

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

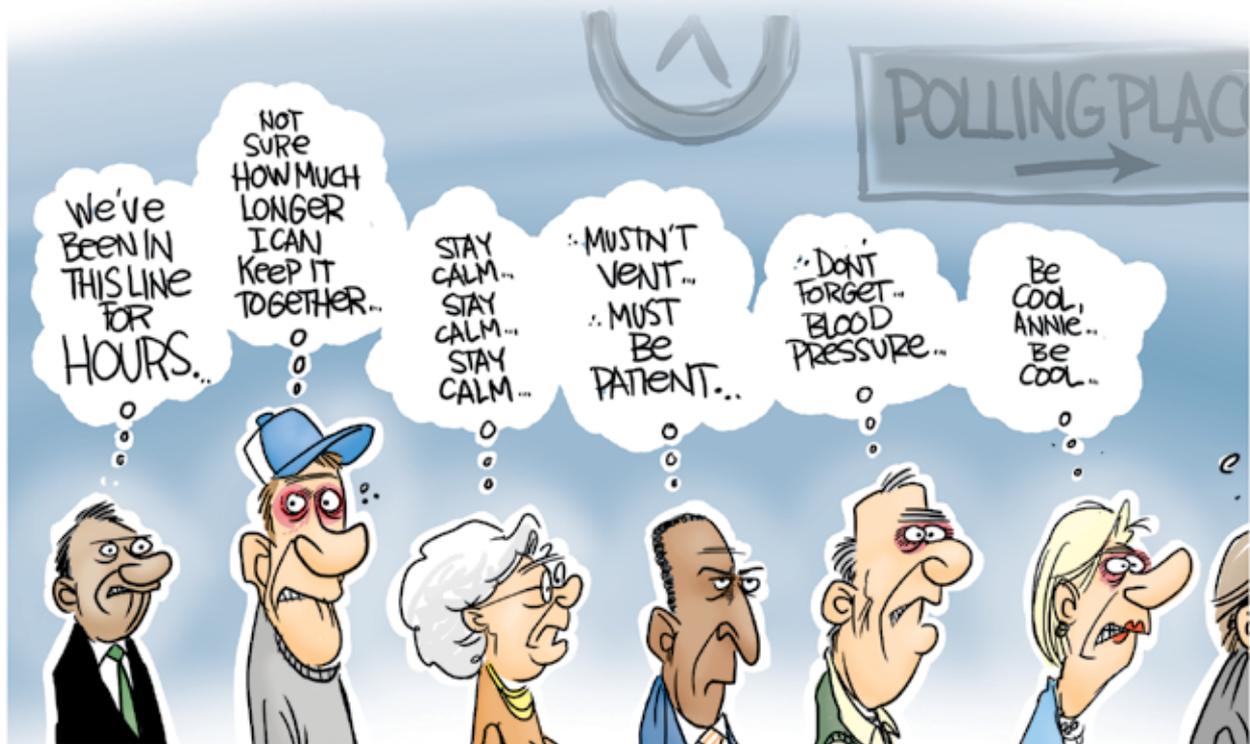
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BALLOT BLOAT

*Seven State Questions Could
Shape Oklahoma For Generations*

'VOTER SUPPRESSION.'



– Special Report begins on page 6



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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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LETTERS TO EDITOR

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Observations

Fairness

SQ 779's debate over the method – not the wisdom – of increasing public education funding creates the opportunity for conversation Oklahoma sorely needs: whether to eliminate the sales tax on groceries.

In recent years, the Legislature approved income tax cuts that disproportionately benefitted the state's wealthiest residents and slashed state revenue by about \$1 billion annually. It also doled out tax cuts and incentives to oil and gas operators that robbed education and other vital services of desperately needed revenues. And it monkeyed with a lifeline to the working poor – the Earned Income Tax Credit – suddenly making many barely-scraping-by families that owe too little in state taxes ineligible for the credit.

How about doing something to help Oklahoma's working class and poor for a change?

It's a debate other states already are having – or have had. Take Alabama, for example, one of seven states – including Oklahoma – that taxes groceries at the same rate as all other purchases.

Earlier this year, a Republican state senator, Gerald Dial, proposed phasing out grocery taxes over four years and replacing the lost revenue with a one cent overall sales tax hike.

Dial argued the grocery tax "is the most regressive tax you can have and punishes those on fixed incomes." But he failed to persuade fellow lawmakers – at least in part because of fears the proposed one cent increase would not offset the loss in grocery tax revenues.

"The food tax is pretty stable," Dial told the Associated Press. "People buy pretty much the same amount of food. In bad times my wife doesn't buy as many shoes, but we still buy the same amount of food."

Even so, at least seven states since 1998 have quit collecting sales taxes on groceries. Moreover, six states – Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Virginia and Utah – tax food at lower rates, according to the

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THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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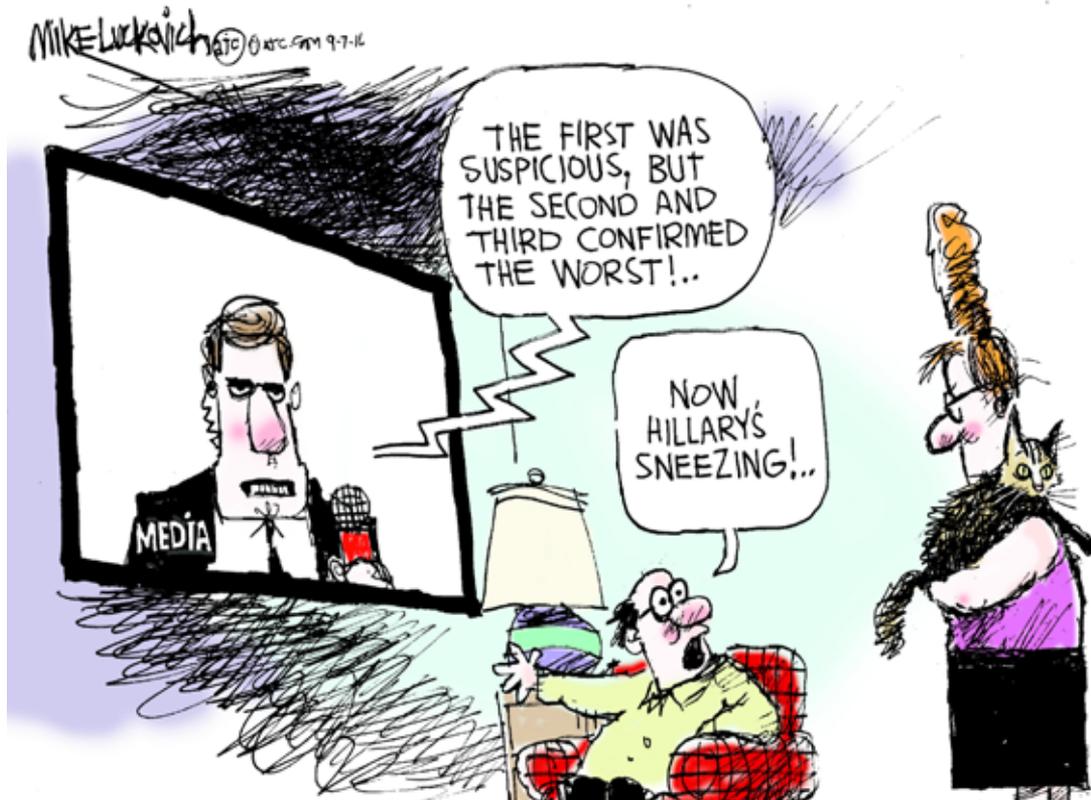
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Observerscope



