles for his work in mental health. The award is a program of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Happy 90th birthday this month to dedicated Observer reader Monroe F. Reece of Tulsa. Have an extra piece of cake for us!

George W. Bush tells former staffers gathered in Dallas he's worried he could be the "last Republican president." His disastrous administration set the stage for Trump's nomination.

Priorities? 98.5% of Millennials can correctly identify Pokémon character Pikachu, but only 61% can identify Vice President Joe Biden. – Time

In handicapping the presidential race, consider this: Catholics represent 22% of the electorate – similar to the number of blacks and Latinos, combined – and were on winning side of the popular vote in the last 10 presidential elections.

Laurel: To Northern Oklahoma College, ranked No. 1 among public two-year colleges for students' return on investment, according to SmartAsset. Average starting salary for grads is 1.9 times the total cost of attending NOC.

Edmond's City Council votes to oppose SQ 779, the proposed one-cent sales tax hike for education. It's a tough spot for municipalities – good schools keep and attract residents, but the sales tax is their primary source of revenue.

It won't be official until later this year, but it appears certain OK's public schools will be majority minority this year. White students outnumbered non-whites last year by only 26.

Forty percent of unarmed people who die at the hands of police are black men – even though they represent only 6% of the U.S. population. Of the 1,502 killed by on-duty officers since Jan. 1, 2015, 732 were white, 381 black and 382 of unknown race. – Time/Washington Post

ity Leader Harry Reid. Harry has come up with a million dollars to help a so-called Democrat [with a lousy record and who supposedly donated a large sum of money to Mitt Romney four years ago] to run against Alan in the Florida primary.

We Democrats must come up with a way to stop this internal battle.

Editor, The Observer:

Trump arrived in the midst of a cloud and strode forth like an emperor of old. But note: in the biblical tradition, the cloud is a symbol of God. God speaks from a cloud, commending Jesus as his Son. Also, the Messiah is foretold as returning on clouds of glory.

And as a friend pointed out: the supermodel is the queen of Sheba!

Editor's Note: Jeff Hamilton is a former Democratic state representative who served from 1984-94.

Editor, The Observer:

There has to be something fundamentally wrong with religion when it is used as a platform, tool and weapon to rule the lives of citizens, whether of that religious persuasion or not.

Yet, people continue to blindly flock to these beliefs without question or shame.

The Trump GOP has allowed the delusional evangelical wing of the party to write much of the GOP campaign platform. As expected, it is filled with hate,



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

bigotry, discrimination and punitive measures to be imposed against citizens and groups that the faithful find unsuitable. In part, it states that the U.S. Constitution is essentially subservient to the “god given, natural, unalienable rights of the people” – to be determined by the faithful, I assume.

I am amazed how card-carrying Republicans buy into these positions without hesitation or objection. Essentially exhibiting a cult-like mentality and devotion to this faith-based political dogma.

Maybe it is time to reconsider the place of religion in society. Perhaps it is time to begin taxing the property and income of these tax-exempt institutions. If the church wants to continue to be actively involved politically in government and the laws that effect citizens, as they do now [see the fingerprints of major religious leaders and figureheads on the 2016 GOP platform], then religious institutions should be taxed like all other citizens. Pay to play as it were.

It is time for a change in the way we do business with religious institutions.

Michael R. Collins
Ponca City

Editor, The Observer:

Oklahoma Gas & Electric recently gave themselves

Clinton

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federal officials in the development of federal policies affecting our communities.

She has been a vocal and visionary leader for tribal citizens as a supporter of the Violence Against Women Act, Tribal Colleges, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Secretary Clinton is the most qualified candidate to be president because she understands that our brightest future lies in strong relationships, especially as we strive to bring equality and economic development to Indian Country. History teaches us that failure to include the voices of tribal leaders leads to devastating results for Indian people. This dialogue is critical to productive federal-tribal relationships.

As president, Hillary Clinton will continue an active dialogue with tribal governments. She will focus a progressive agenda on the needs of our youth, our women, our veterans, our natural resources and access to quality health care for our people for generations.

