

# THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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## A NEW LEGACY

### *How Oklahoma Is Turning Around Its Tragic History Of Indian Education*

BY BAH-HE-TOYA-MAH DAVENPORT

**W**hen President Obama visited our state recently, his first stop was the Choctaw Nation in southeast Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation covers some of the poorest parts of the state – where 32.3% of children live in poverty and unemployment rates are well above the rest of the state.

Because of the serious economic struggles of the region and the strong partner that the federal government has in the Choctaw Nation, the area has been included in the first round of President Obama's Promise Zones, where local and federal resources will be concentrated to improve human development and well-being.

Part of the Choctaw Nation Promise Zone initiative is an intensive summer school program for 4-year-olds to third graders, including both American Indian and



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#### OUR MOTTO

To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

#### OUR CREDO

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

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## Observations

### Sow, Reap

With regular unleaded dancing around \$2 a gallon, many Oklahomans don't know whether to rejoice or recoil.

On one hand, it's glorious to fill up at about half the pump price of two years ago. On the other, plunging oil prices cost the state 9,000-plus energy jobs between December and July.

One economist calls it a "mini-recession." Maybe it is, in strictly economic terms. But for those losing high-paying jobs and for vital government services financed with tax revenues, it's a full-blown calamity.

Once again, Oklahoma's political leaders proved themselves incapable of managing an energy boom. Remember the mid-1980s bumper sticker? *Please, Lord, give me one more oil boom. I promise not to piss it away next time.* Well, guess what.

Greed and power intersected again in a disastrous series of political decisions – the worst rewarding the state's carbon barons with corporate tax credits and individual income tax cuts that helped them amass extraordinarily personal wealth.

In addition, the corporatist- and Republican-dominated Legislature broke repeated promises to diversify an Oklahoma economy long too reliant on two sectors: energy and agriculture. The state has made some small strides in biotech and aerospace, but not nearly enough to soften the blow of stagnant natural gas and plummeting oil prices.

As noted economist Mark Snead put it, in an interview with the Jour-

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## THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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Check out The Observer's fresh new web site, [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net), going live Labor Day weekend. It includes a calendar – send us a note about your event and we'll get it posted!

Sad, but safe prediction, given current legislative leadership: Even Labor Commissioner Mark Costello's murder won't change the fact that a year from now county jails will still be Oklahoma's primary mental health facilities.

Laurel: To U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, R-Moore, not suffering fools at recent Town Hall meetings. Unlike too many of his colleagues, he attempts to bring wingnut constituents back to reality.

Sen. Jim Halligan is hanging 'em up – the Stillwater Republican and ex-OSU president won't seek a third term in 2016. A possible Democratic pickup?

Dart: To Speaker Jeff Hickman, decrying the state superintendent's plan to cover the cost of ACT tests for high school juniors. Maybe he doesn't have to worry about such trivial expenses.

Eastern Oklahoma State College ordered to pay feds more than \$1 million after some Antlers' campus students received aid to which they were not entitled. The school is weighing possible appeals.

Laurel: To President Obama, dumping McKinley in favor of Denali, the name given the mountain by Alaska's natives. It's past time to review names slapped on other sacred sites over the years.

Tulsa Sen. Rick Brinkley's fall from grace was epic: From shoe-in as next Senate president to pleading guilty to federal fraud charges in less than four months.

Dart: To Sen. Bryce Marlatt, proposing a raid on TSET to fund teacher salary increases. Lawmakers should fund pay raises honestly – by repealing years of income tax cuts that benefitted the wealthy.

Don't forget: The HD 85 special election in northwest OKC is Sept. 8. Democrat Cyndi Munson and Republican Chip Carter are battling to succeed the late Rep. David Dank.

Laurel: To Robin Meyers, for 30 years of courageously speaking biblical truth at OKC's Mayflower Congregational Church. He focuses on the Bible's red letters – opposite of much of the state's religious-political "leadership."

Gov. Mary Fallin hosts 19th annual Septemberfest at Oklahoma History Center on Sept. 12. There is no charge for the family-friendly 10 a.m.-4 p.m. event that includes tours of the Governor's Mansion. For more information, visit [www.fomok.org](http://www.fomok.org).

Dart: To PSO, gouging customers who refuse installation of smart meters in their homes. Of course, it's mostly just silly paranoia ... but charging \$183 upfront and \$28 a month for opt-outers is excessive.

Did you know? The population of Oklahoma's five largest counties – Oklahoma, Tulsa, Cleveland, Canadian and Comanche – nearly equals the state's 72 small counties – only about 40,000 difference out of 3.8 million.

Laurel: To Jackie Archer, named Oklahoma CareerTech's teacher of the year for her innovative biomedical science and medicine program at Lawton-based Great Plains Technology Center.

Embattled state GOP Chair Randy Brogdon may seek to reclaim his former state Senate seat, vacated by Sen. Rick Brinkley's resignation. Special primary election is Nov. 10, general Jan. 12.

Latest episode of As The Courthouse Door Turns: Billionaire Harold Hamm drops defamation suit against fellow oilman Mickey Thompson, but is sued by ex-wife Sue Ann Arnall over oil investments.

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# Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Gov. Mary Mary demeans the state and the office of Gov when she turns the back yard of her house into a trailer park!

Donald Smith  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Webster defines a hero as “noted for courageous acts, one who has risked or given his life.”

I do not care for Sen. McCain’s politics, but that does not take away the fact that he definitely is a hero. All wartime pilots are heroes who chose to take off many times a day from a small moving runway. On evening flights, they flew back to locate their dimly-lit ship in a big, black ocean. The ship seemed to be postage stamp size from their view. Just because they didn’t get shot down, they did encounter gun and rocket fire everyday as part of their missions in Vietnam.

When John McCain crashed, he received many broken bones that were never properly set and they bother him today. He was also mistreated and tortured. When the Viet Cong found him to be the son of Admiral McCain, the commander of the Pacific Fleet, they offered

to release him for PR purposes. John McCain refused, knowing the torture would continue. He said he would not go unless all the prisoners were released.

On the other hand, Trump, whose comments about McCain do not offend Homer Hulme [August Letters], got many deferments rather than go to Vietnam. To demean McCain, using the words of a clown, is not worthy conduct of an officer and a gentleman.

Nadine Jewell  
Norman

*Editor’s Note: The author describes herself as the “proud wife” of a retired U.S. Navy Master Chief.*

Editor, The Observer:

Criminal justice reform is not my expertise. I was a career high school Spanish teacher for 40 years, and am recently retired. It is only in the past few years that I have become aware of how desperate the need is in our state for criminal justice reform, particularly when it comes to women.

I have seen first-hand the damage done to entire families when mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and friends are imprisoned. I do not blame the correctional system

for locking up someone who commits a crime; I blame the offender.

However, it is clear to me now that Oklahoma’s “system” is exceedingly excessive in doling out punishment while not doing near enough to rehabilitate offenders so that they may eventually lead productive, contributing lives.

Oklahoma’s correctional system is unsustainable. We should be using our hard-earned tax dollars to build more roads, medical clinics, and schools, not more prisons.

The time to “study the issue” is past. The time for common-sense action to reduce our inmate population is today. Without turning the focus to rehabilitation, Oklahoma is doomed to continue its No. 1 ranking as the state which imprisons the most women per capita in the nation.

I beseech you: if you are in a position to do something to reform our criminal justice system, please act now.

Susan Harding  
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

In the Aug. 24 issue of the Oklahoman there was a report of the Franklin Graham Festival.

The story also quoted Gov. Mary Fallin, who, it seems, crowned Franklin with accolades of praise for his leadership. She also noted that America will cease to be great if God is continually taken out of our country. This theme was repeated often by the Theologian-in-Chief, Ronald Reagan.

At best this warning is nonsense and at worst it is fear mongering. I would point out to our governor, and I said the same thing in the Reagan era: God is omnipresent by definition, which means God is everywhere and cannot be removed by any form of government – democratic, communist or Nazi. And God is also omnipotent. God is all-powerful and can overcome any opposition. And furthermore, it is

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## *Religious Misdirection*

**T**he 18th Century British intellectual Samuel Johnson is credited with coining the phrase “patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” After months of deceitful rhetoric over the state Supreme Court’s Ten Commandments monument ruling, it may be time to replace “patriotism” with “religiosity.”

It was hardly surprising the Legislature’s theocrats went ballistic when the Oklahoma Constitution’s strict church-state separation was upheld. After all, they cling to revisionist history that America was established as a Christian nation.

Nor was it unexpected when they called for a statewide referendum aimed at excising the language that prevents the monument’s placement on public property.

What is scoundrel-esque, however, is that a proposed constitutional revision wouldn’t really be about the Ten Commandments at all – it would be about legalizing school vouchers.

For years, anti-public education forces have worked to divert taxpayer dollars from public to private and parochial schools. They have been thwarted repeatedly by two things: the state Constitution’s Article 2, Section 5 and public sentiment.

It was only last year a state judge ruled the latest voucher scheme unconstitutional – the Lindsey Nicole Henry “scholarship” that would have allowed parents of special education students to use tax dollars to send their children to private schools.

And just this year, a statewide Public Opinion Strategies poll found Oklahomans by a 2-1 margin oppose vouchers, no doubt recognizing that cash-strapped public schools can ill-afford to lose any more funding.

That’s why the push is so strong to focus a potential statewide referendum on the Ten Commandments, not on the fact that excising Article 2, Section 5 would open the door to vouchers.

Former Gov. Frank Keating, for example, recently authored an op-ed in the Oklahoman that called for the church-state separation to be eliminated, claim-

ing it was based on an anachronistic 19th Century, anti-Catholic proposal known as the Blaine Amendment.

Except that it wasn’t. According to an ACLU-Oklahoma primer, Blaine was a proposed amendment – never ratified – to the U.S. Constitution aimed at “ensuring that public schools could not be operated by a church or otherwise under the control of any particular religion.”

It wasn’t until three decades later, of course, that Oklahoma became a state and – contrary to Keating’s revisionism – Article 2, Section 5 wasn’t a Blaine scion. It actually was the handiwork of a coalition of Christian ministers, Native Americans and other constitutional convention delegates responding to “abusive practices in which some government-funded religious schools forcibly Christianized Indian children,” the ACLU reports.

State Rep. David Perryman, D-Chickasha, also debunked the anti-Catholic canard: “In truth, this type of protection was adopted in states across the country when Catholics objected to the use of Protestant texts in public schools and sought public funding for schools in which Catholic texts would be used.

“Since America was a melting pot that invited people of all races, creeds, religions and cultural backgrounds, most state governments believed that the common good would be served by providing that no public money be used for the benefit of any sect, church, denomination or system of religion, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon or otherwise, whatever the future might bring [including Islam].”

The strategy by pro-voucher forces is pretty clever if you think about it. A majority of Oklahomans clearly likes the idea of a Ten Commandments monument at the state Capitol – 73% supported it in a 2003 statewide survey. If they can be convinced to focus on the monument – and on “religious liberty” – they might not notice they’re voting against something they adore: public education.

Religiosity, indeed, has become the last refuge of a scoundrel.

# ***In Support Of Supreme Court's Ten Commandments Ruling***

*An open letter to the Oklahoma Legislature from the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma:*

We strongly support the decision of the Oklahoma Supreme Court that the Ten Commandments monument should not be on the grounds of our state Capitol. Others have pointed out that this monument on state government property violates the letter and spirit of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Oklahoma County District Attorney has made an eloquent personal statement, as a committed Christian, as to why placing this monument on the grounds of state government is inappropriate, offensive to many, and even hypocritical.

The wording of the Oklahoma Constitution is very clear and the Supreme Court has done what it is supposed to do – to rule on the constitutionality of a law or action. We urge that our legislators, governor, other Oklahoma officials, and Oklahoma citizens accept and obey this ruling. This was not a close decision, but a 7-2 vote, so a reversal of their decision was very unlikely. The Oklahoma Attorney General asked for a judicial review of the decision, and the Oklahoma Supreme Court turned this down. Further attempts to reverse this decision would be a significant waste of taxpayers' money.

The Ten Commandments are important to many of us as a religious document. That they are part of the expression of our religious beliefs, and play a role in guiding our relationship with God and with our fellow human beings is not altered or prevented by insisting that the state abstain from any action, including funding, that would favor or promote any one religion or part thereof. There is nothing in our national constitution nor in our state constitution that refers to the Ten Commandments. To treat them as an "historical document" trivializes their religious significance, and is not an acceptable argument for placing them on the grounds of government property.

Those who would like to classify our nation as a Christian nation would do a grave disservice to the founders of our nation and to the citizens of our nation and state today. Our founders, whatever their personal religious beliefs, clearly were opposed to the creation of a theocracy. Governed by colonial England, in which there was an official state religion, and in which the relationship between crown and church involved a history of persecution of other religions, they had no desire to allow anything similar to be part of the free nation they were creating here in America. Indeed, they realized then, as we should realize now, that the various legislative proposals that would move us in the direction of a national religion would lead to a nation in which people of all

but one religion would be merely tolerated, second class citizens. Too many have forgotten the history of Protestant colonies persecuting Catholics, and Catholic colonies persecuting Protestants. Baptists had much to fear from other Christian denominations in the Colonies. Such a situation repeatedly has been the cause of prejudicial persecution in other nations over a span of centuries. How many people of various religions, including Christian denominations, fled their home countries for this reason? How many people of various faiths have been uprooted and/or persecuted by theocratic domination, something they hoped would not happen or that they did not think could happen? Our constitution seeks to preserve true freedom of religion: freedom of religion and freedom from religion, freedom to practice one's religion of choice or not to do so.

We also are very concerned about the calls to impeach members of the Supreme Court or to return to the discredited idea of electing and re-electing members of our higher courts. Our Supreme Court did exactly what it is supposed to do. Acting independently from the other branches of government, it decided NOT what the majority may want, but what is constitutional. Our nation's founders knew how important it is to prevent the tyranny of the majority from depriving others of their constitutional rights. Our legislative branch has the right to make laws. We expect our legislators to be smart enough and responsible enough not to pass laws which, predictably, are unconstitutional and will waste taxpayers' money with subsequent appeals. The current process for selection of justices in our higher courts is a good one, one that provides for selection of highly competent individuals, preserves their independence, and prevents legislators or the governor from threatening them when their decision is not what the legislature or governor wants.

*Carl J. Rubenstein, MD, President, Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma*

*Rev. Bob Lawrence, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance of Tulsa*

*Rabbi Jack Moline, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance, National Office*

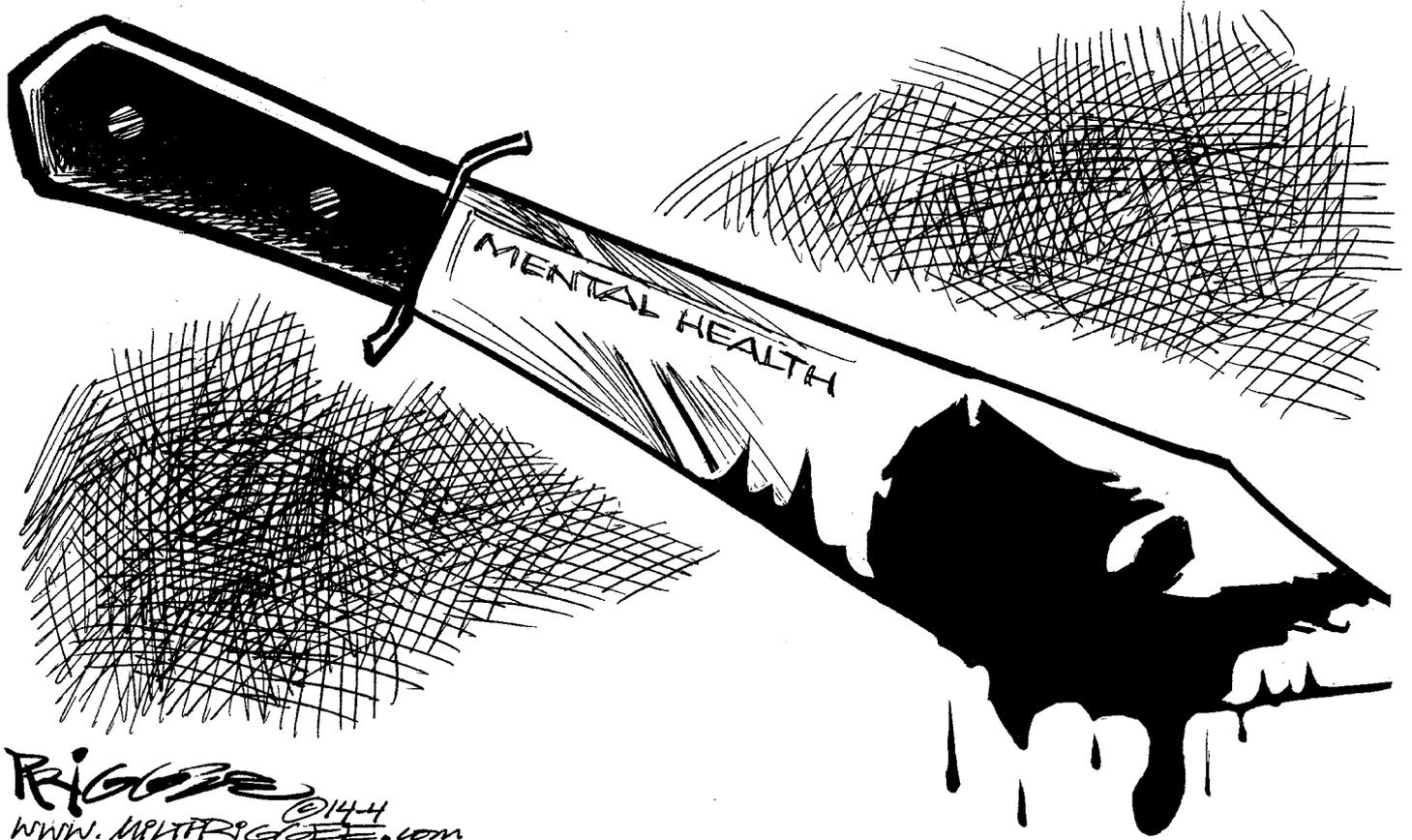
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*Joan & Michael Korenblit, Respect Diversity Foundation*

*CAIR Oklahoma*

*Rabbi Vered Harris, Temple B'nai Israel, Oklahoma City*

*Rabbi Abby Jacobson, Temple Emanuel, Oklahoma City*



## 'No One But Ourselves To Blame'

*As Oklahoma mourns the murder of its Labor Commissioner by his mentally ill son and prepares to execute yet another death row inmate, renowned attorney Don Holladay makes the case that penny-wise policy choices are backfiring, shoving an already shaky criminal justice system to the brink.*

**M**any like to point to the death penalty's retention as a necessary ingredient of our state's get-tough-on-crime philosophy. Instead, it represents just one more misperceived component of a criminal justice system that is sliding off a cliff.

If Oklahomans really want to be tough on crime, our elected leadership is going to have to confront the obvious: Oklahoma is now a national leader in virtually every important category that contributes to crime in our communities. If we want to reduce the costs of crime for the taxpayers, and make our communities safer, we are going to have to spend money to save money.

No one can seriously dispute the direct links be-

tween crime, inadequate funding of mental health services, and failure to address the drug and alcohol addiction of those we lock-up. Embarrassingly, Oklahoma is currently a leader in the number of incarcerated prisoners with a history of, or symptoms of, mental illness.