Join us Sept. 22 for Observer Newsmakers, featuring Sen. Kay Floyd and OK Bar President Garvin Isaacs, at OKC's Full Circle Books, 3-4 p.m. Topics: raft of clearly unconstitutional legislation and efforts to undermine an independent judiciary.

Laurel: To OKC attorney David Slane, challenging AG Scott Pruitt's ideological rewrite of medical marijuana ballot question. The Supreme Court whacked Pruitt on this chicanery before – hopefully it will again.

Can you blame Nico Gomez for quitting as OK Health Care Authority CEO? It's impossible to work with legislative leadership more interested in ideology than solutions.

Dart: To Gov. Mary Fallin, failing to appoint one person of color to her new 17-member Justice Reform Task Force – even though minorities are incarcerated at disproportionately higher rates.

Legislative Black Caucus is creating a \$10,000 endowed Langston scholarship in memory of OK's first black senator, E. Melvin Porter, who died July 26. For details, contact dhchism@langston.edu.

Laurel: To Putnam City's Hilldale Elementary, providing dinner to students in after-school programs to ensure they don't go to bed hungry. It's part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture effort.

Did you hear it? Collective sigh of relief from GOP establishment that patriot preacher Paul Blair's OK Senate bid went down in flames.

How embarrassing if Oklahoma were to be only state Trump carries. #OklahomaStandard?

Fox News paid Gretchen Carlson \$20 million to settle sexual harassment claims against Roger Ailes, whose legacy will be of a propagandist extraordinaire and a world-class pig.

Ed Allen is retiring in January as American Federation of Teachers president, representing 2,200 OKC public school teachers. Former Grant teacher Benjamin Box will fill in until next spring's elections.

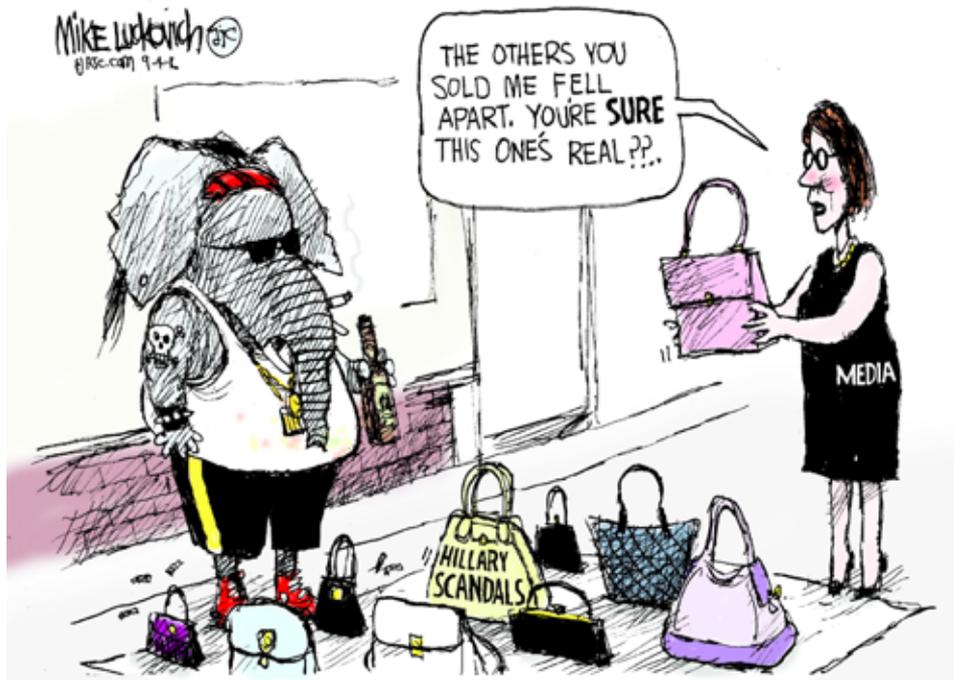
Aetna's withdrawal from Affordable Care Act exchanges could fuel a new drive for universal health care. Short-term, Oklahomans will suffer because Blue Cross' dominance guarantees ever-higher premiums.

Another black eye: Oklahoma scores an F for failing to adopt a single policy supporting new and expecting parents in 23 years since federal Family and Medical Leave Act became law. – National Partnership for Women and Families

Late Night's Seth Meyers nails it: "Trump might think 'bigot' is a compliment because it has the word 'big' in it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Letters



loan at reasonable rates. I know I can trust them. The RNC knows Wall Street has my best interests at heart.

Tom Newman
Harrah

Editor, The Observer:

Thanks to Gov. Mary Fallin, and her oil patch boyfriends, Oklahoma has hit a new numerical high: a second 5.6 earthquake, this time near Pawnee. At least 11 aftershocks in less than 24-hours were recorded, according to the United States Geological Survey, caused by the high-pressure infusion of drilling wastewater produced by petroleum fracking operations and pumped into geologically sensitive rock layers.