I hope you join me in supporting Hillary Clinton as this race moves forward, as she is the best equipped and most experienced person in the race to become our next commander-in-chief.

Bill John Baker is principal chief of the Cherokee Nation.

a \$69.6 million rate increase at ratepayers' expense. They couldn't wait for the Oklahoma Corporation Commission to approve or deny their \$92.5 million rate increase request. So a technicality in the law permitted the big utility to just raise their own rates. It sure doesn't work like that at my job.

You would think OG&E is barely squeaking by financially, but actually the company reported revenues of \$2.2 billion and net income of \$271 million for 2015, but paid no income taxes because of accumulated federal and state tax benefits earned in prior years. On Jan. 1, 2016, the company still held more than \$150 million in unused state tax credits.

Citizens should oppose OG&E's \$92.5 million rate increase. It would double the base rate – that's the amount we pay no matter how much or little electricity we use – from \$13 to \$26 per month. The rate increase would also create a more regressive “demand charge” pay structure by allowing the big utility to identify our highest 15 minutes of electric use during the month and multiply that kilowatt use by \$2.75 as an additional charge on our bills.

No publicly regulated utility in the U.S. has ever been allowed to place a demand charge on residential users. We don't want to be first. Now is not the time. Please tell the Oklahoma Corporation Commission at 405.521.2211 before it's too late.

Phyllis Bryant
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said, made him "feel dishonest."

Another veteran of the Iraq War, Jack Murphy, said he was told to say that he had "horrible nightmares" and was "too shellshocked to do anything." He was to add that he's impotent, even as his wife was expecting. As for his pregnant wife, the friends reportedly said, "They don't know anything."

Adding to the problem has been an easing of standards for obtaining disability payments. For example, proof of a traumatizing event in war was once required for claiming PTSD. Now it isn't, which helps explain why PTSD claims nearly doubled from 2011 to 2015.

One wishes these applicants, though a minority of veterans, would refuse to lie their way to benefits that could go to their suffering comrades. But human nature being such, it's obvious that if you open a path to receiving a monthly check with lies, some people will try to take it. This applies to all government programs.

Veterans' disability payments have soared from about \$15 billion in 2000 to over \$60 billion last year.

Such discussions must also note the very good reasons for rocketing disability costs, unrelated to fraud.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have drawn American troops into very dangerous and stressful missions, creating a growing population of injured and sick veterans. Improvements in battlefield medicine are saving the lives of many grievously injured troops who would otherwise not have survived. They return home with broken bodies.

Those wounded in service to their country are entitled to the best of care. If their injuries impede their ability to work, then a monthly disability check is their due. But though all veterans deserve thanks for their service, they are not entitled to commit fraud.

The solution for long waits – whether for decisions on disability claims or receiving medical attention – should be more staff to do the work. Opening opportunities for cheating serves neither taxpayers nor veterans stuck in the resulting gridlock. It creates unfairness all around.

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Kid Wisdom

A Sunday School teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five- and six-year-olds.

After explaining the commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother," she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, "Thou shall not kill."

An honest seven-year-old told her parents that Billy Brown had kissed her after class.

"How did that happen?" gasped her mother.

"It wasn't easy," admitted the young lady, "but three girls helped me catch him."

One day, a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head.

"Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?" she asked.

Her mother replied, "Well, every time you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thinks about this awhile, then asked, "So how come

ALL of Grandma's hairs are white?"

For weeks, a six-year old lad kept telling his first-grade teacher about the baby brother or sister that was expected at his house.

One day the mother allowed the boy to feel the movements of the unborn child. The six-year old was obviously impressed, but made no comment. Furthermore, he stopped telling his teacher about the impending event.

The teacher finally sat the boy on her lap and said, "Tommy, whatever has become of that baby brother or sister you were expecting at home?"

Tommy burst into tears and confessed, "I think Mommy ate it!"

– Thanks to A.J. Henshaw for sharing

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*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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