In the Department of Corrections [DOC] 2013 annual report, 75% of our female inmates and 53% of male inmates had been diagnosed with mental illness. One-half of those behind bars with a treatable mental illness entered the system for a non-violent offense. Likewise, the 2012 DOC report showed nearly one-half of our Oklahoma prison population was behind bars for drug and alcohol offenses.

To incarcerate a prisoner costs the taxpayers \$48

per day; to fund community health services for that same prisoner costs \$25 per day. On an annualized basis, we pay \$19,000 for each prisoner in the system. Conversely, a good drug court program runs \$5,000 per offender. Importantly, the percentage of those who re-enter the criminal justice system after graduating from a drug court/treatment program is 6.5%, versus 23% for those who did not have access to such programs [based on a three-year study].

To make matters worse, common sense tells us that neglect of our state's vital needs in other areas eventually impacts the criminal justice system as well.

I am now 71 years of age. Never, in the past 50 years, can I recall Oklahoma having elected leaders who are so oblivious to our state's infrastructure, public services, educational needs, and the protection of our most vulnerable residents.

We have recklessly [or intentionally] let Oklahoma slide to the bottom of the heap nationally in virtually every area that counts. It should be no surprise that

the funds are not there to meet Oklahoma's most vital problems, this is just a ruse. Our legislative and executive branches were not interested in doing what needed to be done when oil was \$110 per barrel. After all, the reports that condemn our failures didn't just happen this year.

The reality is our criminal justice needs, our critical public needs, and ultimately our children's future have been hijacked by elected decision-makers who think visionary leadership primarily means reducing taxes [who among us really thinks that the next refund of \$31 for the average family will solve anything?]; or bashing the federal government [by claiming it is "broke" even though we take back more federal dollars each year than we pay in]; or criticizing state and federal judiciary constitutional decisions as "ignoring the will of the people."

There are exceptions, of course – public servants who understand the proper and necessary functions of state government, are dedicated to the public good,

Our criminal justice needs, our critical public needs, and ultimately our children's future have been hijacked by elected decision-makers who think visionary leadership primarily means reducing taxes ... or bashing the federal government ... or criticizing state and federal judiciary constitutional decisions as 'ignoring the will of the people.'

our failures ultimately and logically contribute to the spiral of crime.

Thus, in addition to ignoring critical mental health and drug/alcohol treatment issues, Oklahoma has deliberately turned down federal Medicaid expansion funds which would allow the most poor and their children access to affordable health care; we have become a national leader in allowing child poverty to go unchecked; each year we stay at or near the top in teen-age pregnancies; we stay at the highest level for the number of women incarcerated on a per capita basis; we stay in the bottom tier on a per capital basis for funding of public education; and we stay blind to the need to adequately prepare our children to enter the future's workforce.

The impact of these choices on the prevention of crime seems obvious.

If Oklahoma wants to create vibrant, safe communities, it has chosen the wrong path. Is it really any wonder that one recently reported study tagged Oklahoma as 45th in the nation for the "quality of life" of its citizens?

It doesn't have to be like this, but as long as it continues, we have no one but ourselves to blame. While some hide behind our state's recent oil slump and resultant budget problems as an explanation for why

who realize the meaning of being truly visionary, and who are willing to accept financial accountability. Unfortunately, these few voices are consistently muffled by "no spending" rhetoric, and an executive branch that always points a finger toward Washington, DC to explain any shortcoming.

Until the voters are ready to say "enough" to those who try to undermine the functioning of what responsible state government is all about, and until we stop listening to soundbite nonsense about everything except what is important, our slow train wreck will continue.

Our criminal justice system will grow worse, our quality of life will diminish further [despite the natural beauty of the place where we live and the friendliness of our residents], and the next generation – at least those who stay – will be left to pick-up the pieces.

*Oklahoma City attorney Don Holladay is best known most recently for representing two Tulsa County couples, Mary Bishop and Sharon Baldwin and Gay Phillips and Susan Barton, in their successful fight for marriage equality. The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed their rights to marry last October when it declined to review an appeals court decision striking down Oklahoma's same-sex marriage ban.*

# When Will State Come To Grips With Drug Addiction?

BY RON duBOIS

**A** National Institute on Drug Abuse pamphlet says, "Throughout much of the last century, scientists studying drug abuse labored in the shadows of myths and misconceptions about the nature of addiction. When science began to study addictive behavior in the 1930s, people addicted to drugs were thought to be morally flawed and lacking in willpower.

"Those views shaped society's responses to drug abuse [the war on drugs/drug prohibition] treating it as a moral failing rather than a health problem. This led to an emphasis on punitive rather than preventative and therapeutic actions.

"Today, thanks to science, our views and our responses to drug abuse have changed dramatically. Groundbreaking discoveries about the brain have revolutionized our understanding of drug addiction, enabling us to respond effectively to the problem."

The pamphlet, *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*, states unequivocally, "As a result of scientific research, we know that addiction is a disease that affects both brain and behavior."

In keeping with NIDA's statement that addiction is a disease, the Payne County Democratic Party at its spring convention adopted the following: "We will work to support treating drug misuse as a medical rather than a criminal issue. We support methadone maintenance in county jails and prisons ... "

When will the misplaced bigotry, stigma, hypocrisy, corruption; the laws that harass, imprison, fine and impose probation and community service; the moneymaking drug courts; the imposition of unrealistic financial burdens on both addict and families as punishment for a disease as real as cancer change in favor of a rational public health approach? We can no longer be blind to the way the nation's failed drug war treats citizens with the disease of addiction.

What if the drugs used to treat diseases such as cancer, diabetes, etc., were, for emotional reasons, made illegal? The public no doubt would understand that people with cancer would want to obtain medication to prolong or save their lives. Most Americans would feel sympathy for those who broke the law in order to obtain an illegal substance. The public could see that these laws would foster crime.

Yet the public has been unwilling to see that the same is true of drug prohibition. While it accepts many medical conditions as diseases, it lags in understanding that addiction is also a disease.

Recently the same message came forth in a spate of excellent television documentaries, books and

pamphlets, namely that addiction is an organic brain disease that is a health – not a criminal – issue.

The director of the Indiana Consortium for Mental Health Services Research states that many people falsely see mental disorders as something that never goes away. Joyce Butland, author of NAMI's national Family-to-Family Education Program, defines stigma as "an invisible mark of disgrace or dishonor." She defines stigma in mental illness as "the banishment and scapegoating of people with mental illness whose conditions are considered so fearful, and so repugnant, they are judged to deserve their fate."

When you attach a feeling of permanence to this it justifies, in some ways, a person's sense of "otherness" or less-than-humanness. The terms "culture of otherness" and "stigma" mean the same thing.

Although especially virulent in Oklahoma, the "culture of otherness" and stigma – "the invisible mark of disgrace or dishonor" – affects the history of nations. It is deadly because its victims are unaware they have it.

Why should methadone maintenance in jails and prisons be supported nationwide? Because it is a death sentence not to. Stigma as "the invisible mark of disgrace and dishonor" and the "culture of otherness" enter with the message: "It doesn't matter, the world is better off without them."

Widespread stigma contributes to Oklahoma's No. 1 national ranking in jail/prison suicide. Equally disturbing is that the same ranking applies to the general population.

My son died in the Payne County jail, where medical policy requires "cold turkey" methadone withdrawal. Such a policy is based on inadequate medical understanding that the pains of methadone withdrawal are so great that suicide becomes preferable. Sen. James Halligan, R-Stillwater, and Rep. Lee Denney, R-Cushing, drafted legislation to correct this.

If such a proposal ever becomes law, my son's death will stand as a major victory for justice. If not, the science of brain biology, substance use disorder, and enlightened health care for jail and prison inmates will be swept under the rug, awaiting future enlightened legislation.

*Ron duBois is a retired Oklahoma State University professor. His son, Peter, 49, died in July 2010 after he fell or jumped over a four-foot guard rail and landed 12 feet below on the floor of the Payne County Jail. Ron duBois says the flawed open railing system allows suicidal inmates to harm themselves, when not given proper medical evaluation and medication.*



## Oklahoma's National Parks Suffer From Tea Party Congress' Neglect

BY JOSEPH H. CARTER SR.

Oklahoma's two sites operated by the National Park Service [NPS] suffer about \$34 million in needed maintenance that had been left unfunded and neglected at the end of last fiscal year, according to the park service's stewardship report.

Most glaring is \$34.3 million of work left undone at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area at Sulphur. Of the shortfall, \$3.3 million was cited as costs of fixing "critical needs."

The Washita Battlefield National Historic Site near Cheyenne was shown with a \$236,867 shortfall in maintenance needs for the site of Lt. Col. George A. Custer's infamous Nov. 27, 1868 attack on the Southern Cheyenne village of Peace Chief Black Kettle where women and children were slain. Details of the site's "unmet" needs were not detailed in the report.

Unmet maintenance at the Sulphur attraction – estimated to cost \$615 million to replace – included \$18.8 million for roads; \$3.1 million for campgrounds; \$1.2 million for housing and wastewater treatment repairs, and \$5.3 million for a mixture of other needs.

Formerly named Platt National Park in honor of Sen. O.V. Platt, R-CT, the area was recognized for its unique sulfur waters in 1906, two years before the Grand Canyon was named a national monument. During 1933-40, President Roosevelt's historic CCC workers built the park that was designed by NPS professionals.

The two Oklahoma units are listed in a comprehensive NPS study that prompted pundit Jim Hightower to write that the nation's "Janes and Joes" would "be excited by a presidential contender making an issue of our park's dilapidated facilities, shortened hours,

closed-off sections, locked visitor centers, cancelled programs, ranger shortages” and such. The issue is bigger than White House action.

Elected by anti-tax voters and supporting the “Tea Party” vow to slash government spending, Oklahoma’s totally Republican congressional delegation has helped cause bigger problems than any president could counter.

Congressional action since Republicans took control has hacked across-the-board budget cuts – not surgical slices to eliminate waste and corruption in government spending.

This particular NPS report shows only the maintenance neglect and staff shortage problems facing national parks. Federal lands under the U.S. Forest Service, fish and wildlife refuges and the Bureau of Land Management suffer similar shortfalls due to budget cuts.

Long and loudly in the background are powerful forces demanding that wildlife prairies be opened for livestock grazing; that park forests be cut for lumber; and that mineral-rich public land be open to mining and petroleum production. The plea for money to fix neglected parks is lost in the tumult.

While repairing Oklahoma’s two parks would cost less than one-tenth the \$412 million price of one F-22 fighter jet, the defense lobby is tough competition in the federal money grab. As a result, system-wide over the past four years, the NPS’s maintenance shortfall grew to \$11.5 billion for the 75 million “constructed assets” even though nationally the parks were utilized last year by 292 million visitors.

Fix up of physical facilities is only part of the problem. Public properties demand skilled law enforcement, abuse protection agents, guides and trained firefighters to help Smokey Bear. Each has have been cut. As an example, NPS during the past five years lost 400 park rangers.

Celebrated as “national jewels,” now neglected parks symbolize the unintended victims of “sequestered budget cuts” that were deliberately designed and delivered when Republicans gained control of Congress in 1991. The impact of such broad-axe slashing of budgets was symbolized when television cameras captured a rightwing Texas lawmaker demeaning a park ranger who was enforcing a facility shutdown that the Republican Congressman himself had voted to close.

Long smoldering is the issue of the federal government owning one-fourth of the national land-mass, some 635 million acres. In February 2012, Presidential candidate Mitt Romney told editors in Nevada that “I don’t know why the federal government owns so much of this land.” Controlled by Congress under Article Four of the Constitution, the land is for multiple purposes including military, conservation and recreation. The NPS share of public land for use as parks is a mere 84 million acres divided among 400 areas.

The cut in NPS budgets, the skipped maintenance

and staff losses are victims of the political feud that engulfs the country. The fight is partisan. Since 2011 Republicans have held a Congressional majority. In the same period, the NPS’s appropriated money was cut 12%, some \$364 million.

Troubles also roil over authorization legislation. A major source of funding for public land acquisition, the Land and Water Conservation Fund [LWCF], was created as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. However, the authorizing law expires next Sept. 30. The Republican-controlled Congress faces the challenge of whether to re-authorize the \$900 million LWCF income stream now used only for land acquisition for recreation and conservation purposes.

A vocal lobby seeks to expand the fund’s mission to include park and public lands maintenance and repairs. Extending a Great Society program is problematic with a GOP-controlled Congress, but the change to use LWCF funds for fix up may be national park’s slender hope. The change is championed by the non-profit Property and Environment Research Council of Bozeman, MT that opposes more federal land purchases.

Yet, recently, President Obama added new sites exercising a law that was signed by Republican President Theodore Roosevelt. The fiscal issue of re-authorization rests heavily on both parties, but the breakdown in maintenance is non-partisan and physically damaging to heavily used parks.

Everglades Park’s unmet needs included \$36.7 million for roads; \$1.3 million for trails and \$7.8 million of fix up needs at its 147 buildings. NPS estimates cost to replace all of its facilities would be \$912.9 million. Constant maintenance protects that investment.

Nationwide, NPS lists deferred needs of \$11.49 billion including \$5.63 billion for paved roads and structures such as bridges, \$5.86 billion for “all other facilities” among its 75,780 of “constructed assets” including \$2.17 billion in “highest priority non-transportation facilities.”

*Joseph H. Carter Sr. is a regular contributor to The Oklahoma Observer. Reared in west Tulsa in the 1930-50s era, he 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].*

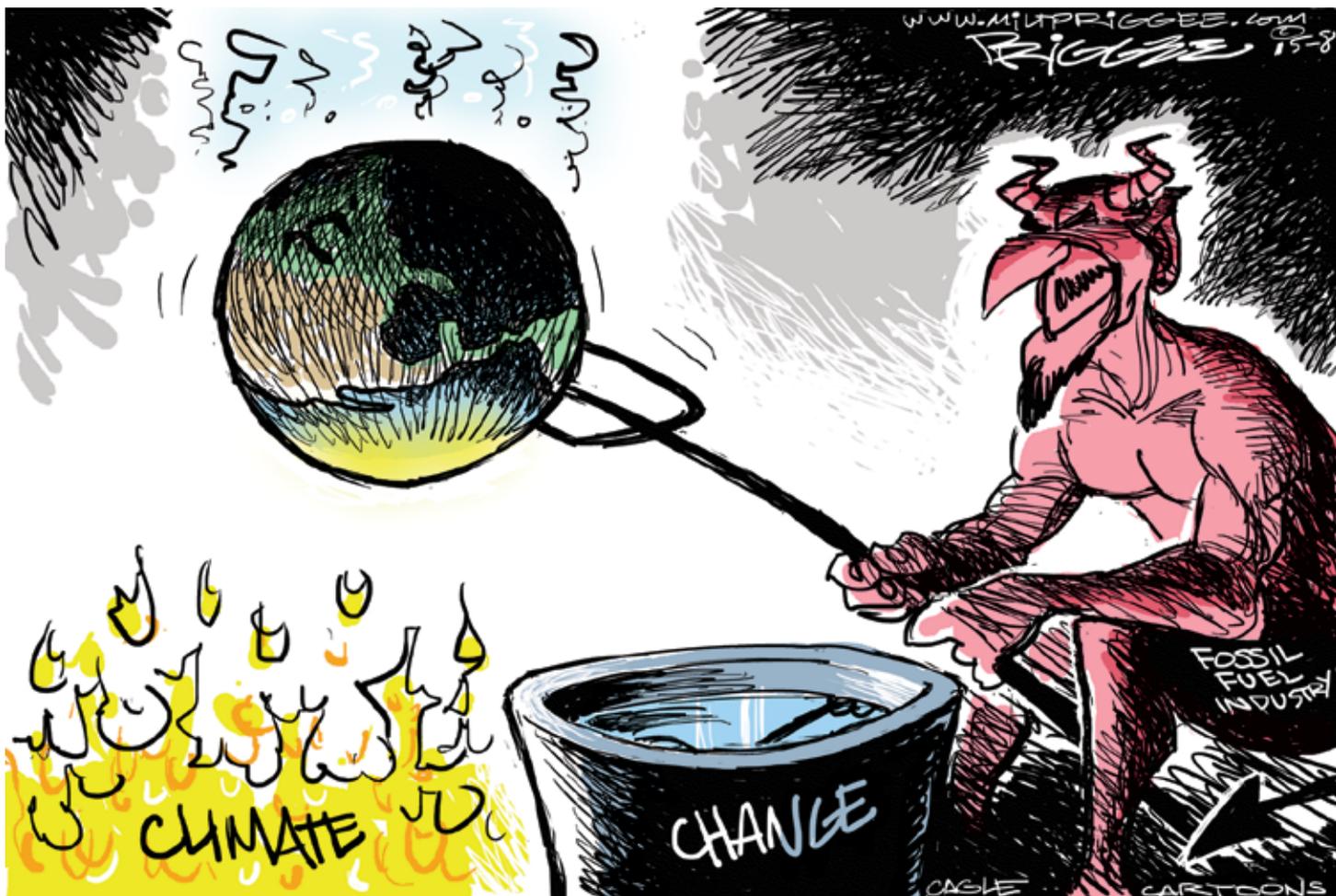
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# An Environmentalist's Lament

## *Native Oklahoman Urges Her State Protect Its Natural Wonders And Its Future*

BY EMILY REMMEL

Oklahoma needs to change. The Sooner State is overdue not just for an environmental movement, but also for someone to challenge the current status quo. From constructing TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline to the steep increase in earthquakes caused from the fracking industry to interstate water wars, Oklahomans deserve adequate representation and leadership from someone other than pro-industry.

I am a scientist, an attorney, and an Oklahoman. This is my story on why the Sooner State, perhaps a friendly and neighborly place to live and raise a family, is not supportive of environmentalists like myself.

Let me start from the beginning. I grew up in Edmond, in a perfectly sized house for a family of four. Our house once bordered open space and grassland,

but is now engulfed by the sprawling metropolis of suburbia McMansions and the allure of the strip mall meccas on every corner. I grew up dreaming about marine biology and escaping to a world of crystal blue waters, prowling sharks, and bustling coral reefs.

During my undergraduate and graduate aspirations at the University of Oklahoma, I ditched the dreams of marine biology and came to respect Oklahoma's extraordinary ecological offerings. The turbid reservoirs and hundreds of miles of streams were, to me, relatively unexplored hotspots for freshwater diversity and scientific endeavors. I was awed.

I gazed lazily through the opaque glass windows of OU's Bizzell Memorial Library in a deep reverie of my most likely professional evolution. Surrounded by the doctoral dissertations and master's theses –

the intellectual timestamps that enshroud the Great Reading Room – I sat quietly contemplating the environment and the state of Oklahoma.

It was 2007, the year of the great 100-year flood that swallowed much of Oklahoma, just as it did this recent spring. Water scarcity that year was the last subject on anyone's mind.

I received career-changing news just as the water breached the Denison Dam spillway at Lake Texoma. I was the next recipient of the Mark Coleman Fellowship at OU. I knew little then of the long-term career effects of embarking on this adventure.

At that time, Oklahoma was in a significant legal skirmish with Texas over water. This lawsuit was not just any rival state spat; it was the type of legal battle that had enough merit to eventually land before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The argument was this: Texas alleged that Oklahoma violated the U.S. Constitution's Interstate Commerce Clause by denying Texas a permit to withdraw water from tributaries in Oklahoma. Texas desired access to high-quality water resources in Oklahoma that support diverse freshwater fish and native mussel species. Texas no longer coveted the Red River's water, which is notoriously salty and more cumbersome to treat.