The first 5.6 was near Prague in 2011; both quakes causing considerable damage to property and the mental health and security of people everywhere.

Lincoln is attributed with a quote regarding fooling people some of the time but not all the time. He couldn't have predicted the extent to which Fallin would be able to confound the wisdom of someone as earthy and experienced in the ways of politics as the Rail-Splitter.

Acting as realtor-in-chief for the petro fraternity, Fallin has negotiated the sale of Oklahoma's natural resources at fire sale prices and made Oklahoma a sacrifice earthquake zone for the much vaunted energy independence scheme foisted on us by our elected administrations of both major parties and corporate avarice. As home-owned solar panels are taxed, the fossil fuel cabal gets its extraction tax reduced from 7% to 2%.

The money made from pollution of the state's environment continues unabated despite scientific studies and experiences in other states where the same drilling and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

Editor, The Observer:

The Pulitzer prize-winning fact-checking service called PolitiFact determined that Hillary Clinton is actually the most truthful candidate of either Party in the 2016 election season.

PolitiFact has also determined that, in general, Hillary Clinton is more honest than most politicians they have ever tracked.

Nathaniel Batchelder
Oklahoma City

Editor's Note: Nathaniel Batchelder is director of the Peace House in Oklahoma City.

Editor, The Observer:

The Daily Disappointment had an editorial recently supporting de-regulation, like that is news. It got me to thinking and I remembered a little note I put together and sent to my friends. Thought I would share it with you.

I am so thrilled about the "new" RNC "pledge." What has got me so excited is the call for less regulation. God knows, we need to get rid of regulations on business. I am just so excited that I am going

to plan a trip to the Caribbean. I thought about California, but you know how those radicals responded to the end of regulations on power suppliers. No, the Caribbean is best.

Since we have de-regulated the airlines I thought I would book a flight on Braniff Airlines. No, that won't work. Ah! I'll try Pan Am. They had their beginning in that part of the world. What? Surely, you're kidding. Oh, well, I just book it on TWA.

That didn't work. And after being told what it would cost, tickets, luggage, seat by a window, etc., I figured I had better get some extra money. I know! I'll sell my Enron stock. Darn, I forgot that they were caught up in that power de-regulation.

Now what? I'll just go down to my local savings and loan and get some money. Darn! I forgot that they de-regulated those a while back. I guess I will have to put off my trip until after the elections and see what gets de-regulated next. Maybe it will be those big Wall Street banks and I can get a



Re-engaging The Electorate

The sparse turnout for last month's primary runoff elections was hardly surprising – even with some heated races in the metro areas.

Apathy? Disconnect? Dispiritedness? Whatever the reason, the long decline in voter participation is a clear and present danger to our democratic republic.

"When a people lose the sense that their voice matters in the political process, the value of the American ideal is muffled," writes Bill Clifford, a 78-year-old Oklahoma City retiree troubled by what he sees.

"In the extreme, this threatens bankruptcy for the very core concept of America. Our present rate of voter participation is unacceptable, and can only be improved by a movement that is more politically astute than politically partisan."

Clifford isn't alone in this assessment.

He's worked tirelessly to help put together a coalition from across the political spectrum to attack a crisis that could result in fewer than half the eligible voters casting ballots in this year's presidential election.

The first fruit of Clifford's yearlong effort bloomed Sept. 1 with a brainstorming session at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond aimed at developing a long-term strategy to civically re-engage Oklahomans.

The event included speakers from the state Election Board, the Secretary of State's office, the League of Women Voters, the State Chamber, the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals and Latino Community Development Agency.

The looming question: "Can a community of independent organizations and individuals voluntarily join forces in a coalition that's non-partisan ... so as to address important social issues of mutual concern and, in the process, create a thought box big enough to bring together their shared goals, interests and capabilities to advance realistic problem solving on issues of concern in ways that are practical?"

Ambitious? Yes. Pie-in-the-sky? Perhaps. But we

have to start somewhere. We ignore at our peril the steady decline in voter participation.

Widespread anger and unrest is evident in this year's presidential race. It's also reflected in the dozens of teachers, administrators and public school supporters seeking legislative seats for the first time – a possible sign of re-engagement.

The problem is, anger and unrest too often are temporary and don't translate into voting, at least beyond one election.

That's why the work of this emerging group is so important and promising: It seeks to re-connect Oklahomans – from Millennials to seniors – with the reality that voting helps shape public policy.

"People need to understand that their voting will affect their daily lives going forward – and I'm especially talking about down ballot," says Sheila Swearingen of Tulsa, president of the Oklahoma League of Women Voters.

While many potential voters may be focused on the presidential race, "it's state legislators, county elected officials and municipal officials," she says, "that are going to be taking on issues and spending public money in ways that affect us everyday."

In this hyper-partisan political age, people – and organizations – tend to coalesce in ideological silos, not only ignoring those with differing views, but also often demonizing them.

Thus, one of the key challenges this fledgling group faces is trust. Can, for example, a well-funded, conservative State Chamber work well with smaller, underfunded, more progressive grass-roots groups toward the same goal: increased voter participation?

It has to begin with the belief that ultimately higher turnout is good for all, that it moves us closer to a consensus on the critical public policy issues of the day, including taxes, public education, infrastructure, and healthcare.

This effort deserves the support of all who care about the kind of state – and country – we're leaving our children and grandchildren.

STATE QUESTIONS, 2016



The Land Mines Hidden In Church-State Question

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

It is hardly hyperbolic to argue this year's election could be the most consequential in Oklahoma history.

Not because a bloviating demagogue and wannabe strongman could become president, though that is scary enough.

Or because the fate of Oklahoma's magnificent – but shamefully underfunded – public schools depends on voters' willingness to pay higher sales taxes.

Or even because Oklahomans finally could overhaul a failed and costly lock-'em-up and throw-away-the-key criminal justice system that begat the nation's second-highest incarceration rate.

Any of those three realities are sufficient to include 2016 in a most-important-election-ever argument.

But there's another issue lurking on the Nov. 8 ballot that could have an even more profound impact long-term on Oklahoma as we know it: the proposed demolition of the state Constitution's strict church-state wall, SQ 790.

While public school supporters focus primarily on

SQ 779 – the proposed 1% sales tax that could generate \$600 million annually in new education revenue – they often seem less aware that SQ 790 could end up siphoning away millions more from taxpayer-funded classrooms.

How so? By eliminating the church-state provision, Oklahomans would be legalizing the spending of tax dollars for sectarian purposes – including vouchers that would allow students to use taxpayer-funded, state education dollars to pay for attending church-sponsored schools or to be home-schooled.

"It's worth noting this was not an initiative of the people," says Jim Huff, a retired public school teacher who's widely considered an expert on church-state separation. "This was done by a simple majority of the Legislature – it didn't even have to go by the governor for review."

SQ 790 is one of seven propositions that will appear on the statewide ballot. All seven are important in determining what kind of state Oklahoma will be in the 21st Century and beyond.

STATE QUESTIONS, 2016

Lines typically are long for presidential elections anyway, but the seven critical ballot measures virtually guarantees casting ballots this year won't be a quick, in-and-out affair.

From SQ 776 that could help determine whether Oklahoma keeps the death penalty in its criminal justice arsenal to SQ 777 that would free agriculture from all state regulation to SQ 792 that would allow cold, strong beer and wine to be sold in groceries, this year's ballot requires voters to study up not only on candidates, but also on implications of the state questions.

In the pages that follow, The Observer offers the best and brightest thinking on some of the key issues to be decided Nov. 8. None will be bigger than SQ 790 – because it could give carte blanche to legislative and religious super-majorities to spend public dollars on pet religious projects for the first time in state history.

It also could give taxpayers severe heartburn because steering public dollars to private – frequently religious – concerns are apt to be challenged in federal court under the U.S. Constitution's establishment clause, meaning more precious tax dollars wasted on court battles that could have been avoided.

Proponents of SQ 790 are spreading two big lies in an attempt to mislead voters – first, that it's about returning the Ten Commandments monument to the state Capitol grounds and, second, that it's about ending an anti-Catholic provision in the state Constitution.

The Ten Commandments were placed on the Capitol's north plaza in late 2012, paid for by fundamentalist Christian state Rep. Mike Ritze. In 2015, the state Supreme Court ruled the Decalogue's presence on public property violated Article 2, Section 5 of the state Constitution that reads:

“No public money or property shall ever be appropriated, applied, donated, or used, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, or system of religion, or for the use, benefit, or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary, or sectarian institution as such.”

“This is original language, this is history,” says Huff. “It's so precise ... it's better than the [federal] First Amendment because it's so specific.”

After the court ruling, the monument was moved about a mile south of the Capitol onto private property controlled by the right-wing Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, the state's leading proponents of school vouchers. But the religious zealots who believe America was founded as a Christian nation and view the Ten Commandments as a public display of that revisionist history persuaded lawmakers to put SQ 790 on the ballot.

Clearly, eliminating Article 2, Section 5 would have

much broader implications than allowing the Ten Commandments to return to the Capitol – including opening the door to other religious and atheist groups to erect the monuments of their choosing on public property and tax dollars to be spent on religious ministries and programs.

Further, SQ 790 proponents argue that removing the state Constitution's church-state separation clause rights a statehood era wrong – anti-Catholic bigotry known as the Blaine Amendment.

Actually, according to ACLU research, Blaine was a proposed 19th Century 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.” Oklahoma, of course, did not become a state until three decades later.

Moreover, what ultimately became the state Constitution's church-state provision wasn't a Blaine scion at all. It was crafted by a coalition of Christian ministers, Native Americans and other constitutional convention delegates irate that some government-sponsored religious schools were attempting to force Christianity on native students.

The legislative sleight-of-hand – promoted by the Daily Disappointment editorial pages – is not only designed to destroy the church-state wall, but also to juice turnout among religious fundamentalists who embrace the revisionist “Christian Nation” history. Such single-issue voters are crucial to Republican efforts to minimize general election damage caused by their failed economic policies that disproportionately benefit the state's wealthiest residents and cripple services vital to the state's vast working class.

So what could happen if SQ 790 is approved? The Legislature's GOP super-majority undoubtedly would redouble efforts to approve school vouchers – without fear of state courts standing in the way.

The state Department of Education – headed by a Republican superintendent, Joy Hofmeister – estimates vouchers could siphon as much as \$68.9 million from already underfunded public school classrooms. Other studies suggest vouchers could divert as much as \$2 billion over the next 14 years.

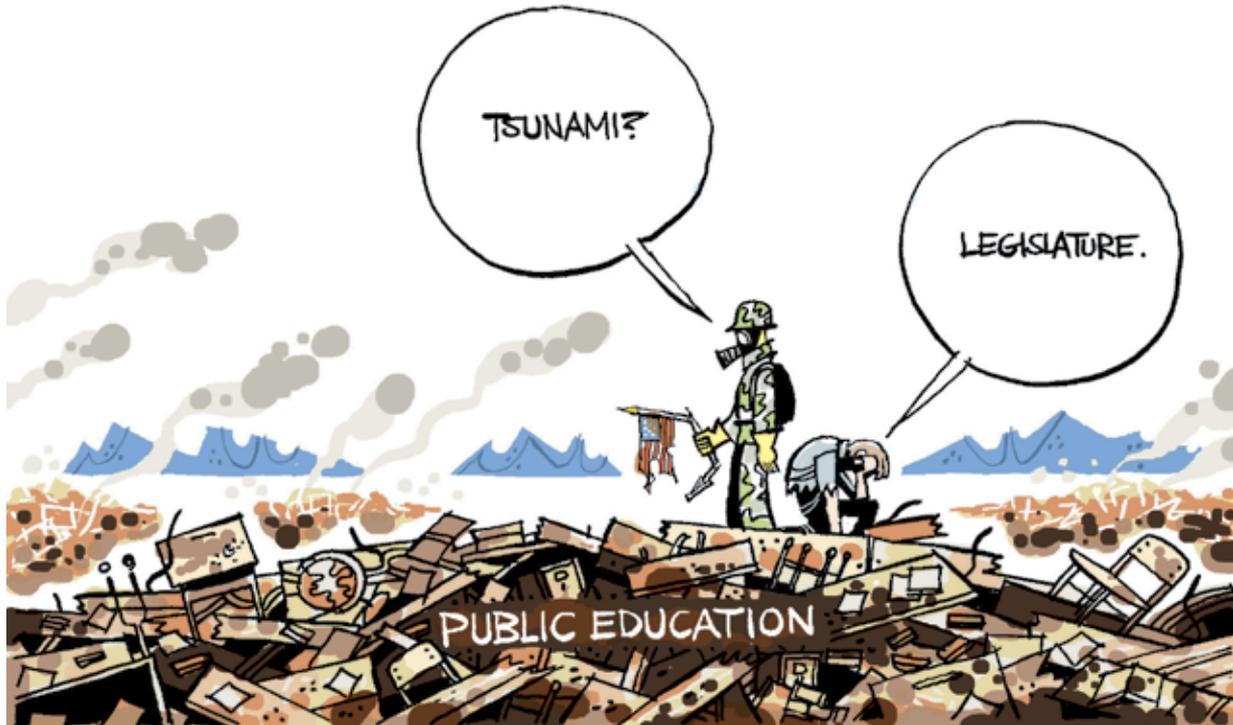
So even if SQ 779 is approved – generating \$600 million a year more for public education from Pre-K to higher ed to CareerTech – excising the constitutional prohibition on vouchers could create more funding headaches for public ed in the future.