My fellowship coincided with this controversy. As a freshwater ecologist, I was fascinated with the seemingly overwhelming complexities of water law. I spent months researching issues central to Oklahomans and gaining a greater appreciation of the extensive history of water rights in the United States. My objective was to understand what drives Oklahoma water resource management – was it politics or the environment itself?

On my fellowship journey, I traveled throughout the state to meet with various stakeholders including state government representatives, hydrologists and engineers, academics, attorneys, Indian tribal representatives, and local concerned citizens. I attended various public planning meetings for drafting Oklahoma's Comprehensive Water Plan. I inquired about all things water: hydrology, geology, drought, invasive species, and competing uses.

On my journey, I met Sardis Lake.

This shallow southeastern Oklahoma Lake had a unique role in the much larger Texas-Oklahoma water argument. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funded and constructed Sardis Lake in 1982. However, Oklahoma never fully repaid the federal government, and water-thirsty Texas proposed to pay the remaining balance on Sardis Lake for access to its water. For many years, local citizens were in limbo as to what may happen to the Lake and their

livelihoods.

It seemed that nobody from the "City" cared about the issues. What would happen if a straw the size of Texas sucked Sardis Lake dry? Would there be devastating ecological effects to the downstream tributaries full of native mussels when water river levels dropped and temperatures rose? Nobody, besides the few concerned citizens in Clayton, was willing to ask these vital questions.

Another bewildering plot twist at the time was the fact that a prestigious law firm in downtown Oklahoma City represented the legal interests of its water rival Texas.

Before giving my presentation and finalizing the fellowship, I received an intimidating phone call from a state attorney questioning my research motives and cautioning me not to meddle in legal matters I clearly didn't understand. My intentions were genuine – I was striving to understand, not interfere.

To understand the legal intricacies better, I ventured off to Vermont Law School – a small private law school consecutively ranked No. 1 nationally in environmental law – tucked away in the shadows of the majestic Green Mountains. Mentored and inspired by



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some of the world's leading environmental attorneys, a spark ignited in my soul.

I came back to Oklahoma during the summer of 2012 after my first year of law school to intern with the Sierra Club and contribute my scientific and, then minimal, legal knowledge in the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline. The Sierra Club, whose Oklahoma City office had two full-time employees, controlled the litigation from its national headquarters in San Francisco. The case was recently rejected by the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Case in point: Oklahoma needs local advocates that are passionate and equipped with the scientific and legal knowledge to speak proactively for the environment.

Finally, after much anticipation, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Oklahoma's favor in 2013. Texas has a valid right [as does Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana] to a percentage of water from the Red River, but Texas does not have a right to withdraw water from Oklahoma tributaries before the water meets the Red River.

Oklahoma's freshwater tributaries, for now, are safe. That is, until attorneys in a distant skyscraper

finely craft the next legal argument.

Oklahoma is ripe for prospective environmental representation.

Issues such as climate change, the Keystone XL pipeline, the earthquakes caused by the hydraulic fracturing industry, and the inevitable water conflicts will undoubtedly continue to significantly impact the state. Oklahoma's leadership in the U.S. Senate and in the governor's office is thick with opposition to these important environmental issues recognized by others throughout the nation. The strong Oklahoma pride and rich history in oil and gas keep the state on its non-environmentally friendly path of least resistance.

Oklahoma and Oklahomans deserve better leadership and a better path forward.

*Emily Rimmel earned BS and MS degrees in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma. She attended Vermont Law School where she was the Editor-in-Chief of the Vermont Journal of Environmental Law and received a JD and Certificate in Water Law. She is licensed to practice law in New Hampshire but currently lives in Connecticut working in environmental regulatory compliance.*

# *Should Oklahoma Put A Tax On Carbon?*

**BY DEREK WIETELMAN**

**L**ast May, U.S. Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-RI, and Brian Schatz, D-HI, held a press conference to introduce a bill that would set a price of \$45 on carbon dioxide emissions in the United States. What was most noteworthy about the occasion was not the content of the legislation itself, but where the two chose to introduce their legislation: the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

While economists have long endorsed a carbon tax as an economically efficient way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the idea hasn't received much political support. However, a growing number of voices from across the political spectrum have begun to endorse the idea of putting a price on carbon.

Just last year, a joint report authored by economists from the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute concluded that "a well-designed carbon tax could improve the long-run U.S. fiscal situation while reducing emissions."

As pressure increases in states and nationally to come up with a better policy response to climate change, does a carbon tax make sense for a politically conservative, oil-and-gas dependent state like Oklahoma?

What is a carbon tax?

A "carbon tax" refers to the setting of a price on emissions of carbon dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>] into the atmosphere. Generally, the largest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> are industries that rely on fossil-fuel combustion, such as electricity producers. Carbon taxes are a subset of a larger category of taxes known as Pigovian taxes, which take their name from Arthur Pigou, the economist who first suggested them.

The goal of a Pigovian tax is ultimately to change a behavior, such as smoking or gambling, that is harmful to a market or society. Carbon taxes fit this description: the end goal is to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that are damaging to the environment and public health, not necessarily to raise large amounts of revenue.

The price of a carbon tax is determined by estimating the "social cost" of carbon, or how much damage CO<sub>2</sub> emissions cause to society due to factors like rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events. The U.S. Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon estimated that the social cost of carbon in 2015 is approximately \$36 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted [in 2007 USD]. Adjusting for inflation, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the social cost of carbon is \$40 per ton [in 2014 USD]. In

comparison, the Whitehouse-Schatz legislation sets a \$45 per ton fee on CO2 [which would increase by 2% annually].

Why do economists generally support a carbon tax over other emissions-reduction methods?

Economists prefer carbon taxes because they eliminate uncertainty. For most businesses, planning decisions need to be made early, and having a set price for CO2 emissions can help businesses make decisions several years down the road while knowing exactly what those emissions will cost them.

Emissions trading schemes like cap-and-trade do not provide this certainty, because emissions permits are usually traded on a market where the price could change drastically over time. Ahead of a UN climate change conference to be held in Paris this December, a group of six of the world's largest oil companies, including BP and Shell, penned an open letter to the conference attendees that supported the adoption of a tax on CO2 emissions. Eliminating uncertainty with regards to business investments was one reason they listed in support of a carbon tax.

What would a carbon tax look like in Oklahoma?

Given the dominance of the oil and gas industry in this state, a tax on CO2 would likely not be welcomed with open arms. However, there is a multitude of ways in which a carbon tax could be beneficial to the state.

One option would be to design the tax in such a way that it is revenue-neutral. This means that the revenue collected from the carbon tax would be used to lower taxes in other areas, like income taxes or sales taxes, so that the net amount of revenue collected by the government remains the same. A revenue-neutral carbon tax is the most feasible option politically, as conservatives who support a carbon tax generally prefer that it be revenue-neutral.

Additionally, recent polling has shown that two-thirds of Americans support the concept of a carbon tax as long as it revenue-neutral.

However, a carbon tax does not have to be revenue-neutral in order to be economically beneficial. In Oklahoma, the increased revenue from a carbon tax could be a key part of a solution to shore up the state's chronic and growing budget shortfalls.

Oklahoma currently has some of the lowest gross production taxes on oil and gas, and tax breaks for the industry that were made permanent last year are costing the state hundreds of millions in revenue annually. Since Oklahoma has slashed taxes on the production of these fossil fuels, putting a price on the CO2 they emit would help make up the difference to properly fund vital public services.

What are some of the biggest problems with implementing a carbon tax?

Carbon taxes are not without their flaws. One of the biggest problems is that a carbon tax is naturally regressive, meaning that it takes the biggest percentage from families and individuals with lower incomes.

Setting a price on CO2 is likely to initially hurt the budgets of low-income households who can ill afford

higher energy bills. Promising solutions to this problem, such as lump-sum rebates, could help counterbalance the tax's regressive nature. A low-income rebate is an essential feature of climate change bills that have been debated in Congress.

Additionally, carbon taxes run into trouble when it comes to the pricing itself.

Policymakers and tax experts must carefully determine the ideal price of the tax – a price that is too low will do nothing to discourage emissions, while a price that is too high could stunt economic growth.

Studies have shown that despite the government's efforts to nail down the social cost of carbon, the large amount of variables that affect CO2 pollution make it difficult to get a precise measurement of the true cost. A Stanford study concluded that the current social cost of carbon estimates drastically underestimates the true cost of carbon on society.

Despite these problems, evidence shows that a tax on carbon is a feasible and sensible solution to combatting rising emissions levels. However, as the earlier mentioned report from Brookings and AEI stated, "Political considerations, rather than economic analysis, are driving many policymakers' views of a carbon tax."

As support for a carbon tax grows among conservatives and the general population, it is time that policymakers take a second look at a solution that could have lasting benefits for the well-being of the economy and the environment.

*Derek Wietelman is an OKPolicy summer intern. He is an Oklahoma State University student pursuing a double major in statistics and political science, with minors in economics and environmental economics, politics, and policy. <http://okpolicy.org>*

## The Gold Urinal

Several days after President Obama was re-elected, he went over to see Bill and Hillary Clinton for dinner at their spacious home. After drinking several glasses of beer, he asked if he could use Bill's private toilet.

When he entered the bathroom, he was astonished to see that Clinton had a golden urinal! Wow!

The next day, Obama told his wife, Michelle, about the urinal in Clinton's private lavatory. "Just think," he said, "maybe I should get a gold urinal, too. But on the other hand, I think that it may be just a bit too self-indulgent ... even for a guy like me!"

Later in the week, when Michelle had lunch with Hillary, she told Hillary how impressed her husband had been when he discovered that Bill had a gold urinal in his private bathroom.

Later that day, when Bill got home, Hillary smiled and said to Bill, "I found out who pissed in your saxophone."

*- Thanks to Royse Samples for sharing*

# Oklahoma Quaking



## *Could State Leaders' Failure To Act Lead To Federal Intervention – Before The Big One Hits?*

BY BOB JACKMAN

Oklahoma's oilmen-made earthquake swarms first started in 2009 at Jones, east of Oklahoma City and north of massive Tinker Air Force Base, and they haven't stopped increasing at alarming rates.

In 2015, Oklahoma earthquakes are on track for an estimated 927 3.0 or greater Richter scale quakes, despite six years of "we are in control" press releases by Gov. Mary Fallin and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission's media-savvy spokesperson, Matt Skinner, aka Mr. Spinner.

It's no surprise, given the growing number of earthquakes and the U.S. Geological Survey's alarming seismicity reports, that Oklahoma Geological Survey seismologists are publicly distributing pamphlets

warning people to "Be prepared – Big One could hit Oklahoma."

They worry ancient, lengthy, subterranean-deep faults are close to catastrophic events, pressured to rupture points by years of the oil industry's high pressure-injected waste water in deep disposal wells – several billions of barrels, permitted by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission [OCC].

In April, the Oklahoma Geological Survey finally admitted that EPA-rated Class II disposal wells were to blame for six years of daily shaking and dish-breaking earthquakes in central and north central Oklahoma.

Attention Gov. Mary Fallin and Concerned Citizens: Here's what could happen if a really big earthquake occurs in Oklahoma.

On March 28, 1964, at Anchorage, AK, which previously had lower level quakes similar to Oklahoma's, a 9.2 magnitude earthquake struck – the biggest in U.S. history.

For three minutes, Anchorage and the ground in a 150-mile radius around it, shook violently. Eleven aftershocks – 6.2 magnitude and greater followed – and 139 were killed.

Within seconds of the first quake, ground levels in some areas jumped as high as 30 feet. Hillside neighborhoods were wiped out by landslide. Utility lines were downed. Several key bridges collapsed. Large schools were ripped apart.

An air traffic control tower collapsed. The Port of Valdez had to be relocated. Rails were torn from their ties. And a teacher watched an Army tank bounce four feet into the air.

This is what experts are warning Oklahomans about when they say a big man-made one could hit.

Alaska's major earthquake [visit [gizmodo.com/the-largest-earthquake-in-us-history-happened-50-years-ago](http://gizmodo.com/the-largest-earthquake-in-us-history-happened-50-years-ago)] was not triggered by disposal wells – it was plate tectonics. But having been through earthquake hell, Alaskans know it can happen again – and unlike Oklahoma they are preparing for it.

In 2014, Alaska FEMA Director John Madden led a series of disaster exercises called Alaska Shield, all aimed at the potential a big earthquake could prove to be a major disruption to the state.

It must not be politically correct for Oklahoma's governor to consider such mock-quake exercises in Oklahoma despite experts' warnings!

From the very beginning, with the 2009 Jones' quakes, seismologists at the Oklahoma Geological Survey knew the culprits – disposal wells – a fact withheld from the public until this spring.

During six years of concealment, Gov. Fallin and the OCC released numerous bogus public announcements, essentially saying, "We first need more studies and data."

Working with legions of oilmen, the governor and the industry offered a series of laughable "solutions:"

- A Traffic Light quake-warning system.
- The geologically-challenged "plug back to the Arbuckle formation" program.
- Now, it's the OCC's "reduce injected volumes" slightly.

Outside geological experts, including me, continually warned the proposals wouldn't work – and we were proven right by USGS reporting that Oklahoma's induced quakes keep getting bigger and more frequent each year.

Best estimates by volunteer activists on 18 quake-impacted Oklahoma counties: 100,000 homes and buildings have visible earthquake damages, totaling \$1-2 billion.

To which our governor recently recommended publicly, "Those [uninsured] with damaged homes should buy earthquake insurance." Brilliant advice!

The saga of Oklahoma's earthquakes, replete with

cover-ups and dismissiveness of the governor and her Big Oil bosses, has gone national and worldwide; international TV reporters arrive, eat barbeque and blackberry pie while watching and videoing a deep-woods seismic-monitor north of Stillwater.

A South Korean TV crew flew to Tulsa to interview me. Asian media are keen on earthquakes for good reason.

Oklahoma is the only place in the world where you have good odds of watching live on seismic-monitors an earthquake as it happens – and disposal wells being turned off and on The Oklahoma Geological Survey closed its public monitor at Tulsa – state censorship of seismicity information!

Corporation Commissioner Dana Murphy, the state's point person on earthquakes, recently said, "Earthquake issues are completely outside the experiences of OCC as well as partner agency and shareholders."

Really, Ms. Murphy? You have had at your disposal for the past six years OGS and nationally-known USGS seismicity experts to educate you on proven quake solutions that worked in other states with this deadly problem.

The statewide elected commissioner, who never appears on public earthquake-related panels, is paid \$115,000 a year and provided a large, nicely-furnished government office and trained staffers, all by Oklahoma taxpayers – some with earthquake damaged homes.

*Mississippi Burning* and *Oklahoma Earthquaking* have common grounds: They are or were states under siege. Mississippi's power structure enforced segregation and ensured violations of human and property rights. Oklahoma's elected Red State elite clings to the mantra: *honor and obey thy oil and earthquake producers*.

In 2009 Oklahoma recorded 20 magnitude 3.0 or larger earthquakes. This year, 580 struck in the first 7½ months – without the state's elected elite bothering to survey homes, schools and bridges for damages. In Mississippi, during a six-month stretch in 1964, 40 black churches burned down without elected officials stepping in to put a stop to it.

These comparisons may seem a stretch, but here's where history may be repeating itself: When well-publicized *Mississippi Burning* fatalities occurred, and nothing was done by state officials to stop the destructive white forces, then – and only then – did 300 FBI agents pour into Mississippi to stop the burnings and killings.

Oklahoma is like 1960s Mississippi. Nothing has been done by Oklahoma officials for six years to stop the oilmen's daily barrage of earthquakes. And if, by our state officials' continuing neglect of duty, Oklahomans are killed by a future big one, then – and only then – will our earthquakes be stopped by unwelcomed federal intervention.

*Bob Jackman, a petroleum geologist living in Tulsa, describes himself as a 40-year oil and gas hunter.*

# Legacy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

non-American Indian children. It will be a new test of the U.S. government's ability to partner with a tribe to improve education for all children.

That partnership builds on Oklahoma's recent successes with Indian education. We have become a good model for the nation as a whole of how to begin overcoming our tragic history of using education in ways that damaged American Indian communities and culture.

As of 2013, 15% of students in Oklahoma public schools are identified as American Indian, which ties them with Hispanics as the second largest group of students in the state.

Oklahoma's American Indian students have outperformed their counterparts in other states for some time. In 2013, Oklahoma's American Indian students scored better on the National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP] than American Indian students nationally in all subjects and grades tested that year.

While we don't know exactly why Oklahoma is doing better at educating American Indian students, we can point to a few successful policies in recent years. In 2010, Oklahoma lawmakers created the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education with HB 2929.

The council brings together representatives from numerous tribes and public educators to make recommendations, evaluate, and report on the effectiveness of the public education system in meeting the needs of the Native American students in Oklahoma.

In 2014, the state Department of Education introduced the Oklahoma Indian Education Resource, an online hub of education guides and lesson plans for teaching about Oklahoma's Indian tribes in ways that meet the state's Academic Standards. Users can even upload lesson plans in a variety of subject areas that are designed to meet the cultural needs and learning styles of American Indian students.

Dwight Pickering, the director of Oklahoma's Office of American Indian Education, said that the resource "will be an ongoing repository that will change as history changes, along with additional information that is brought forward by our tribes. This is one step toward a much bigger project: 'Indian education for all.'"

These efforts to create an informative, culturally-inclusive curriculum on American Indian issues is a stark contrast to how Indian education was handled earlier in Oklahoma's history.

Beginning with the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, which was enforced even though it was never ratified by the tribes, many American Indian families were required to send their children to attend non-Indian, federal government-sponsored schools. These schools forced children to abandon their Native American identities, including cutting their hair,

changing their names, and forbidding them from speaking their native languages.

Native American children were being taken from their families to boarding schools well into the 1970s, and many of the children who attended those institutions are still living in Oklahoma as elders in their tribal communities and parents and grandparents to American Indian students in Oklahoma schools.

Thankfully today we have moved to more collaborative and inclusive policies for Indian education. But given our troubled history, we must be vigilant to keep ensuring that communities are not intentionally or unintentionally marginalized.

Another area where tribes and the state are working together to bolster education is through funding compacts. In 2004 Oklahoma voters approved SQ 712, which extended an offer to gaming tribes to pay exclusivity fees, with the majority of funds earmarked for education. In 2014 the Gaming Compliance Unit reported \$122.6 million given to the state from tribal gaming, with the Education Reform Revolving Fund 1017 receiving \$107.6 million.

The tribes' contributions to state education funding are in addition to support tribes often give to schools in their communities. Many tribes offer resources to enhance education and assist students through incentive programs, tribal grants, tutoring and scholarships.

Some tribes give students a clothing stipend at the beginning of a school year. Others might offer a cash incentive for good grades or resources for students to attend educational activities, such as a robotics competition, academic bowl, conference or cultural event.

Tribe-sponsored camps during the summer time are also fairly common, with a focus that may include diabetes prevention, environmental issues, cultural history, and safety.

Tribes are showing a growing to commitment to investing in education for the whole state.

On the other hand, it is alarming that Oklahoma has made large cuts in education spending when millions are being contributed each year via the state compacts.

As Cherokee Nation Secretary of State Chuck Hoskin Jr. pointed out during OKPolicy's State Budget Summit: "What I think is the tribes have helped pay for [Oklahoma's income tax cuts], and we didn't want to pay for those tax cuts. ... Part of the fundamental aspect of SQ 712 is that we would be partners with the state, and what we wanted is that the revenues we would generate would help add to what the state could do – to help the state do more for the health, the education, the housing and economic development for the citizens of the state of Oklahoma.