Huff says approval of SQ 790 would create “a giant hole in the state Constitution about what we can do with state dollars, state property and state agencies.”

“It could be challenged through the [federal] establishment clause, but we'd have to work our way up to the U.S. Supreme Court.”

It's a risk informed Oklahoma voters should not take.

FITZSUMMONS & TRAZIWA DUBOIS



SQ 779: Two Veteran Educators Debate Penny Sales Tax Plan

BY JOHN THOMPSON

We definitely must vote Yes! on SQ 779. I wish we could cast our ballots with the certainty that we are making the right choice for the right reason. Voters must not be ambivalent, however. A No vote would be catastrophic. Oklahoma needs a huge turnout to vote for school funding, and get on track towards providing an educational and economic future for all of our kids.

Rarely do I comment on school finances. I focus on education policy, especially in regard to high-poverty Oklahoma City schools. Neither do I like to think of education funding in isolation. To build a just and promising future, teachers and school systems must join as team players with state and local social service providers and nonprofits in order to tackle complex and interconnected challenges. If this

BY SHARON MARTIN

My daughter was shopping for the things on her son's pre-kindergarten school list last year. She made two trips into Tulsa for the right kind of mat and visited several stores for the correct brands of school supplies, wipes, and tissues.

"How do one-income parents afford this?" she asked.

They can't.

There has been a steady dismantling of the contract between citizens and the state over the past several years regarding public education. Give private companies a chunk of money here and a gob of money there, and soon there is no money left to pay for basic services or supplies. Cut the requirements of a librarian here, class size there, and soon there are no

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Thompson

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were merely a question of how to fund an increase in teacher salaries, I don't know where I would come down in terms of the arguments by good Democrats and policy experts who question whether the sales tax is the proper tool.

Our teachers need a raise. They've gone a decade without one. Oklahoma invests 22% less than the rest of the region in per student funding, and we continue to cut education spending by as much or more as any state in the country. We face an exodus of teaching talent to neighboring states where teachers might be paid \$10,000 more while living just a few miles across the border. Teachers need the \$5,000 a year raise that SQ 779 would fund. But that is not the reason for taking the unusual step of raising sales taxes.

SQ 779 is not about teachers or other adults. It is about of our kids. SQ 779 is a belated effort to rescue our poorest children's educations. In some of Oklahoma's most challenged districts, our schools could literally collapse. Rather than question the harm that a penny tax increase could inflict on cities and our poorest voters, we should ask about the price tag for rebuilding our most challenged schools in those cities.

In fact, the defeat of SQ 779 could be a No vote on whether we care enough to salvage our most disadvantaged schools.

I know this will sound like hyperbole to some. Seventeen years ago, I wondered if business leaders were exaggerating when they briefed members of the MAPS for Kids bipartisan coalition. I was discreetly told that the MAPS effort to raise a temporary sales tax and property taxes was likely the last chance for the Oklahoma City Public School System. The OK-CPS had suffered through too many years without passing bond issues and the bill for the chronic underfunding of schools was about to come due. If the voters did not support the tax increase, the next step would be to try to manage an orderly breakup of the district. Under such a situation, it would be unlikely that anything resembling adequate education options would be provided for our poorest children.

I saw real progress at John Marshall and in other OKCPS schools after the MAPS tax was passed, but then came No Child Left Behind. Teachers and students have since been afflicted with 15 years of test, sort, reward, and punish malpractice. Bubble-in accountability has stolen so much of the joy of teaching and learning. The energies of adults and kids alike have been squandered on soul-killing bubble-in malpractice.

During the last few years, in Oklahoma and across

the nation, educators have joined a grassroots uprising against test and punish, as well as the increased segregation that accompanied school choice. Finally, we are pushing back against the way that the extreme proliferation of charters has undermined underfunded, traditional public schools. Even so, adults and students are exhausted by this ordeal.

I left the fulltime public school classroom during the Great Recession, at the time when my school dropped to the last in the state. I haven't done a very good job of being retired, however, and I've stayed in touch with inner city schools by teaching part-time and volunteering in high-challenge classrooms. Even with the oil bust, the overall economic gains of recent years since 2010 should have made the problems that children bring to class become more manageable. And I've seen some incremental gains even as I wonder why the schools I visit still haven't been able to gain more traction.

As unusual, my colleagues who remain in the classroom still emphasize the positive. But I can't forget the pattern that repeated itself throughout my career.

Whenever our top teachers went to a district meeting, a conference, or even a basketball game where we ran into former students who transferred to less challenged schools, we'd hear the same sales pitch. We'd repeatedly turn down offers to transfer to more respected schools where it would be easier teach. Year after year, we would turn down the offers. Each spring, though, a great teacher would admit to nightly headaches or crying him or herself to sleep, and the transfer opportunities would seem more irresistible.

As NCLB undermined the progress funded by MAPS for Kids, it was especially hard to not be worn down by a sense of betrayal. At the end of one year, 14 of our best teachers and principals broke down and accepted their prestigious offers, and the school never recovered from the loss.

I understand that I have not undergone the full set of challenges that my former colleagues faced during the last six years of austerity, while they've also been forced to implement soul-killing federal and state mandates.

In the highest-challenge schools, I also suspect that teachers' fatigue is not the most worrisome concern. From what I hear from students and former students, they often are the ones who face the worse burnout.

An entire generation has endured an education career dominated by teach-to-the-test. Not only have the kids been encouraged to practice bad learning habits, but also many have been disenchanting about school. Young people need adults to take charge, pro-

STATE QUESTIONS, 2016

tect students from the types of malpractice that has been thrust on teachers and learners alike.

I'd love to believe that inner city teachers who have stuck it out could shake off a defeat at the polls, ignore out-of-state salaries, and turn down offers to transfer to easier classes, but I have my doubts.

Middle class and affluent schools will survive the crisis. There is no law carved in heavenly stones, however, guaranteeing that public schools for our most vulnerable children must survive. The legislative cavalry isn't about to charge over the hill, pro-

Martin

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standards.

Siphon off funds for charters, testing, and teacher evaluations. Mandate changes that have nothing to do with student progress or wellbeing. Cut funding. Cut taxes, so you have to cut funding again. Lay off personnel. Shorten the school year. Ask already strapped parents to buy copy paper. Ask teachers and administrators to spend part of every Friday hawking treats so the school can afford field trips at the end of the year.

It seems that someone wants public education to fail, but teachers keep holding up the walls.

Teachers in my school found a deal that lets them individually sign up for ink cartridges for a fixed monthly rate. Do secretaries bring their own ink cartridges? Do legislators?

Our legislators budgeted a 183% raise, \$9 million, for the Legislative Service Bureau. They take care of themselves. And they take care of their donors.

Some oil industry tax loopholes have been set up to expire in three years. All a company has to do is reorganize every three years. Who cares if their employees' children have ancient textbooks, if there are 25 kindergarteners with one certified teacher?

Do schools need the income that another penny sales tax would provide? Yes. But can the already strapped parents afford to pay another penny on every dollar of groceries they buy? No.

We've asked enough of parents, teachers, and administrators. It's time to ask the oil industry to support the schools that educate their employees' children. It's time to ask those with high incomes to pay their fair share so that the next generation has the opportunities to succeed that they did.

It will be an uphill battle to reverse recent tax cuts. Legislators would rather short the citizens than anger their donors. It will be a battle with Goliath to cut loopholes and giveaways. But the future, the wellbeing of our children and theirs, is at stake.

Sharon Martin lives near Oilton and is a longtime public school reading specialist.

viding the resources that our overburdened teachers and students need.

If the voters don't come to the rescue in terms of providing financial relief, at least to the most under-resourced schools, I fear for the worst.

Dr. John Thompson, an education writer whose essays appear regularly in *The Oklahoma Observer*, has a doctorate from Rutgers University and is the author of *Closing the Frontier: Radical Responses in Oklahoma Politics*. His latest book, *A Teacher's Tale*, is available through Tate Publishing.

'Rabin' Highlights Jewish Film Fest

The 3rd annual Oklahoma Jewish Film Festival at Tulsa's Circle Cinema features a screening of *Rabin In His Own Words*, a documentary on the life of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Sept. 20 screening also includes a question-and-answer session with Rabin's son, Yuval, in his only scheduled U.S. ap-

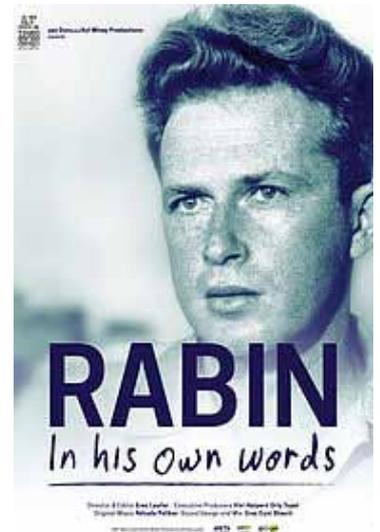
pearance. Jacob Howland, PhD, will moderate the special 7 p.m. event.

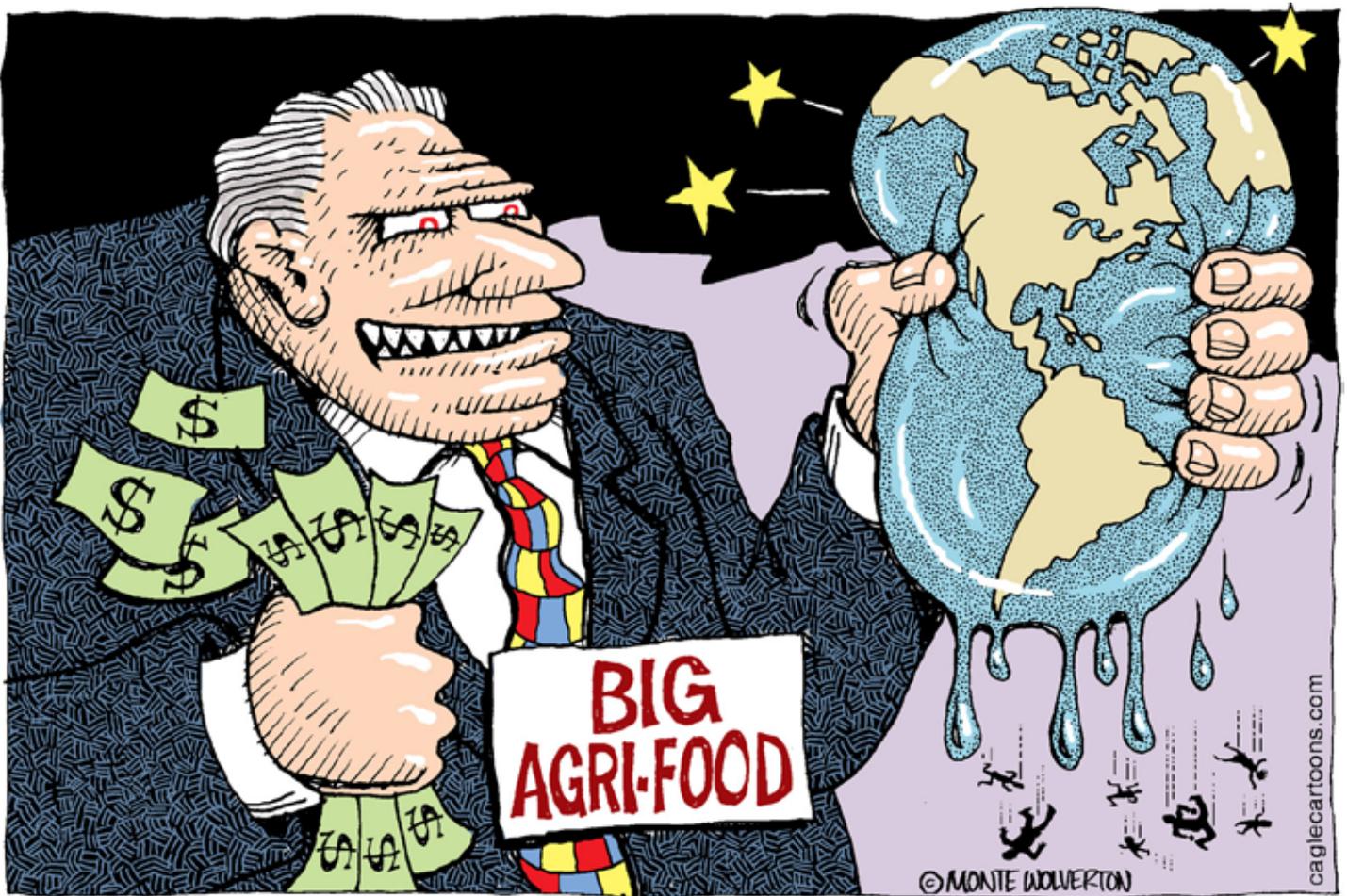
Rabin In His Own Words is described as an "autobiography," of sorts – the story told entirely in Rabin's own voice through rare archival footage, home movies and private letters.