Because, guess what, 150,000 of those citizens are also citizens of the Cherokee Nation, and thousands more for the other Indian nations. That was the bargain that we had hoped for, and what we've found is that we helped pay for some of these tax cuts."

There is also growing concern that American Indian students are not college-ready. In 2014 the average ACT score for American Indian students in the state was 19.3, which is below requirements to attend or receive academic scholarships at many universities.

An Oklahoma City Community College report identified their American Indian students as among the least college-ready, with nearly 68% requiring developmental courses before they can begin a degree program.

Tribes exist today as active cultures and sovereign states that make important contributions to our shared experience as Oklahomans. So what exactly do tribes expect from the state's education system?

Of course this is going to vary by community, but

one common factor is that, like all Oklahomans, we want our children to get a good education, have qualified instructors, and experience minimal incidents of bullying or harassment, no matter what school they attend.

American Indian students have the best opportunity to succeed academically in Oklahoma compared to anywhere else in the country, but we must keep building on this achievement through strong collaborations with tribal governments and individuals.

*Bah-He-Toya-Mah Davenport is an OKPolicy summer intern. She has a political science degree from Oklahoma City University and is completing post-graduate studies at the University of Minnesota-Duluth Tribal Administration and Governance program. Prior to OKPolicy she worked at her tribe, the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. She has interned with the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education in Washington, DC.*

*Cover Photos: Choctaw Nation Facebook page.*

# *Solving State's Teacher Shortage Is About Budget ABCs – Not TSET*

**BY ARNOLD HAMILTON**

**W**oodward Sen. Bryce Marlatt's proposal to use tobacco settlement money to finance across-the-board pay raises for Oklahoma teachers is the equivalent of punching the legislative panic button.

Lawmakers know they're in deep fiscal voodoo after years of ill-advised income tax cuts and corporate welfare. This year's budget hole was \$611 million. Next year's likely will top \$1 billion, thanks to plunging energy prices.

With teacher shortages and exploding class sizes headlining last months' back-to-school media coverage, it was only a matter of time before lawmakers took aim at the one sacrosanct pot of money left in Oklahoma: The Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust [TSET].

The nearly \$1 billion fund resulted from a 1998 lawsuit by Oklahoma and 45 other states against tobacco companies. In 2000, Oklahoma voters prudently endorsed a constitutional amendment that put the money in a lock box, out of the Legislature's reach – only earnings from the endowment can be spent and only on programs aimed at improving the health and well-being of Oklahomans.

Can anyone seriously doubt Marlatt's proposal resulted from the fact he and other lawmakers are feeling the heat from constituents irate over what is happening to their public schools?

Administrators can't fill key teaching positions,

forcing more kids into fewer classrooms – more than 50 in several Edmond high school classes, for example – and hundreds of emergency fill-in instructors into classes for which they've not been trained.

Why? Because despite paying lip service to education, state lawmakers have allowed teacher salaries to slip to the lowest in the region, behind even – *good grief!* – New Mexico.

With no money to help keep teachers from fleeing, lawmakers are desperate to reduce the political heat. House leadership resorted to a time-honored tradition: diversion.

Speaker Jeff Hickman and House Republicans issued a press release, complaining about state Superintendent Joy Hofmeister's plan to redirect \$1.5 million already allocated for state testing to Oklahoma high school juniors so they can take the ACT college-prep test for free.

"Last week, paying for the ACT test for all 11th grade students was a higher priority than our teacher shortage," complained Hickman, R-Fairview. "I believe the state superintendent should reconsider the priorities and allocate the \$1.5 million in excess funding she said she received in this year's state budget to provide a \$1,500 signing bonus for those 1,000 Oklahoma classrooms in need of teachers."

Think about that. A \$1,500 signing bonus – the equivalent of \$125 a month for one year, before taxes – is expected to woo the best, brightest and most

qualified to Oklahoma's classrooms when, for example, starting Oklahoma City salaries [\$31,600] are \$7,000-plus a year less than in Wichita, KS?

You don't have to be a certified financial planner or a CPA to know \$1,500 is not a serious incentive, especially when masters degreed teachers with a quarter century experience are only earning about \$45,000 a year.

Remember, Oklahoma's part-time lawmakers start at \$38,400 a year plus \$160 a day per diem and nearly all the special interest-paid lunches and dinners they can eat – and they aren't even required to have earned a college degree or successfully completed extensive job-related training.

Need you wonder why Oklahoma educators feel so disrespected?

Marlatt's answer is to give voters the opportunity to siphon money from the fight to boost Oklahoma's terrible health rankings into Oklahoma's cash-starved public schools.

"Teachers definitely deserve a raise," says GOP state Treasurer Ken Miller. "But this is yet another example of the Legislature trying to find a source of funds to make up for its self-inflicted erosion of the revenue base."

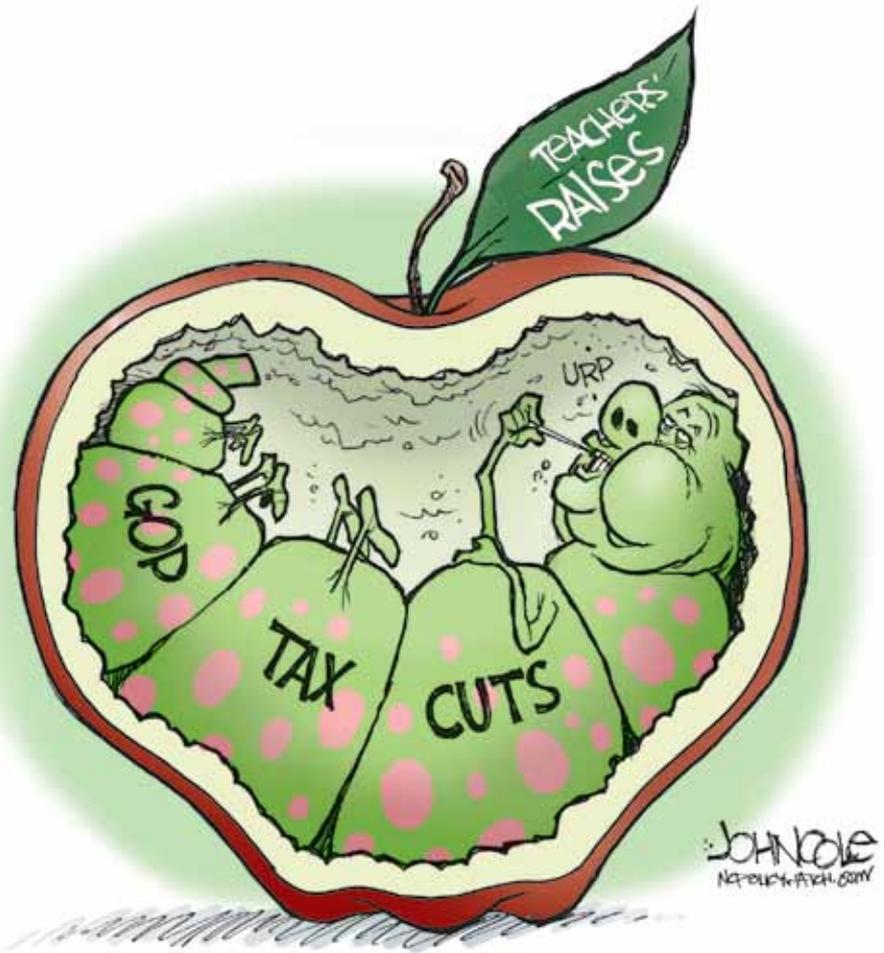
For all their lip service about education being their No. 1 priority, the state's legislative majority hasn't lifted a finger to reverse five-plus years of draconian budgets crippling the state's public schools.

Oh, sure, lawmakers approved some window dressing last year, enacting laws that give schools flexibility when it comes to recruiting and retention bonuses and relaxing testing requirements when hiring experienced teachers from out-of-state.

But the Legislature deflected Hofmeister's signature plan to reduce the state's critical teacher shortage and stem the exodus to other, higher-paying states: she wants to increase teachers' base salaries by \$5,000 over a five-year period.

And now, the Speaker and Co. are carping over Hofmeister's plan to use \$1.5 million to give Oklahoma kids – many of whom qualify for free or reduced lunches – an entrée to college by eliminating the costs associated with taking the ACT.

It might be difficult for some of the Legislature's fancy suits to imagine, but coming up with an extra \$39.50 to take the ACT – not to mention the gas money or bus fare to get to a testing site – isn't easy when your parents are working multiple jobs to keep a roof overhead, the lights on and food on the table.



Plus, Hofmeister's ACT strategy dovetails nicely with Gov. Mary Fallin's effort to improve Oklahoma's economic future by boosting the number of college graduates.

As the governor noted when unveiling her campaign four years ago, 60% of jobs will require a college degree by decade's end. Yet only one-third of Oklahomans are college graduates – "a disadvantage to Oklahoma," she said.

Raiding the tobacco endowment to finance teacher salary increases is the legislative equivalent of a Ponzi scheme.

Remember how lottery proceeds were required constitutionally to supplement – not replace – state education appropriations? Well, state schools' \$60 million annual lottery bonus has been more than offset the last five years by the nation's deepest education cuts.

If voters approved tapping the tobacco endowment for across-the-board teacher pay raises, what's to prevent lawmakers from engaging in the same political monkey business and cutting general revenue for schools?

It's time for Oklahomans to demand their Legislature fund public education fully and honestly. If that means raising income taxes, as well as ending corporate welfare, so be it.

Leave TSET alone.

# TRUMPED!



## *Could The Donald Really Be GOP Nominee?*

BY CAL HOBSON

**N**o, I'm not sipping from straws swirling in the cups of distraction and delusion as our 2016 presidential election soap opera performs nightly before my disbelieving eyes. 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.

I know. I know. Surely our fellow citizens will wake up or sober up and fall out of enchantment with the arrogant *Apprentice* agitator, multiple bankruptcy filing scofflaw, blathering behemoth devoid of any coherent policy proposals.

You think? And just why would they suddenly come

to their senses when so little of same has been displayed to date?

Presidential hopefuls currently perceived to be electable range from a very conservative black Republican neurosurgeon named Ben Carson to an aging and angry socialist firebrand, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders. Also in the boiling cauldron of candidates are sitting governors and senators, former governors, has-been members of the world's most exclusive club, forgotten mayors, wealthy, maligned women named Carly and Hillary, as well as the undisputed polling preference, The Donald.

Let's start with what we unquestionably do know about the billionaire blabbermouth. He is arrogant, angry, bigoted, pushy, profane, preeminently profit-

able, probably paranoid, certainly charismatic, Teflon-coated, much admired and therefore electable.

Before you break into a gaggle of giggles and declare me crazy, allow this novice columnist to suggest reasons why the possibility of Commander-in-Chief Trump – a “shoot from the lip” hothead with not a second of service in uniform – is no longer just a late-night TV punch-line.

The most important advantage the current leader of the pachyderms possesses is his billion-dollar bank account which will allow him, unlike all the others, to stay in the game. His net worth is between \$6 billion and \$10 billion and for comparison Oklahoma’s state budget is a slim \$7 billion.

Of course, willingness to waste millions of personal money pursuing the presidency doesn’t necessarily mean electoral success. Just ask Ross Perot, Nelson Rockefeller, Mitt Romney or any of the other super rich aspirants who wanted their mail posted to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

However, when it comes to available campaign cash, our game show puppeteer is different in several ways. He’s obviously richer than all of his announced opponents combined and appears impervious to most criticism, unlike the thin-skinned Perot.

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. His formula for creating and sustaining the current polling advantage is as simple as it is outrageous:

1. Utter an unfounded but provocative five-second sound bite.
2. Wait for the inevitable serious and therefore widely ignored common sense response.
3. Ridicule its messenger, not the material, then move quickly to the next talk radio irrelevancy of the day.
4. Repeat the process often.

The media for the most part is and will continue to be a compliant co-conspirator. If you don’t believe me, just catch a clip of CNN’s widely watched “Stump For Trump Girls.” These two engaging yet goofy gals from Carolina Country named Diamond and Silk probably now have more political swag than Warren Buffet, Bill O’Reilly, Big Bird and Ellen DeGeneres combined.

Well, maybe not Big Bird.

Second, and not to be underestimated, his name recognition is right up there with Charles Manson. Political scientists estimate that a famous name is worth three to five points in the privacy of the election booth and therefore can be the difference maker in close races.

Remember, it was none other than President Abraham Lincoln who, on victory night in 1860, offered cigars, whiskey and most importantly advice to the press by suggesting, “Boys, I don’t care what you write about me, just write about me.”

Obviously The Donald doesn’t care either. Consequently he has comfortably soaked in a tsunami of soothing media coverage while other aspirants to the

presidency are lucky to get even a small splash and then only when they awkwardly criticize The Teflon Don.

Third, Trump understands how television conveys its message, an all-too-rare talent that was first displayed by a young man named Kennedy 55 years ago. Brief, dramatic, theatrical bursts of information, accurate or otherwise, delivered with smiles, frowns, scowls, gestures – anything except how gentle Jeb jabs – is what works on the boob tube.

Many Americans want their political information served up like they receive lunch which is courtesy of the drive-through window at McDonald’s. The product speedily delivered is usually temporarily satisfying, simple in content but surely not healthy for us. Sounds much like a 30-second attack ad to me.

Fourth, the field of 15 “others” often replicate Trump’s rope-a-dope demagoguery as he spews his chaotic chorus of criticism. His targets are the easy and most vulnerable humans in our society.

For example, illegal immigrants – mostly hard working Mexicans, very few of whom moonlight as rapists – currently top his expulsion to-do list. In Trump World roofers, road maintenance crews, hotel maids, dishwashers, nannies, probably even your favorite yardman Juan, should be transported south down I-35 stopping only long enough to build his proposed Wall To Everywhere that will Make America Great Again.

Additionally, “anchor babies” have been identified for deportation even though they are by birth and the 14th Amendment U.S. citizens. Amazingly, when former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, once presumptive nominee of the elephant herd and whose wife Columba is a native of Mexico, was queried about the inoperable and illegal proposal for forced removal of some of our youngest citizens, the best the not-quite-yet Burning Bush could do was to ask the inquiring reporter for a different characterization of these children.

Here’s one: How about Americans?

In closing let me take a stab at answering some of the questions I have raised:

1. Is Trump electable? Emphatically yes.

2. Is he likely to be? More than perhaps, not quite possibly and a country mile from probably. However, when pot heads, hog farmers and evangelicals in Iowa, who make up about 88% of that state’s lily white population, prefer him more than any of the alternatives, somebody’s smoking something illegal up there or maybe they’re not just making taxpayer-subsidized ethanol with all that federally insured corn.

3. Would his election signal the end of America as we know it? No chance.

According to respected Princeton historian Sean Wilentz, the abysmal performances of our five worst presidents – three Democrats, one whig and a Republican – were so corrupt, rudderless and without any memorable merit that even Trump cannot destroy what our Founders so carefully crafted. For that, if nothing else during this campaign comedy, let us give thanks.

Oh, the futile five flunkies are James Buchanan, Franklin Pierce, Millard Fillmore, Woodrow Wilson during his second term and, of course, George W. Bush every day in both of his.

Speaking of things to be thankful for – if The Donald doesn't get the Republican nomination he will undoubtedly, along with his wife Melania as his vice presidential running mate [she holds dual citizenship in America and her native Slovenia], campaign on the independent ticket just as another preening off-plumb wannabe named H. Ross Perot did in 1992.

Consequently, the 2016 version of that earlier goat-roping will provide similar results.

First, the three-way race to the White House bedrooms will be anything but boring.

Second, a Democrat with a familiar last name but of the opposite sex from the first 44 presidents could occupy the Oval Office with only a plurality vote of about 44%. This number, which happens to be the reliable national base of the Democratic Party, is iden-

tical to that earned by a certain lady's philandering, saxophone playing, internationally peace-keeping and budget-balancing husband 24 years ago.

Third, and most ironic of all, the Republicans will blame everyone and everything for this perceived calamity except the guilty party – their own.

Unfair and unbalanced Fox fans may recall that in 2012 crafty Karl Rove set a very high standard for delusional disconnect when he could not accept the reality that a black dude from the Second City with the middle name of Hussein had won again. Hopefully Bush's Brain will receive another delicious dose of disappointment in 2016 courtesy of the comedic, vacuous huckster he and others like him have helped create.

Welcome to America future immigrants. Are you sure you want to come?

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

# *'All Of Us Matter Or None Of Us Do'*

**BY BOB BEARDEN**

Black Lives Matter. Yes they do, as all lives should matter. But the problems lie in the fact that 50 years after signing of the Civil Rights Act, black lives, brown lives and the lives of people of color do not matter to our politicians as much as white lives. Too often to politicians running for office not all lives matter equally! And that is what is wrong in our nation today.

At a time when we should be celebrating the melting pot our nation should have become by now, we still find politicians, often solely for the purpose of their election, courting hate groups who want and seek to perpetuate their myths that white lives are more important, that white lives are somehow superior to the lives of people of color.

And we even have Supreme Court justices and elected leaders helping to perpetuate that myth.

Of course we are a free speech country, but there is – and always has been – a limit to the freedom of speech that reasonable people and people of reason should not and most do not go beyond. And therein lies the problem we face

in ensuring that all lives matter equally whether, white, black, yellow or brown.

We can't just stifle free speech, but we as reasonable people need not give our blessings to people who abuse their right to speak freely. And politicians often not only court people who make outrageous statements that are racist and bigoted in nature, they sometimes agree with them and even make them themselves. And they often try to play the race card in reverse to justify their own racism or bigotry.

We must quit giving in to racism and bigotry by remaining mute and saying and doing nothing when we see it raise its ugly head.

Freedom of speech is one thing, but there should be no free ride for those who spout racist and bigoted words and ideas. They have a right to their opinions and they also have a right to speak their minds, but they don't have, nor do they deserve, the right to put their thoughts or their words into action.

As Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "Freedom of speech does not extend to yelling fire in a crowded

theater." If responsible politicians will not speak up and speak out against bigotry and racism, in whatever form it comes in, then we the people must do it for them.