The documentary takes viewers from his childhood – he was the son of a labor leader before the founding of the State of Israel – through his evolution from farmer to army man and eventually his service as prime minister.

The Rabin event is presented in conjunction with the Jewish Federation of Tulsa and the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art.

For more information on the screening – and a schedule of movies in the Sept. 18-21 Oklahoma Jewish Film Festival – visit www.circlecinema.com.





SQ 777: 'Right To Harm' Better Description Of Big Ag, ALEC Scheme

BY HARLAN HENTGES

Oklahomans are arguing about “right to farm.” How did that happen?

Oklahoma loves farmers. No one seriously believes there is any chance our Legislature would outlaw farming. Yet, someone hatched the idea that we need a constitutional “right to farm.” This is SQ 777 on the November ballot. If passed, it would be unconstitutional for the Legislature to pass a law limiting any agricultural technology or livestock raising practice, unless there is a compelling state interest.

Instead of arguing about “right to farm,” which is as useful as teats on a boar, let’s look at how this happened.

THIS ISN’T ABOUT FARMERS

Agriculture is changing rapidly due to industrialization. In industrial agriculture, the key is reduc-

ing the need for the expensive skills of a farmer. A “farmer” is skilled in animal husbandry, agronomy and business and can manage the unpredictability of nature to produce food economically. This skill set is not needed by an industrial “agricultural producer” which uses laborers to operate equipment and feed animals. A “farmer” working as an “agricultural producer,” is like a chef working at McDonalds – over-skilled and underpaid.

‘AG PRODUCERS’ TRIUMPH OVER ‘FARMERS’

Oklahoma hog production is an example of how “agricultural producers” triumphed over “farmers.” Before 1990, hogs were typically raised by Midwest corn farmers. Then Seaboard brought industrial hog production to Guymon, where it slaughters 19,000 hogs per day. Consultants dictate how hogs are fed,

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STATE QUESTIONS, 2016

medicated and confined in massive buildings. Laborers work. Managers handle finances. They don't need a farmer, but are more than happy to use his good name. Without real "farmers," there's no good reason to argue about a "right to farm."

NO GOOD REASON, BUT THERE'S A BAD ONE

Industrialization causes problems that have nothing to do with farmers. These problems stem from market power of multinational agricultural corporations ["Big Ag"]. The biggest are JBS of Brazil, largest beef packer in the U.S. and world; Chinese-owned Smithfield, largest pork producer in the U.S. and world; Monsanto, world's largest seed company and fifth largest chemical company; and Chinese-owned Syngenta, the world's largest agrochemical company. These companies own the "agricultural technologies and livestock production and ranching practices" that are protected by SQ 777.

Big Ag does not want any state laws that might interfere with their use of market power to push their products on farmers and consumers. This is the rotten core of SQ 777.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MARKET POWER?

When Big Ag ignores less powerful market participants like farmers and consumers, it creates problems the market can't fix.

Take sow crates. Seaboard keeps sows in narrow crates. They can stand up, lay down, move forward and back a couple of feet, but cannot turn around. A sow only leaves to give birth and nurse in a different crate for about two weeks. Because she can't move, she needs less feed which means lower costs, more sales and larger profits for Seaboard. Sows in crates wasn't a problem until consumers found out.

Consumers are troubled by the idea of a sow living its entire life in narrow crate, but Big Ag, due to market power, does not have to listen to consumers. The market failed consumers, so they exercised their rights as citizens. Laws getting rid of sow crates passed in nine states. Despite the backlash, some corporations, like Seaboard, continue to use crates wherever they're legal, including Oklahoma

How bad could it be?

In addition to sow crates, Big Ag's new industrial technologies and practices raise other controversies over growth stimulants, genetically modified organism [GMOs], clones, etc. Some issues are merely matters of consumer preferences, but history shows they can be matters of

life and death.

One issue overshadows the others – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy [BSE] – Mad Cow disease. Mad Cow is not fully understood, but it is believed Mad Cow entered the food supply because cattle were fed remains of other cattle in the form of meat and bone meal [MBM]. MBM, a cheap source of protein, meant higher profits for agricultural producers. Even though the exact cause of Mad Cow is not completely understood, laws were passed against feeding MBM.

SQ 777 would make a law against MBM unconstitutional, unless it could be proven there was a "compelling state interest." Such proof would have been difficult because the exact cause of Mad Cow disease was, and still is, in doubt. Would Big Ag volunteer to give up MBM? Big tobacco's response to cancer, and big oil's response to earthquakes, suggests that Big Ag might not act voluntarily.