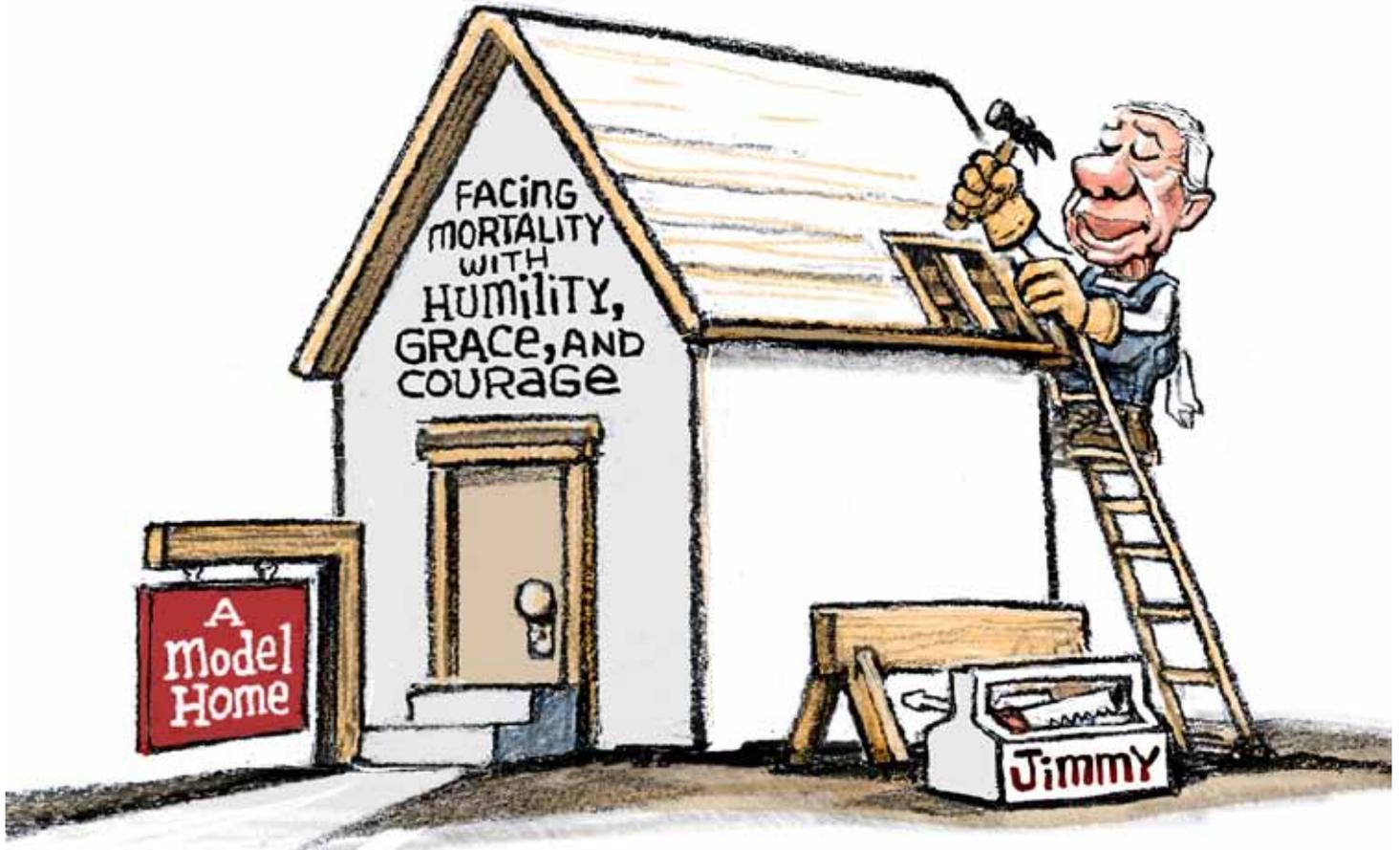
The best way to do it for them is to put these people out of office. If we are ever to really take true action to make our nation the melting pot that was envisioned by our founders, then we must be truly committed to ending racism and bigotry in all of its forms.

Black Lives Matter, because all lives must matter. Or as my minister, Dr. Robin Meyers, has said many times from his pulpit, "Either all of us matter or none of us do!" As Dr. King said, "We can only be free as a nation, when all of us are free!"

Marginalizing segments of our society is not the way to make us free. Stand up and be counted, and love one another – every single other – because Black Lives Matter, and they must matter in exactly the same way as all lives matter.

*Bob Bearden is a trustee with the Central Oklahoma Labor Federation and a member of Mayflower Congregational Church, UCC.*

## ONE LAST HABITAT, FOR US ALL.



# *Why I Love Jimmy Carter*

BY JAMES STOVALL

**I**n 1975, I had recently graduated from high school. The country was still recovering from the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Richard Nixon. I had picked up a brochure from the Carter for President campaign.

I doubted that a former governor and peanut farmer from Georgia would have much of a chance of winning the White House. I was struck by the fact that his tone was distinctly different from most southern democratic governors of his time.

Specifically, he seemed to express a strong desire to leave behind the racist past and work together as one nation. I liked this and so I decided to keep my eye on Carter and his unlikely bid for the presidency. Having grown up in south Louisiana, I was keenly aware of the racist past that could not be ignored.

Later in his campaign, I had the opportunity to hear

him speak in person. He wasn't a great speaker but he was clearly intelligent and had a low-key kind of southern charm.

Having moved to Chicago to attend college, I had become more aware of my own southern heritage. After just a few months in Chicago, I had lost my own southern accent without much effort. When people said that they couldn't tell that I was from the south from the way that I spoke, I took this as a complement.

I became aware that in the minds of many people, "Southern" was most often equated with racism and ignorance. I had noticed that in the popular culture and the media, if you wanted to portray someone in a negative light, you gave him a southern accent.

This was one of the challenges faced by candidate Carter. He wanted to present the South in a new light.

I was grateful for this. He was a symbol of a new kind of political leader in the South that acknowledged our racist past and sought meaningful ways to make amends.

In 1976, when Carter won the election, I had been living and working as a volunteer in a small rural village in Egypt as part of an international development program.

One of the issues that I was able to learn more about while in Egypt was the conflict with Israel. I was able to see first-hand the wounds that had been inflicted upon Egypt by the far superior Israeli Defense forces in their fairly recent six-day war in which Israel seized the Sinai Peninsula.

I also came to know more about the plight of the Palestinian people in their struggle to gain freedom from the occupying forces of Israel.

It was especially gratifying to me when Carter was able to play a critical role in the Camp David Peace Accord.

The agreement still stands today as a model of how peace is possible even in the most difficult circumstances, in the most entrenched conflicts of our time. Ten years after Carter left the White House, I had the opportunity to hear him speak in person for a second time.

As a professional mediator, I was attending a conference of people involved in peacemaking and conflict resolution and the keynote speaker was the former president.

He shared with us some of his experience that grew out of not only the Camp David accord but other successful peacemaking efforts in which he had played a part.

He spoke about the patience and persistence that was required of him. He spoke about how he dealt with repeated threats to leave the negotiating table. He spoke about his efforts to build a deeply personal connection with all of the players regardless of his own views of the positions they were taking. He spoke about maintaining a sense of hope and optimism in the face of deep skepticism and hopelessness.

The conference I was attending was in North Carolina. The former president had caught a plane in Atlanta in order to deliver his speech to the gathering over lunch.

At the beginning of his talk he shared with us that before leaving his home that morning he had gotten up early and mowed the lawn at his church in Plains. As one who has never been very fond of mowing lawns, I was impressed that a man of such great accomplishments and intelligence would be bothered to mow the lawn at his church. Surely a former president could have gotten someone else to carry out such a menial task.

This was Jimmy Carter.

This willingness to get his hands dirty was also very evident in his longtime commitment to building houses as part of Habitat for Humanity. This commitment took him to dozens of countries where he rolled

up his sleeves and joined in the hard work of building a house for someone in need.

Carter has been one of the busiest former presidents that our country has ever had. Through his work at the Carter Center, he has continued his peacemaking efforts in dozens of conflict situations around the world, where even the U.S. State Department would not go.

Jimmy Carter made it OK for me to be southern. He also made it OK for me to be Christian.

In the same way that he showed the world that being southern did not equate to being ignorant and racist, Jimmy Carter also showed that being Christian did not equate to being judgmental, self-righteous and hypocritical.

From the time he first introduced himself to the nation, he made it very clear that he was a deeply committed Christian. In his case, he made it clear that this was not simply a set of beliefs that he carried around in his head. It was a faith that he lived every day.

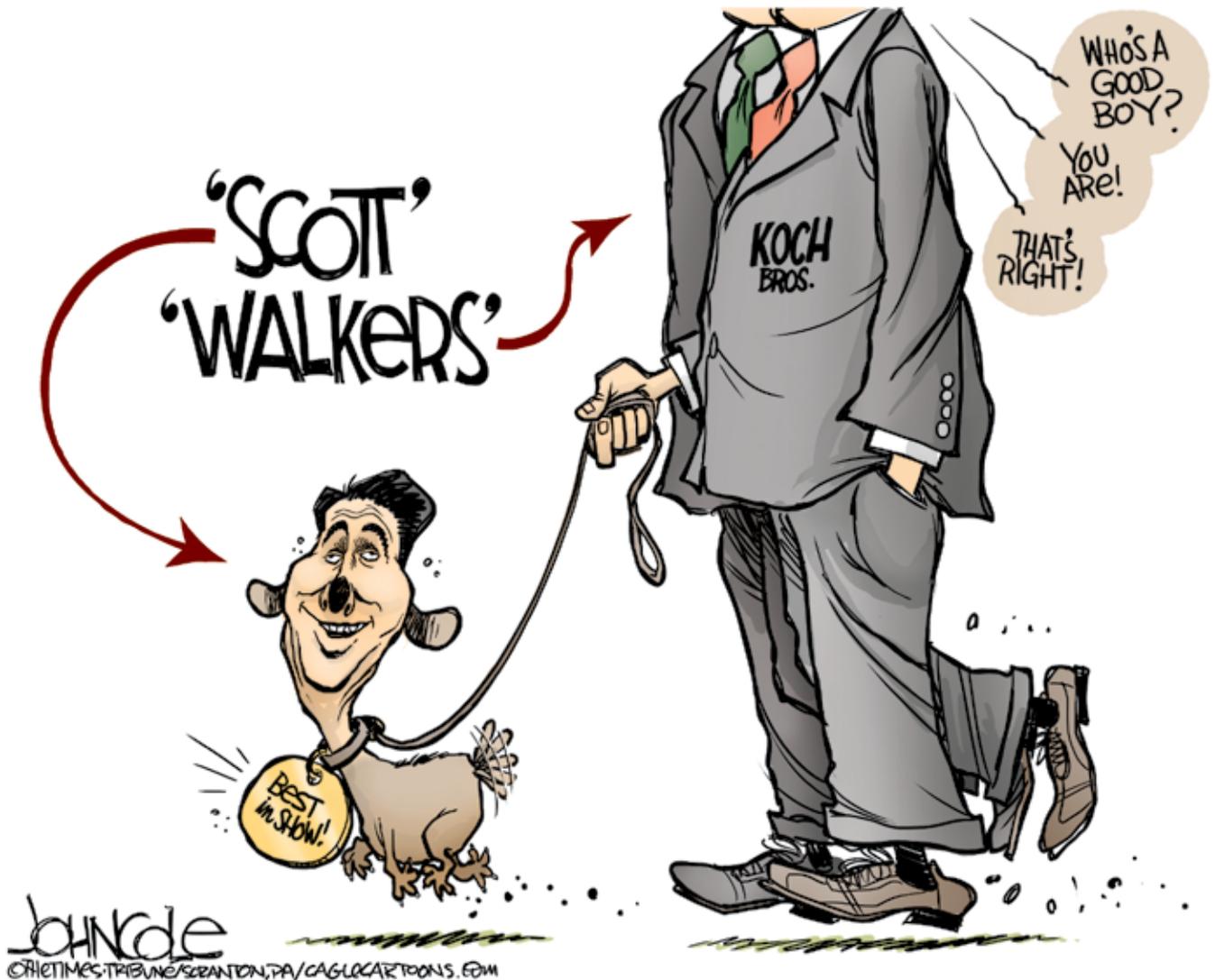
It was a deep and sincere commitment to follow in the path of Jesus; the path of justice seeking for all. His faith led him to acts of service that ranged from making peace between nations to mowing the lawn at his church on a day when he had plenty of other commitments.

So when I recently saw him on TV speaking at a press conference about his cancer and the possibility of death, it was no surprise that he spoke with a kind of quiet confidence and serenity. He is so clearly a man at peace with himself. He spoke of his own gratitude for the wonderful life that he has lived and the many blessings he has received.

I was reminded of the blessing that he has been for me.

*James Stovall is director of the Mediation Institute in Oklahoma City and a frequent contributor to The Oklahoma Observer. He can be reached at [j\\_stovall@site.net](mailto:j_stovall@site.net).*





## *I'm Stickin' To The Union*

BY HARRY T. COOK

**T**he might and main of corporate America and its sky-high stacks of dollars are presently arrayed against one of the pillars of democracy: collective bargaining, otherwise known as unions.

The Koch Brothers are pouring money into the presidential campaign of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker in recognition of his success in the battle to emasculate public workers unions. Other tycoons are piling on as well.

Collective bargaining along with the graduated income tax, Social Security and Medicare are together a critical part of American democracy's foundation. Each has a leveling influence, the desired effect being that those with much should not have too much at the expense of those who have too little.

A little Marxist, you say? Der alte Karl, were he still drawing breath, might not have recognized the application of his theories by the likes of Lenin and Mao. Marx had inhaled some of the first toxic fumes of the Industrial Revolution and understood how badly workers were then treated. He was a socialist, and so what?

We are, for the most part, all socialists. Any of us who has a Social Security number and is accruing retirement benefits from contributions by employers and through FICA deductions from wages is a socialist. Any one of us with a Medicare card is a socialist.

Along with unions, both Social Security and Medicare are under attack by devious disinformation. Social Security would never come within light years of bankruptcy if those who make more than \$118,500

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in a year – the current ceiling at which every dollar thereafter is exempt from FICA deductions – were required to pay the tax on all income however gained. And it would be more than fair and surely just for them to be so required if, indeed, the United States aspires to the ideals of democracy.

The Affordable Care Act has brought some semblance of equality to the delivery of health care to the previously uninsured, just as Medicare has done for retirees over half a century. More democracy. Two-thirds of the Congress opposes all three.

At the base of it all is the theory and practice of collective bargaining that, to be honest, has its roots in Marxism. If the manufacture of framistans requires human beings to craft, assemble and deliver them, then such human beings deserve to have some real interest in the means of their production and delivery.

A good many Americans look to Scott Walker as a contemporary hero as he has put the unions in their place – which, by the way, is what? They do not understand that collective bargaining is the cornerstone of the economics of American democracy.

It has not been in the makeup of most corporations to yield control of so much as a wrench to the worker. That was made clear long ago. Thus over time the idea of collective bargaining arose, eventually forcing business to negotiate with labor over wages and work rules.

Of this process Walter Reuther is the patron saint. Through the efforts of Reuther and others, a middle class was created in this country with certain rights and expectations.

Yet industry has set back the middle class by moving manufacturing to Southern states where unions were, like anything resembling commonsense, unpopular. Then as unions began to take root in the Sunbelt, all of a sudden we are driving American cars made in Mexico. And so it has gone.

The two-tiered wage system that was stuffed down the throat of the UAW at a time when the automotive industry was in real trouble was a serious blow to the gut of collective bargaining. The theory was: Sow the seeds of discontent among the workers, not between labor and management. There's more than one way to skin a cat.

A good many Americans look to Scott Walker as a contemporary hero as he has put the unions in their place – which, by the way, is what? They do not understand that collective bargaining is the cornerstone

of the economics of American democracy.

Here's about one set of unions that made America much safer: In the latter decade or two of the 19th Century, railroad workers began agitating for better wages, work rules and safer operation of railways – for themselves and rail passengers. In one well-known case, a locomotive engineer was fired because, after 52 straight hours at the throttle, he refused on the grounds of safety for himself and others to go on another run without sleep.

Such working conditions are what moved Eugene V. Debs to fight for the rights and safety of rail workers and their trains. He was beaten, jailed and turned into a pariah by the same kind of disinformation in which Gov. Walker and others have trafficked. That war of words is not all that far from the 1937 Battle of the Overpass during which Reuther and other UAW members were brutally attacked from behind by Hen-

ry Ford's goons.

I spent a decade as a member of Local 22 of the Newspaper Guild that represented reporters, some editors, photographers and others in the employ of the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News. Twenty years ago next month, long gone from the paper, I saw that union, like Byron's "might of the Gentile ... melted like snow in the glance of the Lord," as its members meekly left their desks in what was soon to become seen as a lockout, "the lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown."

Journalism in Detroit hasn't been the same since. The papers' corporate owners got their way and proceeded to ruin what had become two pretty good if not great newspapers, along with the lives and livelihood of their faithful employees.

I grew up in a religious tradition that prized the naive hymnody of Protestantism and have never forgotten the perverse Calvinistic sentiment of this lyric: Be strong! We have hard work to do And loads to lift. Shun not the struggle! 'Tis God's gift. Be strong!

Neither Debs nor Reuther nor my comrades in journalism thought their struggles with corporate America to be the gift of any god, save a demented one. Solidarity forever.

*Harry T. Cook is an Episcopal priest, journalist and author living in Michigan.*

# *Open Skies = Unfair Advantage*

**BY JAMES P. HOFFA**

**U**nfair labor practices are once again hurting U.S. workers and threatening jobs across America. This time, the threat is coming from overseas, as three airlines from the Middle East – Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Emirates – are embracing shady financial practices and anti-worker policies to undercut U.S. companies.

These Persian Gulf region air carriers are distorting the market with unfair advantages, and hoping no one notices. U.S. airlines are accountable to their shareholders and operate as private businesses. They respond to pressures in the marketplace and must negotiate contracts with their unionized employees.

In contrast, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Emirates are run as extensions of the countries they serve. In direct violation of the international Open Skies agreement, recent evidence shows the governments of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates [UAE] are pumping billions of dollars into these companies through subsidies, supportive public policies and state-funded construction. These billions provide the airlines with an enormous benefit that upends the international aviation market and undermines global competition standards.

A recent report shows that these subsidies and unfair benefits have totaled \$42 billion over the last decade alone. With that much government cash, no wonder these airlines are expanding! With no pressure to earn profits, provide a living wage or control costs, these state-funded enterprises jeopardize American businesses, threatening jobs and consumer choice in the process.

It's as if a foreign government were manufacturing cars on the cheap in its own country and then selling them by the thousands in U.S. cities at below-market rates. That's not competition – it's a tactic straight out of the old monopolist playbook. It's also one the U.S. government has rejected for decades.

To make it worse, these airlines operate with minimal oversight. In stark contrast to the U.S., airline regulators in Qatar and the UAE are anything but independent. The chairman of Emirates, for example, also serves as president of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority. This would be an absurd conflict of interest anywhere else, but for big companies in these countries, it's just how they do business.

The Gulf airlines tilt the playing field through other, more sinister policies enforced by their governments. Both Qatar and the UAE outlaw labor unions and offer almost no protection for their workers. The abysmal treatment of workers in Qatar has already drawn

widespread condemnation in the lead up to the World Cup, for example, and rightfully so. Conditions for workers in those countries are so poor that their jobs are often compared to indentured servitude. Workers are suffering in Qatar and the UAE, but the airlines save billions as a result.

Access to our skies must be equitable. Like any international accord, these agreements must be enforced.

Pressure is building to reexamine the U.S. Open Skies policy. The Teamsters are proud members of the Partnership for Open & Fair Skies, a coalition of industry and union groups formed to restore a level playing field under the Open Skies agreements with Qatar and the UAE.

A bipartisan group of 262 House lawmakers is pushing the Obama Administration to investigate the unfair subsidies Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Emirates have received since 2004.

A survey of American voters conducted in April shows that more than 79% of American voters believe that the U.S. government should act to fix trade violations of Open Skies agreements and stand up for American workers. Americans broadly agree that the U.S. government needs to act to end aviation trade agreement violations:

- 74% feel the U.S. government should take action to remedy violations if it were proven that foreign partners were violating the Open Skies agreements they signed with the United States.
- 79% of voters feel that the U.S. government should take action to resolve these subsidy violations rather than waiting for the consumer-driven marketplace to work out a solution.
- 79% of voters feel it is a national security risk to allow the viability of our aviation infrastructure to be threatened due to its important relationship supporting the U.S. military in times of crisis.

The Teamsters and other airline unions, the airline industry and the American people urge U.S. negotiators to revisit the Open Skies protocols with the countries that are receiving governmental support to ensure fairness. American workers can compete with anyone in the world when the playing field is level, but everyone has to play by the same rules.

*James P. Hoffa is general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.*

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# *CEOs Call For Wage Increases For Workers! What's The Catch?*

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

**P**eter Georgescu has a message he wants America's corporate and political elites to hear: "I'm scared," he said in a recent New York Times opinion piece.

He adds that Paul Tudor Jones is scared, too, as is Ken Langone. And they are trying to get the Powers That Be to pay attention to their urgent concerns. But wait – these three *are* Powers That Be. Georgescu is former head of Young & Rubicam, one of the world's largest PR and advertising firms; Jones is a quadruple-billionaire and hedge fund operator; and Langone is a founder of Home Depot.

What is scaring the pants off these powerful peers of the corporate plutocracy? Inequality.

Yes, amazingly, these actual occupiers of Wall Street say they share Occupy Wall Street's critical analysis of America's widening chasm between the rich and the rest of us. "We are creating a caste system from which it's almost impossible to escape," Georgescu wrote, not only trapping the poor, but also "those on the higher end of the middle class."

He issued a clarion call for his corporate peers to reverse the dangerous and ever-widening gulf of income inequality in our country by increasing the paychecks of America's workaday majority. "We business leaders know what to do. But do we have the will to do it? Are we willing to control the excessive greed so prevalent in our culture today and divert resources to better education and the creation of more opportunity?"

Right on, Peter! However, their concern is not driven by moral outrage at the injustice of it all, but by self-interest: "We are concerned where income inequality will lead," he said. Specifically, he warned that one of two horrors awaits the elites if they stick to the present path: social unrest [conjuring up images of the guillotine] or [horror of horrors] "oppressive taxes" on the superrich.

Motivation aside, Georgescu does comprehend the remedy that our society must have: "Invest in the actual value creators – the employees," he writes. "Start compensating fairly [with] a wage that en-

ables employees to share amply in productivity increases and creative innovations." They have talked with other corporate chieftains and found "almost unanimous agreement" on the need to compensate employees better.

Great! So they'll just do it, right? Uh ... no. But he says he knows just the thing that'll jar the CEOs into action: "Government can provide tax incentives to business to pay more to employees."

That's his big idea. Yes, corporate wage-hike subsidies. He actually wants us taxpayers to give money to bloated, uber-rich corporations so they can pay a dab more to their employees!

As Lily Tomlin said, "No matter how cynical you become, it's never enough to keep up."

First of all, Georgescu proposes this tax giveaway to the corporate elite could "exist for three to five years and then be evaluated for effectiveness."

Much like the Bush tax cuts that helped drive the economic divide, once the corporate chieftains get a taste for a government handout, they will send their lawyers and lobbyists to Washington to schmooze Congress critters into making the tax subsidy permanent.

Secondly, paying to get "good behavior" would reward bad behavior, completely absolving those very CEOs and wealthy shareholders of their guilt in creating today's gross inequality.

After all, they are the ones who have pushed relentlessly for 30 years to disempower labor unions, downsize and privatize the workforce, send jobs offshore, defund education and social programs and otherwise dismantle the framework that once sustained America's healthy middle class. These guys put the "sin" in cynical.

If we want to fix income inequality, Larry Hanley, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union, has a solution. In response to Georgescu's offer of charity to corporations Hanley wrote: "Strengthen labor laws, and we can have democracy and equality again."



# Religious Persecution? Hogwash!

BY CHRISTY THOMAS

**T**he First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads in part, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

We commonly refer to this provision as “separation of church and state” or “separation of church from state.” Either way, the intent is clear: the United States shall not have a required church where all citizens must maintain membership. We are astounding-free to practice our religion the way we want.

Which is why I don’t understand the conservative church outrage over the recent Supreme Court decision that granted same-sex couples the right to commit themselves to one another in the challenges and privileges that come with marriage. This is the correct next step in the radical experiment of democracy

in which we live.

Nonetheless, a huge outcry insisting that God is abandoning our country rose from countless pulpits and blogs.

Hogwash.

Although some of the shapers of our government were adherents of Christianity, from the beginning we’ve been a nation of pluralities, of multiple religions and of the unique freedom not to be religious but still have all rights of citizenship.

It has been a messy process. Every time one more group demanded to be recognized, vicious opposition voices worked to shout those interlopers down. As a rule, opponents cited the Bible as their authority to support their places of privilege while denying rights to others.

But, thanks be to God, there really is separation of

church and state here. Our elected representatives and our judiciary are not representatives or servants of some restricted religious body. They are under no obligation to follow religious restrictions. They are, however, under the obligation to follow the dictates of the laws that govern this country.

Which is exactly what happened.

I was out of town celebrating my birthday when the decision was announced. When I later checked the news, the amount of hate and entitlement spewing from certain religious voices stunned me.

One preacher, probably representative of many on the conservative end, insisted that America is some grand idea, a new order founded by God. He also stated that the Supreme Court decision represented greater treachery to this country than either Pearl Harbor or 9/11. Others called the wrath of God down upon those who call for a more open, more just society.

I saw much conflation of church and state. America is to be worshiped alongside God, who no longer transcends political and national boundaries.

Some gleefully predicted God's wrath to soon fall and cause quick decline of the nation. Their fear of persecution permeated the messages with the surety they are going to be forced to join in marriage those whom they find repugnant or unacceptable. Some call for a massive uprising of civil disobedience, citing Martin Luther King as their model against such injustice.

Again, hogwash.

Preachers have the freedom to say those things precisely because they won't be persecuted.

They can be as loving or as hateful, as inclusive or exclusive, as they wish.

They can interpret the Bible to say that God hates certain people and chooses just a select few for eternal bliss or that God loves the creation in its entirety and suffers with us in our joint and individual agonies, pains and betrayals.

They can be the most holy and humble of servants or the most lavishly paid of the prosperity gospel money machines.

They can condemn others with abandon or preach universal salvation even for the worst among us.

No matter what, no government official can come after them for the free expression of their religious beliefs.

They are not employees of the state. They can perform marriages, or they can decline to perform marriages. They can open their doors to certain people, or they can slam the doors in the faces of those they don't want in their oh-so-pure enclaves.

They are unbelievably privileged.

That's what it means to live in a free society.

If preachers want to dictate the religious views of the country, I would suggest they spend some time in an ISIS-dominated society. After all, the leaders of ISIS declare that their religion dictates their murders and rapes.

We enjoy unique freedoms because of the separa-

tion of church and state. Go to church – or don't go to church. Let others in, or keep others out. You get to decide. That's the power of the U.S. experiment.

But I will say this about myself: If my credentialing as a United Methodist clergywoman had allowed it and if I had been in town, I, too, would have been on the courthouse steps offering my services with great joy to any who might want a wedding by a Christian pastor.

That's my freedom. I'm grateful for it.

*Christy Thomas is a retired United Methodist elder living in Texas. This post originally appeared on her blog *The Thoughtful Pastor* at [www.christythomas.com](http://www.christythomas.com) and in *AU's Church & State* magazine.*

## **DO I KNOW YOU?**

During these serious and troubled times, people of all faiths should remember these four great religious truths:

1. Muslims do not recognize Jews as God's chosen people.
2. Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
3. Protestants do not recognize the Pope as the leader of the Christian world.
4. Baptists do not recognize each other at the liquor store.

## **GOOD SAMARITAN**

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan. She asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?"

A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, "I think I'd throw up."

## **DID NOAH FISH?**

A Sunday school teacher asked, "Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the ark?"

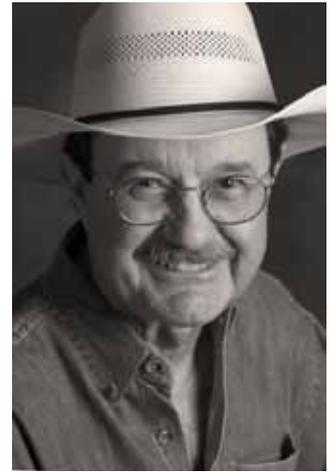
"No," replied Johnny. "How could he, with just two worms."

## **UNANSWERED PRAYER**

The preacher's 5 year-old daughter noticed that her father always paused and bowed his head for a moment before starting his sermon. One day, she asked him why.

"Well, Honey," he began, proud that his daughter was so observant of his messages. "I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon."

"How come He doesn't answer it?" she asked.



## *Why A Monument To A Union-Busting Robber Baron?*

**O**ccasionally, I see something that is so bizarre, so out of place, so wrong that I have to assume I'm hallucinating. For example, I could have sworn I was delusional when I heard about the National Park Service's Pullman National Monument in Chicago.

George Pullman? My mind boggled! Our tax dollars are being spent to build a national park in tribute to a narcissistic, paternalistic, brutalistic 19th-Century robber baron? Incredibly, yes.

Pullman, a notorious union buster and exploiter of working families, is having his history mythologized by today's Powers That Be, portraying him as a model of the corporate order's historic virtue. At the Feb. 19 official consecration of Pullman's park, Chicago's thoroughly corporatized mayor, Rahm Emanuel, even gushed: "This will be a monument ... to Pullman's role in building the American dream."

"History," as the old adage goes, "is written by the winners," even when they're losers as human beings. Pullman was most certainly a loser as a human being for this "dream," as Rahm refers to it, was a nightmare to Pullman's workers.

They toiled in his factories making rail cars, including the luxury "Palace" sleeper for elite train travel. Pullman considered himself a beneficent employer, having built a 600-acre town for the workforce and vaingloriously naming the new home-place for himself. PullmanTown included houses he rented to his workers, churches, schools, a bank, library, and parks – all owned by his company.

Indeed, when officials announced this year that Pullman's town was becoming an honored part of America's park system, officials attested to his generosity by hailing the town as a place he created "to provide his employees a good life."

The workers in the town of Pullman, however, were less charmed, for he ruled the burg as autocratically as he did his factories. No saloons or "agitators" were allowed, nor did he allow any public speeches, town

meetings, independent newspapers or even open discussions.

In a letter residents wrote to the American Railway Union, they offered an example of Pullman's greed and exploitation of his workers: "Water which Pullman buys from the city at eight cents a thousand gallons he retails to us at 500% advance ... Gas which sells at 75 cents per thousand feet in Hyde Park, just north of us, he sells for \$2.25."

The resentful residents created a little ditty that summed up the surreal feel of the place: "We are born in a Pullman house, fed from the Pullman shops, taught in the Pullman schools, catechized in the Pullman Church, and when we die, we shall go to Pullman hell."

In 1894, the workers got Pullman's hell on Earth. Not only did he drastically cut his workers' [he referred to his workers condescendingly as his "children"] wages five times, he also refused to lower their rent. He had guaranteed a 6% return to the wealthy investors who financed the town, he explained – and the investors' needs came first.

What a dysfunctional father! The suffering imposed by this feudal lord on his workers led to the historic Pullman Strike that quickly spread nationwide, led by union icon Eugene Debs.

This uprising was not a problem for Lord George, though. He and other railroad royals rushed to the White House and got President Grover Cleveland to dispatch the U.S. Army to join police and militia forces to crush the labor rebellion. Thirty workers were killed, Debs was arrested on a trumped-up conspiracy charge and all laborers who'd joined the strike were fired and blacklisted.

Now, 120 years later, we taxpayers are financing a monument to this loser's greed. The only way that Pullman National Monument can have any legitimacy is for the grounds to be strewn with sculptures of the 30 dead workers he killed.

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# *Superrich Donors Turn Our Democracy Into Their Plutocracy*

Once upon a time in our Good Ol' US-of-A, presidential contenders and their political parties had to raise the funds needed to make the race. How quaint.

But for the 2016 run, this quaint way of selecting our candidates is no longer the case, thanks to the Supreme Court's malicious meddling in the democratic process in its reckless Citizens United decision. In that decision, the five members of the Corporate Cabal decreed that "non-candidate" campaigns can take unlimited sums of money directly from corporations. Therefore a very few wealthy powers can pour money into these murky political operations and gain unwarranted plutocratic power over the election process.

And looking at the fundraising numbers, those wealthy powers have definitely taken charge of the electoral game. These very special interests, who have their own presidential agendas, now put up the vast majority of funds and run their own private campaigns to elect someone who will do their bidding.

So far, of over \$400 million raised to back candidates of either party in next year's race, half of the money has come from a pool of only about 400 people – and two-thirds of their cash went not to candidates directly but to corporate-run super PACs.

To get a grasp at what this looks like, take a peek at the super PACs supporting Ted Cruz. Of the \$37 million they have raised, \$36 million was pumped in by only three interests – a New York hedge fund manager, a corporate plunderer living in Puerto Rico and the owners of a fracking operation who've pocketed billions from the explosive use of this destructive drilling technology.

So while Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz, Scott Walker and gang are the candidates, the driving forces in this election have names like Robert Mercer, Norman Braman, Diane Hendricks, Dan and Farris Wilks, Toby Neugebauer and Miguel Fernandez.

Who are these people? They are part of a small but powerful coterie of multimillionaire corporate executives and billionaires who fund secretive presidential super PACs that can determine who gets nominated. These elephantine funders play politics like some superrich, heavy-betting gamblers play roulette – putting enormous piles of chips on a name in hopes of getting lucky, then cashing in for governmental favors.

Let's take a look at the funders:

- Robert Mercer, chief of the Renaissance Technologies hedge fund, has already put more than \$11 million into Ted Cruz's SuperPAC.

- Norman Braman, former owner of the Philadelphia Eagle's football team, has \$5 million down on Marco Rubio

- Diane Hendricks, the billionaire owner of a roofing outfit and a staunch anti-worker activist, is betting \$5 million on Scott Walker, as are the Koch Brothers.

- Mike Fernandez, a billionaire investor in health-care corporations, has backed Jeb Bush with \$3 million.

- Ronald Cameron, an Arkansas poultry baron, is into Mike Huckabee for \$3 million.

These shadowy super PACs amount to exclusive political casinos, with only a handful of million-dollar-plus players dominating each one [including the one behind Hillary Clinton's campaign]. These few people are not merely "big donors" – they are *owners*, with full access to their candidate and an owner's prerogative to shape the candidate's policies and messages.

But one of these new players assures us that they're not buying candidates for corporate and personal gain, but "primarily [for] a love economic freedom."

Sure, sweetheart – all you want is the "economic freedom" to pollute, defraud, exploit, rob and otherwise harm anything and anyone standing between you and another dollar in profit.

The problem with the GOP presidential debates is that the wrong people are on stage. These treacherous few donors are using their bags of cash to pervert American democracy into rank plutocracy. Why not put them on stage and make each one answer pointed questions about what special favors they're trying to buy? – *Jim Hightower*

## *Free Students*

## *From Debt – Now*

**B**utch Hancock, one of Austin's finest singer-songwriters, grew up in the Texas Panhandle, out among dry-land farmers and strict fundamentalist Christians. Butch once told me that he felt he'd been permanently scarred in his vulnerable teen years by the local culture's puritanical preaching on sexual propriety: "They told us that sex is filthy, obscene, wicked, and beastly – and that we should save it for someone we love."

Today, America's higher education complex approaches students with the same sort of convoluted logic that guided Butch's sex education: "A college

degree is the key to prosperity for both you and your country, so it's essential," lectures the hierarchy to the neophytes. "But we'll make it hard to get and often not worth the getting."

Touted as a necessity, but priced like a luxury, many degree programs are mediocre or worse – predatory loan scams that hustle aspiring students into deep debt and poverty.

On both a human level and in terms of our national interest, that is seriously twisted. Nonetheless, it's our nation's de facto educational policy, promulgated and enforced by a cabal of ideologues and profiteers, including Washington politicians, most state governments, college CEOs, Wall Street financiers and debt-collection corporations. What we have is a shameful ethical collapse. These self-serving interests have intentionally devalued education from an essential public investment in the common good to just another commodity.

Back in the olden days of 1961, I attended the University of North Texas. At this public school, I was blessed with good teachers, a student body of working-class kids [most, like me, were the first in their families to go to college] and an educational culture focused on enabling us to become socially useful citizens.

All of this cost me under \$800 a year [about \$6,250 in today's dollars] – including living expenses! With close-to-free tuition and a part-time job, I could afford to get a good education, gain experience in everything from work to civic activism, make useful connections, graduate in four years and obtain a debt-free start in life. We just assumed that's what college was supposed to be.

It still ought to be, but for most students today, it's not even close. In the U.S., tuition and fees charged by public four-year colleges and universities average more than \$20,000 per year.

For a private four-year college, it's more than double that amount. Even public two-year colleges cost

around \$11,000 per year.

The nation's fastest growing provider of higher education is unfortunately also the worst: private, for-profit schools. While a few deliver an honest educational product, honesty is not a business model embraced by most of these sprawling, predatory chains largely owned by Wall Street.

To achieve the Wall Street imperative of goosing up stock prices and maximizing profits, this educational sector routinely applies the full toolkit of corporate thievery, including false advertising, high-pressure sales tactics, bait-and-switch scams, legal dodges, political protection and outright lying.

Rather than educating students and broadening life's possibilities, many for-profit colleges have bankrupted hundreds of thousands of students. Worse, many of these "schools" prey on struggling, low-income workers desperately hoping a degree will provide a toehold in the middle class.

To say there are lots of horror stories about private, for-profit colleges gouging students is like saying there are lots of ouchies in a bramble patch. A profusion of books, articles, reports, investigations and lawsuits, as well as websites such as My ITT Experience, document the toll.

You might ask, "If they're so awful, how do they stay in business?" The old-fashioned way: By lavishly spreading money around to the right people. And since most of their revenue comes from taxpayers, it's actually your money they're spreading.

"Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife," said American philosopher and education reformer John Dewey. It's time we give birth to a new debt-free democracy.

Put a tiny tax on the billions of daily, automated transactions by speculators, and more than enough money will come into the public coffers to free up higher education for all. For information, check out United States Students Association [<http://www.usstudents.org>]. – *Jim Hightower*

## *Ashley Madison's Online Innocents?*

BY FROMA HARROP

**T**o the thousands who've been outed as users of the Ashley Madison adultery website: You deserve sympathy. Your greatest sin was trusting a website to protect your identity – especially one that would have rated a 10 as a juicy target for hackers.

The second sin, for many of you, was believing that Ashley Madison was populated by heavy-breathing wives looking for action – as opposed to bots and cardboard participants.

Ashley Madison was apparently not a "wonderland" of 31 million men competing for 5.5 million women. "Only a paltry number of women's accounts actually

looked human," Annalee Newitz wrote for Gizmodo. That is, only about 12,000 of the 5.5 million female profiles.

Bored office workers may have created many of the fake profiles and then vanished. And there are charges that the site itself fabricated women. One woman claims that Ashley Madison paid her to write more than 1,000 fake profiles in Portuguese for a Brazilian audience.

And how many of the real women – or men – were actually looking for an affair, as opposed to fooling around online?

Women who've been on respectable dating sites,



such as Match.com, say that lots of men there are “jerks” playing mind games with those seeking a good mate.

Nonetheless, Ashley Madison – with its trademark manicured finger covering a foxy mouth – has been denounced, defended and, most grievously, taken seriously.

One news outlet used the leaked details to make a chart purporting to show which states have the most cheaters. Alabama was No. 1. Data analysts have noted that Alabama is the first state in the alphabetical dropdown menu for people concocting profiles.

After about 15,000 federal workers, including active-duty military, were found to be trolling Ashley Madison, the Washington Post wondered aloud whether these employees should be fired for adultery. Surely not over adultery, much less the appearance of adultery, but playing around on taxpayer time is another matter.

The hackers, members of Impact Team, also got on their high horse about the wages of infidelity. They may have been trying to justify exposing the bank accounts and other personal information belonging to thousands of the “innocents” who signed up with Ashley Madison. [They had first demanded that the Canadian-based site come down, promising to trample on the members’ privacy if it didn’t.]

“Chances are your man signed up on the world’s

biggest affair site, but never had one,” Impact Team wrote after its data dump. “He just tried to. If that distinction matters.”

First off, that distinction does matter. Secondly, why assume that the men tried to? How many men on the site were really looking to score in the physical sense? They may just have been curious about what was out there. Oh, yes, the hackers “sharing” the users’ pictures and sexual preferences are keeping their own identities under wraps. Real heroes, they.

The Toronto police report that criminals are already trying to extort people on the leaked Ashley Madison list, threatening to share embarrassing data with the users’ friends, families and employers.

A wish to ridicule the whole phenomenon is tempered by some tragic results. That would include at least two suicides that are being blamed on the exposure.

Ashley Madison, the business, is now being charged with corporate crimes too numerous to list here. The chief executive of the parent company lost his job over the weekend.

The web can be a very dangerous place for trusting people, including untrustworthy ones. As the Ashley Madison case shows, too many Internet users think they can do the ski jump when they belong on the bunny slope.

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# PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS

**FOR  
THE  
IRAN  
DEAL**

**DIPLOMATS**



**GENERALS**



**SCIENTISTS**



**AGAINST  
THE  
IRAN  
DEAL**

**ARCHITECTS**



## *U.S., Israel And The Iran Deal*

BY HAROLD V. SARE

**T**he U.S. Congress is now within its 60-day period to review the nuclear agreement with Iran negotiated by the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China, along with the European Union. It was a long negotiation process requiring changing deadlines. However, Iran, with demanding objectives, was willing to negotiate to get relief from sanctions that were imposed earlier by the major powers because of Iran's nuclear development efforts.

This agreement, unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council, would authorize a measure to lift the sanctions against Iran. The Iran Parliament has the right under its Constitution to review the deal; and the U.S. Congress has 60 days to review the agreement. The UN Security Council also approved a measure that would automatically reinstate the harsh sanctions against Iran if Iran refuses to accept the agreement reached in Vienna.

Under the proposed 15-year agreement, Iran has to

dismantle two-thirds of its installed centrifuges for enriching uranium and dispose of 98% of its uranium stockpile – that is, reduce its stockpile of low-enriched uranium from 10,000 kilograms to 300 kilograms – a level significantly below capacity to build a bomb. And this would be binding for 15 years.

Also, Iran is required to redesign its heavy-water reactor at Arak so that it cannot produce plutonium, a critical fuel for making weapons. Iran must provide strict transparency and accept inspections under the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA].

If Iran violates any aspect of the agreement, the U.S. and the European Union can immediately re-impose the sanctions that are now in place, but which would be withdrawn under the terms of this agreement. Since those sanctions have been quite harmful to the Iranian economy, the leadership wants to remove them.

Realistically, the sanctions seem to be weakening somewhat under the expressed policies of the vari-

ous major powers involved with the Iran negotiations. The United States diplomats recognize the threatened weakening position on sanctions, but they also believe it is necessary to try to negotiate some normalcy in a very politically complex Middle East.

Let us be clear: the U.S. does not want Iran to develop a nuclear capacity! However, the Iranians had made considerable progress toward reaching a point enabling them to do so – even though they claim they are working on only peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The imposed sanctions have seriously hurt the Iranian economy, and this provides impetus for Iran to engage in negotiations. Iran is one of the most developed countries in the region with a population nearing 80 million people. Their education level is impressively high compared to other Middle Eastern countries, and this compels them to develop their economy and trade with the outside world.

There are major political/religious conflicts within

action against Iran and has encouraged negotiations to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear capability. He recognizes that the United States easily could become involved in a long military entanglement that would be costly in U.S. lives and treasure.

Negotiation should be skillfully attempted where it is possible before military action is taken as the answer. Of course, the U.S. must have a very strong and capable military when we need it. But that military must be relevant to the age we are living in.

The president also knows that there are 1.3 billion-plus Muslims in the world and if properly motivated to become involved could bring about a world conflict, civilian killings, and economic disaster. Too many politicians I hear speaking to the Middle East situation reveal that they have little, if any knowledge of history. The Muslims during one long period of world history controlled the largest empire that history has known.

The U.S. and other countries have negotiated with the Soviet Union, China, Pakistan, India and each other on nuclear war. It is clear that we did not trust the Russians or the Chinese, but we negotiated anyway. Why should Iran be different?

their country which leadership has to cope with. However, Iran is primarily Shi'a [90%], and for centuries it has been in conflict with the worldwide majority of Sunni Muslims. A major problem in Iraq is that it, too, is primarily a Shi'a country, but contains a large population of Sunnis and in the past has been politically dominated by Sunnis. ISIS in Syria and parts of Iraq are primarily Sunni Muslims, pushed out of their positions in Iraq.

The U.S. occupation of Iraq failed to recognize and adequately cope with this Shi'a/Sunni divide, and because of that the Syria-Iraqi area has become a region of major conflict.

Iran Shia's and the Kurds have become a major fighting force against ISIS. Unfortunately, the U.S. military invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 upset the "political balance" that history over time had generated.

Currently, the U.S. policy argues that the ongoing conflict must be the responsibility of the Muslims to work out. However, the U.S. continues to provide advisers [over 3,000 of them] and many air strikes against ISIS, a dangerous extremist Muslim movement against any differing peoples, including the United States.

President Obama has attempted to keep the U.S. military out of the total conflict situation. He has attempted to bring troops home and to encourage negotiations. He has been unwilling to take military

President Obama's effort at negotiation should be appreciated. He sensibly is keeping the military in the picture, but as a fallback position or last resort. It is recognized that the kind of military needed today is different from what was required in the last century. Conflict today seemingly is less organized along militaristic "fronts," but more dispersed – reaching into innocent populations without warning and brutally savage.

Israel has the nuclear bomb, as we all know. India has the nuclear bomb. So does Pakistan, a very unstable Muslim state. Further development of nuclear military power in an unstable region such as the Middle East and the surrounding areas is considered dangerous by the major powers. If we can prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons for 15 years, we may well have time to work out issues with them over a period of time.

Israel's leadership, along with Republican and some Democratic U.S. Congressional members, are fearful of Iran's potential for developing nuclear weapons and believe that the only way to deal with the problem is to take military action and impose more forceful sanctions against Iran. If we can avoid war, mankind the world over will be much better off.

The U.S. and other countries have negotiated with the Soviet Union, China, Pakistan, India and each other on nuclear war. It is clear that we did not trust the Russians or the Chinese, but we negotiated any-

way. Why should Iran be different?

The U.S. has been at war in that region for a number of years and spent trillions of borrowed dollars paying for it, and a majority of U.S. voters are opposed to keep doing the same thing.

Many leaders in Arab states opposed the deal with Iran probably because of religious differences, but specifically because of Iran's involvement in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has strenuously opposed the negotiations and the agreement reached. He came to the United States and spoke to Congress about his opposition – the first time a foreign leader has ever done that. The speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives strongly opposes the negotiations and the agreement. He made it possible for Netanyahu to speak to Congress.

It has been reliably reported that high-ranking Israeli security personnel favor the agreement. However, Netanyahu speaks out against the agreement because of Iran's call for doing away with Israel, and Iran's "unreliable word" about not producing a nuclear capacity.

U.S. nuclear power authorities [including scientists] believe the agreement is needed and can be reliably enforced. There probably is no doubt that Republican leaders [who agreed during President Obama's first term that they were not going to work with him] are

working against him even on this crucial negotiation.

Israel carries a lot of weight in U.S. politics, even though the Israeli population is only about 8.3 million, of which only 6.1 million are Jews and 1.7 million are Arabs. The U.S. continues to provide from \$3 billion to \$15 billion in aid per year depending on Israel's "military requirements."

Nonetheless, the leadership often is not responsive to U.S. policies in the Middle East. For instance, the Israelis establish Jewish settlements in disputed areas, which the U.S. resists.

While Israel is a controversial state in the Middle East, the Jews, because of the brutal persecution they received from Hitler and the Nazis, needed a state of their own. We can wish for more normalization in the Middle East, but it takes all states in the region, including Israel, to work constructively toward that goal. President Obama is making every effort to achieve that goal without war.

In a final note, it is interesting that the "Iran Project," on which the present proposed agreement is based, was cofounded by the United Nations Association of the United States of America and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 2002.

Reasonable and responsible leadership might bring this agreement about. We cannot be sure.

*Harold V. Sare is regents service professor of political science emeritus at Oklahoma State University.*

# *Why Israel's Security Experts Support Iran Deal – And Iran's Hardliners Don't*

BY JOE CONASON

**A**s Congressional Republicans seek to undermine the nuclear agreement between Iran and the international powers, they assert that hardline Islamists in the Islamic Republic are delighted with the deal while Israelis concerned over their country's security are appalled. The same theme is repeated constantly on Fox News Channel and throughout right-wing media.

But that message is largely false – and in very important respects, the opposite is true.

In arguing for the agreement at American University last month, President Obama noted that the most hostile factions in the Tehran regime aren't celebrating this agreement – as the cover of *The New York Post* suggested.

"In fact, it's those hardliners who are most comfortable with the status quo," he said. "It's those hardliners chanting 'Death to America' who have been most opposed to the deal. They're making common cause

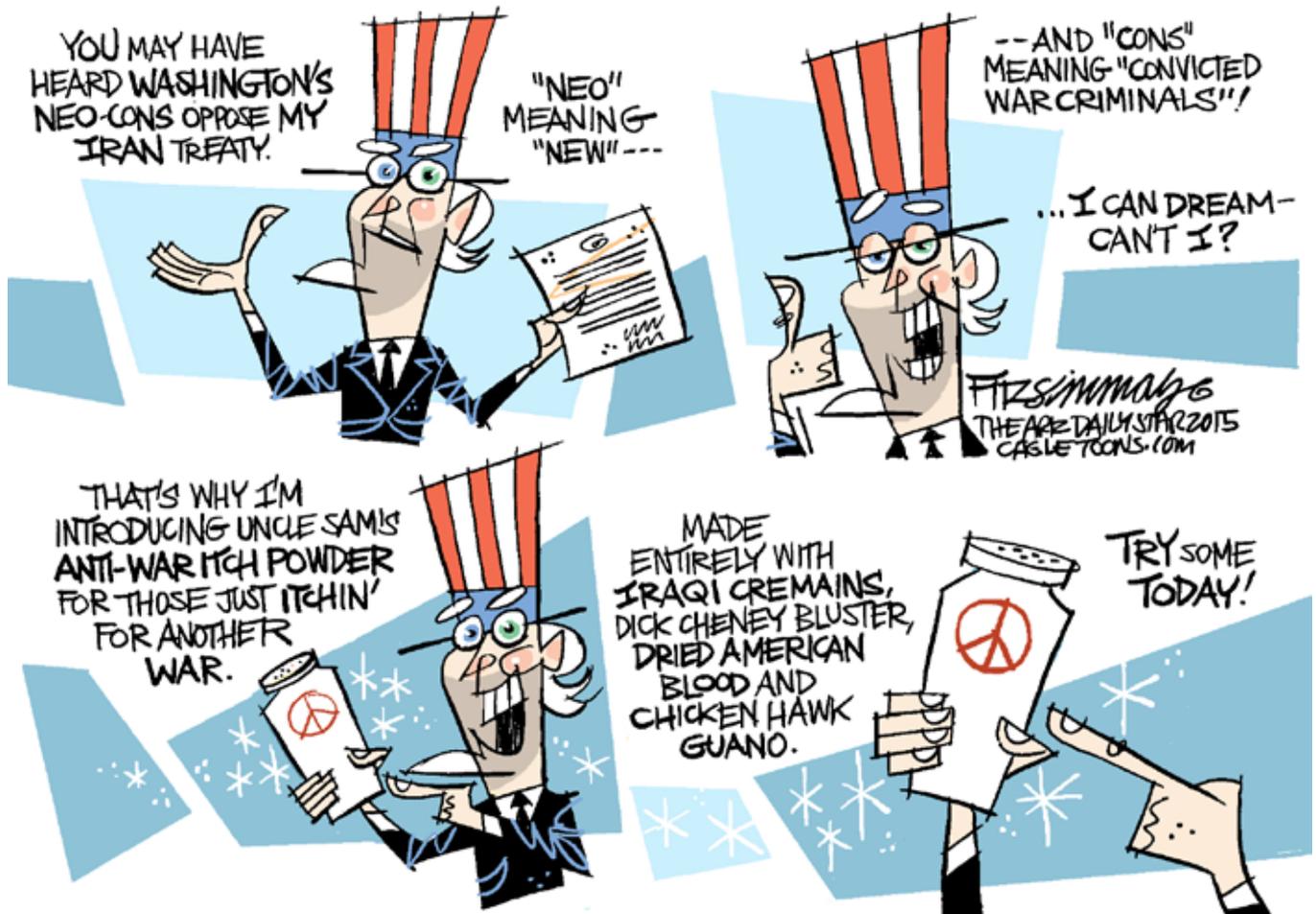
with the Republican caucus."

Indeed, while vast throngs of Iranians greeted their government's negotiators in a joyous welcome, the fanatical reactionaries in the Revolutionary Guard and the paramilitary Basij movement – which have violently repressed democratic currents in Iran – could barely control their outrage.

Upon reading the terms, a Basij spokesman said last month, "We quickly realized that what we feared ... had become a reality. If Iran agrees with this, our nuclear industry will be handcuffed for many years to come."

Hoping and perhaps praying for a veto by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, their supreme leader, the Basijis, the right-wing media in Tehran, and their regime sponsors pointed to "red lines" that the agreement allegedly crossed.

"We will never accept it," said Mohammed Ali Jafari, a high-ranking Revolutionary Guard commander.



Such shrill expressions of frustration should encourage everyone who understands the agreement's real value. Iran's "Death to America, Death to Israel" cohort hates this deal – not only because of its highly restrictive provisions, but because over the long term, it strengthens their democratic opponents and threatens their corrupt control of Iranian society.

In Israel, meanwhile, the alarmist criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – a sage whose confident predictions about Iran, Iraq, and almost everything else are reliably, totally wrong – has obscured support from actual military and intelligence leaders. Like experts in this country and around the world, the best-informed Israelis understand the deal's imperfections very well – and support it nevertheless.

"There are no ideal agreements," declared Ami Ayalon, a military veteran who headed the Israeli Navy and later oversaw the Jewish state's security service, the Shin Bet.

But as Ayalon explained to J.J. Goldberg of the Forward, this agreement is "the best possible alternative from Israel's point of view, given the other available alternatives" – including the most likely alternative which is, as Obama explained, another extremely dangerous Mideast war.

Efraim Halevy, who formerly ran the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, and later headed its National Security Council, concurs with Ayalon [and Obama]. Writing in Yedioth Aharonoth, the national daily published in Tel Aviv, Halevy points out a pro-

found contradiction in Netanyahu's blustering complaints.

Having warned that an Iranian nuclear weapon would pose a unique existential threat to Israel, how can Bibi logically reject the agreement that forestalls any bomb development for at least 15 years and increases the "breakout time" from one month to a year – even if Iran ultimately violates its commitments?

Such a deal is far preferable to no deal, the ex-Mossad chief insists, although it won't necessarily dissuade Tehran from making trouble elsewhere. Halevy also emphasizes that no mythical "better" deal would ever win support from Russia and China, Iran's main weapons suppliers, whose leaders have endorsed this agreement.

In short, both of these top former officials believe the agreement with Iran will enhance their nation's security – and contrary to what Fox News Channel's sages might claim, they represent mainstream opinion in Israel's military and intelligence circles.

So perhaps we can safely discount the partisan demagogues and feckless opportunists who claim to be protecting the Jewish state from Barack Obama. And when someone like Mike Huckabee – who memorably escaped military service because of his "flat feet" – denounces the president for "marching Israelis to the oven door," let's remember the sane and serious response of Israel's most experienced defenders.

## *Can New UN Goals Help Grow World Economy, Reduce Poverty?*

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**THE AGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*By Jeffrey D. Sachs*

*Columbia University Press*

*544 pages, \$34.95*

---

**BY TERENCE MCDOWELL**

**J**effrey Sachs is a world-renowned economics professor, leader in sustainable development, senior UN advisor, and special advisor to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. His book explains what sustainable development means, why it matters, and how we should proceed to solve the interconnected problems with population growth, poverty, inequality, health care, and global warming.

Sustainable development is a central concept of our age. It is both a way of understanding the world and a method for solving global problems.

Sachs says “Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] will guide the world’s economic diplomacy in the coming generation. Sustainable development tries to make sense of the interactions of three complex systems: the world economy, the global society, and the Earth’s physical environment.”

How does an economy of 7.2 billion people and \$90 trillion gross world output change over time? What causes economic growth? Why does poverty persist?

These are some of the questions Sachs attempts to answer. But in order for any plan to work, a fourth objective must also be achieved: good governance.

Governments must carry out many core functions to enable society to prosper. These core functions include the provision of social services, such as health care and education; the provision of infrastructure such as roads, ports, and power; the protection of individuals from crime and violence; the promotion of basic science and new technologies; and the implementation of regulations to protect the environment.

Sachs begins with our over-crowded planet and the impact of various projections of population growth on our ability to control our future. He provides a his-

tory of economic development and why some countries developed while others remained poor.

Other chapters analyze planetary boundaries, social inclusion, education for all, health care for all, food security, resilient cities, climate change, and saving biodiversity and protecting ecosystems. The final chapter discusses the 10 SDGs that will be released in the fall of 2015 to be considered by the UN General Assembly.

The 10 SDGs:

**SDG1: End extreme poverty, including hunger.** The more specific goal is to end extreme poverty in all its forms; in other words, to complete the MDGs including hunger, child stunting, malnutrition, and food insecurity, and give special support to highly vulnerable countries. The World Bank leadership voted in 2013 to take on this specific objective of ending extreme poverty by the year 2030.

**SDG2: Achieve economic development within planetary boundaries.** This goal means all countries have a right to economic development as long as that development respects planetary boundaries, ensures sustainable production and consumption patterns, and helps to stabilize the global population by mid-century.

**SDG3: Ensure effective learning for all children and for youth for their lives and livelihoods.** This education goal is stated as “effective learning,” meaning children should be enabled to develop the skills they need to be productive, to be fulfilled in their lives, to be good citizens, and to be able to find decent jobs.

**SDG4: Achieve gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights for all.** Sustainable development rests on the core dimensions of justice, fairness, so-

cial inclusion, and social mobility. Discrimination is a huge and persistent barrier to full participation in economic life and to life satisfaction. This goal will also direct the world's attention to excessive inequality of income and wealth and to the concept of "relative poverty," meaning a situation which households are not in extreme poverty, but are still too poor to be part of the dignified life of the society.

**SDG5:** Achieve health and well-being at all ages. The subtitle of this SDG is to achieve universal health coverage at every stage of life with particular emphasis on primary health services, including reproductive health, to ensure that all people receive quality healthy health services without suffering financial hardship.

**SDG6:** Improve agricultural systems and raise rural productivity. This goal calls on all countries to improve farming practices, rural infrastructure, and access to resources for food production to increase the productivity of agriculture, livestock, and fisheries; raise small-holder incomes; reduce environmental impacts; promote rural prosperity; and ensure resilience to climate change.

**SDG7:** Empower inclusive, productive, and resilient cities. The goal is to make all cities socially inclusive, economically productive, environmentally sustainable, and secure and resilient to climate change and other risks. Success in SDG7 will require new forms of participatory, accountable, and effective city governance to support rapid and equitable urban transformation.

**SDG8:** Curb human-induced climate change and ensure sustainable energy. The aim is to curb greenhouse gas emissions from the energy industry, agriculture, the built environment, and land-use change to ensure a peak of global CO2 emissions in the coming years and to head off the rapidly growing danger of climate change; and to promote sustainable energy for all. The world will need to cut greenhouse gas emis-

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sions approximately by half by 2050, even as the world economy grows perhaps three-fold between now and then. Success requires that the world decarbonize the energy system while also ensuring that electricity and modern energy services are available for all. Meet-

ing this challenge will, of course, require a much faster transition to low-carbon energy than we have achieved to date.

**SDG9:** Secure ecosystem services and biodiversity and ensure good management of water and other natural resources. Biodiver-

sity and marine and terrestrial ecosystems of local, regional, and global significance should be measured, managed, and monitored to ensure the continuation of resilient and adaptive life support systems that support sustainable development. Water and other natural resources should be managed sustainably and transparently to support inclusive economic and human development.

SDG10: Transform government for sustainable development. The public sector, business, and other stakeholders should commit to good governance. Good governance for sustainable development includes transparency, accountability, accession to information, participation, and end to tax havens, and efforts to stamp out corruption.

The world's governments have called for SDGs, which are currently being negotiated in the UN General Assembly. But will these new goals really make a difference?

Will a new set of goals somehow help the world to do what it has not yet been able to do – to shift from a dangerous business as usual path to a path of true sustainable development? Can UN goals actually make a difference?

This will be hard to accomplish with the current Congress and their abhorrence of anything to do with the UN, climate change, or ecosystem services and biodiversity.

*Terence McDowell is a retired clinical chemist living in Edmond.*

# Brokaw's Story Of Survival

## A LUCKY LIFE INTERRUPTED

*A Memoir of Hope*

By Tom Brokaw

Random House Publishing Group

240 pages, \$27

## BY WANDA JO STAPLETON

**T**om Brokaw's recently published book is titled *A Lucky Life Interrupted*. The subtitle is called *A Memoir of Hope* because it describes his hopeful attitude about prevailing over the cancer which has interrupted his life.

The "lucky" part of his life consisted of being the host of NBC Nightly News for over 20 years. Also as a journalist, of jumping on a plane and racing off to cover big, breaking stories – stories such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of Nelson Mandela's life, an interview with the Dalai Lama in exile, and the morning of Sept. 11, 2001 in New York City.

### DIAGNOSIS

The "interruption" occurred in 2013 when he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma [a treatable but in-

curable blood cancer] found during an examination at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN.

His cancer is now in remission, due, no doubt, to having the best treatment available anywhere. For example, the doctors at the Mayo Clinic transferred him to Memorial Sloan Kettering, the world famous cancer treatment center in New York.

### RECOVERY

As a result, Brokaw, as he says, is "not picking out a casket." Instead, he was feeling well enough to go bird hunting in South Dakota when pheasant season opened. The South Dakota trip was a pilot, of sorts, for NBC Sports.

During much of 2013, he worked on a two-hour documentary on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He picked his feel-good days to record his on-camera appearances, while taking the daily dose of chemotherapy.

Finally, this year he finished, and Random House published his book, *A Lucky Life Interrupted: A Memoir of Hope*.

Now his public is wondering what's next for Tom Brokaw.

*Wanda Jo Stapleton represented south Oklahoma City in the state House from 1986-96.*

## Oklahoma Friends Meetings (Quakers)

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

- Author unknown

### MEETING FOR WORSHIP SCHEDULE AND CONTACTS

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# Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

nal Record: “The notion that Oklahoma has diversified away from oil and gas is, at this point, many, many years away.”

The noose is now tight around lawmakers’ necks. SQ 640 makes increasing taxes all but impossible. Some experts predict oil will remain at or below \$50 a barrel until late 2016 – less than half its peak price. And six years of starvation budgets have yielded predictable results: teacher shortages, crumbling roads and bridges, crises in mental health and corrections.

There is simply no way to sugarcoat this: dark days are ahead for Oklahoma. July marked the third consecutive month – and fourth time in five months – that state revenues were lower than the same month a year ago. Next year’s budget hole is projected to be nearly double this year’s \$611 million chasm.

One by one, Oklahomans paying attention to the train wreck engineered by the shrink-government cabal must begin to engage and inspire their apathetic neighbors to help wrest political control away from the state’s wealthy elite and their legislative lapdogs.

The 2016 election year starts early with this month’s House District 85 special election in northwest Oklahoma City. A victory by Democrat Cyndi Munson in the historically GOP area would barely put a dent in GOP control of the House. But it would fire a shot across the bow of an often-smug majority – a sign that rank-and-file taxpayers have taken notice and aren’t pleased with their elected leadership driving the state off a fiscal cliff.

The state’s economic future depends on raising all boats, not just multi-million-dollar yachts. The blueprint for a brighter future for all requires significant new investments in public education, health care and infrastructure – and requiring the 1% to pay their fair share of taxes.

## Honor

The University of Oklahoma should do the honorable thing and return a rare 19th Century painting to the family from whom it was stolen by Nazis in World War II.

Alas, the university stubbornly refuses to give up the circa 1886 oil, Camille Pissarro’s *Shepherdess Bringing In Sheep*, unless a federal court orders it to do so.

It’s an incredibly tone-deaf response from an institution that not only takes pride in its academics but also in the values it imparts to its students. And it makes all of us, as Oklahomans, look bad in the international court of public opinion.

The painting was stolen from a collector named Raoul Meyer when Nazis rolled across Europe,

rounding up Jews and pirating their valuables. Most of Meyer’s family was killed at Auschwitz concentration camp.

After the war, surviving members sought to reclaim the art, but a Swiss tribunal ruled the statute of limitations had expired. Three years later, in 1956, Aaron Weitzenhoffer purchased the painting that became part of a collection bequeathed to OU by his wife Clara in 2000.

Meyer’s surviving daughter Leone, now 75 and living in Paris, filed suit in U.S. federal court, seeking the painting’s return.

“This is about a duty to seek justice,” Leone Meyer noted in a recent letter to state Rep. Paul Wesselhoft, who repeatedly has urged OU to return the pilfered painting. “I cannot conceive,” she added, “that the University of Oklahoma could aid and abet those crimes in any form ... ”

That Nazis plundered Jewish homes for valuables is well known, detailed not only in history books and mainstream media coverage, but also in the George Clooney movie *The Monuments Men*.

These were war crimes, and civilized society should demand that victimized families get back their heirlooms – or at the very least be compensated for their losses. The notion that in 1953, less than a decade after the war ended, the statute of limitations already expired for Meyer’s survivors is preposterous.

First, finding a single painting is no small feat – it could be anywhere in the world, including Norman. Second, we still hunt – and in some cases prosecute – Nazis who’ve attempted to blend into communities around the world.

There’s no statute of limitations on murder. Why would there be one for valuables plundered in war? It’s never too late to right a wrong.



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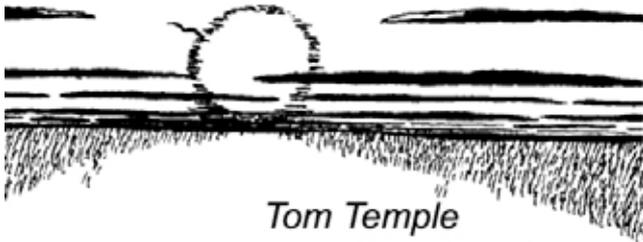
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# Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

**Laurel:** To state District Judge Patricia Parrish, tossing yet another specious anti-abortion law. Will the anti-choice crowd ever get the message? Their religious zealotry is costing state taxpayers dearly.

Green the Vote hopes to begin circulating a petition this month aimed at legalizing medical marijuana. The group needs 123,725 signatures to get the question on November 2016 ballot.

**Laurel:** To former Lt. Gov. Jari Askins, taking on yet another challenge – implementing a court-ordered plan to improve state's troubled foster system. Imagine if she'd been elected governor in 2010 instead ...

Attention, Free Market Ideologues: 72% of Americans in new Kaiser Family Foundation poll called prescription drug costs "unreasonable." Eighty-six percent want to require drug companies to disclose how they set prices – and 83% want Medicare to be allowed to negotiate drug prices.

Mark your calendars: The Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hosts a day-long public meeting Sept. 11 focused on civil rights and the school-to-prison pipeline. There is no charge to attend the 8 a.m-5 p.m. meeting at Oklahoma City University School of Law's Crowe & Dunlevy Commons, 800 N. Harvey.

Myth-Buster? Despite worries that people of color are at risk of being left behind technologically, there is no digital divide between black and white millennials when it comes to news: Two-thirds of both head straight to the Internet. – Associated Press, NORC and American Press Institute poll

Whither, retirement? By 2022, 35% of the American workforce is projected to be 50-plus. – AARP

Nearly one in three registered voters wants Eleanor Roosevelt to be the first woman on American currency when the new \$10 bill is released in 2020. – McClatchy-Marist poll

Great news in midst of Hatch pepper season: Adding spicy food to one to two meals a week can reduce your chances of death up to 10%, according to new research. – Time

# Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

not God's role to make America greater than other nations. [I infer that that was the point of the governor's comment anyway.]

Gov. Fallin also added that Christians were being persecuted because "we" cannot have "our own Ten Commandments at the state Capitol." In the first place, the Ten Commandments are found in the Torah, which is the Jewish bible. Christians preempted them anyway. Secondly, we live in a pluralistic nation and government is not to show favoritism. [Also, the Oklahoma Constitution prohibits using public space for religious partisanship. Sounds to me as if Christians like the governor are doing the persecuting.]

That politicians are seldom theologians is not a crime. But politicians do need to seek professional advice before they open their mouths about God. On second thought, maybe they should just drop the God-talk altogether. As the old saying of ecumenical mystics goes: "Those who do not know, speak; and those who know, do not speak."

One final comment. One other report of the Franklin Festival noted that he believes that God has his eye on each of us and notes our sins, most of them related to sex. That reminds me of a comment that Father Malcolm Boyd made in his 1967 book of prayers, *Are You Running with Me Jesus?* Boyd writes: "God, I discovered, was not an upper-middle class snob in a private, clublike 'holy of holies' nor was he an impersonal IBM machine computing petty sins in some celestial office building above the clouds."

Christian theology has moved on in the spirit of Father Boyd during the past 48 years, except in the rightwing Fallin/Franklin "holy of holies."

Jeff Hamilton  
Midwest City

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

Editor, The Observer:

I came of age during the Vietnam War and I grew up in Houston, so all my life I have heard people say he or she "only married them to become a U.S. citizen." Because I am a Baby Boomer I have always had friends whose mothers were war brides. One of them lived down the street.

Everyone - especially the GOP candidates - is talking about "anchor babies." They always say, "She came here so her children could be U.S. citizens."



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No one seems to take on the subject of “him coming here so his children would be U.S. citizens.” In Texas it happened a lot.

Everyone knows someone whose mother was Vietnamese or Japanese and married a U.S. soldier. Everyone knows someone whose parents divorced after they got here. The number of people I know who have one parent who is Hispanic and one who isn't is astounding. I also know people who have one parent, not born in the USA, whose parents have divorced. I know people whose foreign born parent has never become a citizen.

Well, you can't become a citizen by just marrying someone. You have to wait months just to get a green card. You have to be 18 and have lived in the USA for three years, been married to the citizen for three years, you have to have been physically present in the country for at least half of that time and you cannot have established a home outside the country. Then you have to apply for citizenship, take a picture, get fingerprinted, and later be interviewed and pass the tests.

A lot of movie stars and athletes, born in other countries, have married U.S. citizens, but are not themselves citizens, which means there are a lot of anchor babies out there. Many own homes in other countries, especially those who like the tax breaks for having a business in Jamaica or somewhere else to avoid taxes.

We already know that Marco Rubio was born here four years before either of his parents were citizens and they had been here close to 20 years. We know that Ted Cruz claims he is a U.S. citizen, although he was born in Canada, because his mother was a U.S. citizen. His father was not a citizen until 2005.

What about the guy who can't seem to keep his mouth shut? The one who has decided to buy his own campaign instead of wasting his money buying another candidate? We all know that if you have enough money you can do it without any other donations, and I guess if you don't win you can take it off your taxes as a failed business venture.

As it turns out “The Donald” has three children who could be called “anchor babies.” First, Ivana Zelnickova Trump was born in Czechoslovakia when it was still behind the “Iron Curtain” so we don't blame her for wanting to get out. The same was true about a lot of countries. First, she married Alfred Winklmyr so she could get a passport out of Austria in 1971 and into Canada and they divorced in 1976.

She met Donald while she was promoting the Montreal Olympics. They got married in 1977 and then Donald Jr. was born in 1977, Ivana in 1981 and Erik in 1984, but Ivana [The Donald's wife] didn't become a citizen until 1988. So, it appears “The Donald” himself has three anchor babies. Jeb Bush has two anchor babies, born before their mother was a citizen.

This country was built by illegal immigrants and then got really nasty about any other illegal immigrants. They forced either slavery or indentured ser-

vitute on millions and then decided they didn't want any other immigrants. In fact, the immigrants already here fought further immigration because they want to keep their jobs, even if they were not paid a living wage.

To this day the wealthy are still bringing in immigrants to do all the menial, back-breaking jobs at really low wages and then insisting they go back because they are not worthy of citizenship.

There are 58,000-plus names on that Vietnam Wall and a lot of them died for citizenship. This country since at least World War I has given citizenship to guys who were willing to put on the uniform of a country that didn't want them in order to become citizens.

"The Donald's" insistence that all of those people who were born here go home reminds me of the John Denver song *Rocky Mountain High*. In the first line he says that he is "coming home to a place he has never been before," but in the case of the "so-called" illegal anchor babies, they would be forced to "go home to a place most of them have never been before."

This country is, and always has been, an illegal immigrant land, and each time a new group comes in, the previous group pitches a fit.

Karen Webb  
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Any person appearing before the criminal grand jury investigating the Tulsa County sheriff's office should have the same rights as a game-changer named Ernesto Miranda.

In 1963, two Arizona cops did not tell Miranda he could remain silent and have an attorney before they hotboxed him. He confessed to robbery, kidnapping and rape.

The confession was used at his trial and he was found guilty. He was sentenced to 20 to 30 years in prison.

On appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned his conviction in 1966. Now, Miranda rights must be read to suspects as soon as they are controlled: The right to remain silent when questioned, anything you say or do may be used against you in court, you have the right to consult an attorney before speaking to police, and have an attorney present during questioning now or in the future, and if you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you before questioning.

Miranda was retried without his confession. He was found guilty and served 11 years.

In the grand jury room, witnesses cannot be advised by an attorney in violation of their Sixth Amendment constitutional right.

Since grand jury proceedings are secret, we will never know if a prosecutor abused his power to get an indictment.

There is no judge in the grand jury room to restrain the prosecutor.

So, it's time to read Miranda rights to all grand jury witnesses before they testify.

Let's permit them to have a lawyer in the grand jury room so witnesses can be cross-examined and protect their client from cooking his or her own goose.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
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# Bernie's Blueprint

**Jobs, Jobs, Jobs:** The truth is that real unemployment in our country is not the “official” and widely-reported 5.4%. Counting those who are under-employed and those who have given up looking for work, real unemployment is almost 11%. Even more disturbingly, real unemployment for white and Hispanic youth is over 30%, while African-American youth unemployment is over 50%. If we are truly serious about reversing the decline of the middle class and putting millions of people back to work, we need a major federal jobs program. The most effective way to do that is to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. In that regard, I have introduced legislation which would invest \$1 trillion over 5 years to modernize our country's physical infrastructure. This legislation would create and maintain at least

13 million good-paying jobs. It would also make our country more productive, efficient and safe. I will also continue my opposition to our current trade policies which have cost us millions of decent paying jobs as corporate America shuts down plants here and moves them to low-wage countries.

**Raising Wages:** Today, millions of Americans are working for starvation wages and median family income has declined by almost \$5,000 since 1999. The current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour is totally inadequate. We need to raise the minimum wage to a living wage – \$15 an hour over the next few years. Our goal must be that no full-time worker in this country lives in poverty. We must also bring about pay equity. There is no rational reason why women should be earning 78 cents on the dollar compared to men who perform the same work. Further, we need to implement “family values” for American working families. It is unacceptable that the U.S. is the only major country on earth that does not guarantee family and medical leave, sick time and paid vacations.

**Wealth and Income Inequality:** Today, the richest 400 Americans own over \$2.2 trillion in wealth, more than the bottom 150 million Americans combined. Meanwhile, nearly half of all Americans have less than \$10,000 in savings and have no idea how they will be able to retire with dignity. In order to reverse the massive transfer of wealth and income from the middle class to the very rich that we have seen in recent years, we need real tax reform which makes the wealthy and profitable corporations begin to pay their fair share of taxes. It is fiscally irresponsible that the U.S. Treasury loses about \$100 billion a year because corporations and the rich stash their profits in the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and other tax havens. We need a tax system which is fair and progressive. Children should not go hungry in this country while profitable corporations and the wealthy avoid their tax responsibilities.

**Reforming Wall Street:** I have introduced legislation which would break up the largest financial institutions in the country. In my view, if a bank is too big to fail, it is too big to exist. Wall Street cannot continue to be an island unto itself investing trillions in risky financial instruments. We need banks that invest in the job creating productive economy. We do not need more speculation and gambling in casino type activities.

**Campaign Finance Reform:** We need to return to a one-person one-vote democracy. It is not acceptable that the Koch brothers and other billionaires are spending endless sums of money to buy elections. I have introduced legislation which would overturn the horrendous Citizens United decision and will only appoint Supreme Court justices who are prepared to do that. We must also demand disclosure of all large campaign contributions. Long term, we need to move to public funding of elections.

**Reversing Climate Change:** The United States must lead the world in reversing climate change and make certain that this planet is habitable for our children and grandchildren. We must transform our energy system away from fossil fuels and into energy efficiency and sustainable energies. Millions of homes and buildings need to be weatherized, our transportation system needs to be energy efficient and we need to greatly accelerate the progress we are already seeing in wind, solar, geothermal and other forms of sustainable energy. Transforming our energy system will not only protect the environment, it will create good-paying jobs.

**Health Care for All:** The United States remains the only major country on earth that does not guarantee health care for all as a right. Despite the modest gains of the Affordable Care Act, 35 million Americans continue to lack health insurance and many more are under-insured. Yet, we continue paying far more per capita for health care than any other nation. The United States must move toward a Medicare-for-All single-payer system.

**Protecting Our Most Vulnerable:** Today, the United States has more people living in poverty than at almost any time in the modern history of our country. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major nation, and millions of seniors and disabled people struggle to put food on the table because of insufficient Social Security benefits. In my view, we have a moral responsibility to make certain that no American goes hungry or sleeps on the street. We must also make certain that seniors and people with disabilities can live in dignity. Not only must we vigorously oppose Republican attacks on the social safety net, we must expand benefits for those most in need. That is why I have recently introduced legislation which would extend the solvency of Social Security until 2065, while increasing benefits for those most in need.

**College for All:** The United States must join Germany and many other countries in understanding that investing in our young people's education is investing in the future of our nation. I have introduced legislation to make tuition in public colleges and universities free, as well as substantially lowering interest rates on student loans.

**War and Peace:** I voted against the war in Iraq, and that was the right vote. We must be vigorous in combatting terrorism, but we can't do it alone. We must be part of an international coalition that includes Muslim nations which not only defeats ISIS but which works hard to create conditions for lasting peace. I will vigorously oppose an endless war in the Middle East.

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