HOW DID SQ 777 GET TO OKLAHOMA?

"Right to farm" is the offspring of Big Ag and the American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC]. In



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Oklahoma, it is driven by the Oklahoma Pork Council, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, and Oklahoma Farm Bureau. Rep. Scott Biggs and Sen. Jason Smalley were persuaded to carry the legislation that put SQ 777 on the ballot.

The label "right to farm" gives politicians a perfect tool for pandering. They argue it is vitally important that we protect farmers from liberals. It gets funny when you imagine big guys in cowboy hats begging for protection from tree-hugging animal lovers. It is not so funny when you see that Oklahomans are being paid to mislead friends and neighbors and ridicule those who understand the deception – a regular occurrence on social media and elsewhere.

BIG AG CAN'T BE SATISFIED

Big Ag brought this divisive fight to Oklahoma because it knows that, even in Oklahoma, it will face scrutiny for its treatment of farmers and consumers. Seaboard, specifically, must be concerned about its sow crate issue. By bringing SQ 777 to Oklahoma, Big Ag has proven it cannot be satisfied. Oklahoma

has fed Big Ag in every way possible. It went along with Seaboard's sow crates, Monsanto's chemicals and GMOs, and Tyson's chicken litter, but apparently, that is not enough. Big Ag wants more. With SQ 777, Big Ag wants Oklahomans to give up the right to ever disagree with anything Big Ag does.

Between now and November, there will be a lot of useless fighting about SQ 777 and the "right to farm." Whatever the outcome in November, be assured that Seaboard and the rest of Big Ag will eventually learn what every farmer knows – pigs get fat and hogs get slaughtered.

Harlan Hentges grew up farming in Noble County where his father, brother, nephew and their wives still farm. He earned an agricultural economics degree from Oklahoma State University, Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and juris doctorate from the University of Texas-Austin. He practices law in Edmond, with an emphasis on issues related farmers, ranchers, and other small businesses and individuals.

SQ's 780/781: Voters Can Get Smart On Crime Even If Lawmakers Won't

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

The United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other industrialized country in the world, and except for North Korea, the numbers are not even close. Frustratingly, among the Southern states whose policies and laws push America's rate so high, Oklahoma is No. 2 overall and No. 1 for the incarceration of women.

According to a Sept. 1 article in the Daily Ardmoreite, Oklahoma's prison admission rate has increased 20% over the past five years. These prisoners are disenfranchised from our society and, because we neglect to career-counsel or treat mental illnesses, they become ostracized and even when they are released, they have no path to productivity.

The direct price tag to Oklahoma taxpayers is approximately half a billion dollars a year, but that number is eclipsed by the social cost the state incurs when considering expenses related to children who have one or both parents incarcerated.

Virtually everyone believes that Oklahoma's incarceration rate is too high, but there is little agreement about what to do about it.

We are where we are because legislators fear being viewed as soft on crime. Instead of common sense legislation that could decrease incarceration rates,

bill after bill is filed to show constituents how tough on crime they really are.

Consequently, the Legislature has abdicated a leadership role and is not leading the state to a solution.

The void has been filled by a number of religious and social justice based groups who recognize our dire circumstances and the effects of mass incarceration. They have used the Initiative Petition process to get both SQ 780 and SQ 781 on the Nov. 8 statewide general election ballot.

Supporters of SQ 780 have called it the "Oklahoma Smart Justice Reform Act." They state that their intent is to implement justice reforms to: [1] stop wasting taxpayer money keeping people who commit low-level offenses behind bars for years; and [2] saddle fewer people who commit low-level offenses with felony convictions that will follow them through life and prevent them from getting an education or a job.

If a majority of the voters who go to the polls in November vote yes on SQ 780, 18 sections of Oklahoma statutes would be amended and one statute would be repealed. Proponents say that the net effect of the change would be to reclassify certain non-violent property crimes and drug possession charges as misdemeanors rather than felonies.

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The Tulsa County District Attorney says that changing these offenses from felonies to misdemeanors is a mistake and could hamper his ability to negotiate for persons charged with a felony to undergo treatment for addiction or for other plea bargains.

Supporters of SQ 781 have named it the "County Community Safety Investment Fund" to establish an account to hold savings that might be realized if SQ 780 passes. Those funds would be used for commu-

nity based counseling, treatment and mental health.

SQ 780 may become effective even if SQ 781 fails, but 781 will not become effective if 780 fails.

David Perryman, a Chickasha Democrat, represents District 56 in the Oklahoma House.

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State Questions: The People's Priorities v. The Ruling Class'

BY CAL HOBSON

Criminal sentencing reform, drug treatment, education funding, the Ten Commandments, death penalty, Right to Farm and drinking cold beer on Sunday. That's a mouthful!

All seven of these complex and controversial topics are imbedded in state questions that will be decided by you, the voters, on Nov. 8. The first three were placed there through citizen initiative petitions while the last four came the easier way, via votes cast by our elected leaders.

Also on that same November day Americans will select our next president and, in my October column, I'll forecast the winner, not just nationally but the victor state by state. In 2012 I crystal-balled 49 of the 50 correctly but this cycle may be a little trickier be-

cause many folks believe we have only a congenital liar or a billionaire blowhard as our choices. Two minor party candidates will also be on your ballot. They are Libertarian Gary Johnson and Green Party leader Dr. Jill Stein. Good people with no chance.

However, for today, I want to focus on the origins of each policy question you will consider, how it got on the November ballot, who put it there and why. I'll also risk my prescient prognosis skill by predicting which ones will pass or fail and how I plan to vote.

As we have come to expect, our legislators didn't resolve much of anything significant this past session. They could have tackled the pitiful status of education funding or the crying need to reform the criminal justice system but didn't, couldn't or wouldn't.

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And no wonder. Solons squandered their precious time and your money debating such critical social challenges as [1] the location of stone monuments; [2] how the state can kill people; [3] who can farm; [4] when, where and at what temperature you can buy your beer and wine. Public education? Criminal justice? Drug and alcohol treatment? Not on their radar.

They left that heavily lifting leadership to more able activists, such as OU President David Boren and former House Speaker Kris Steele, both of whom adeptly guided three important state matters through the thicket of signature-gathering while fending off mean-spirited and meaningless objections. At the same time, legislative luminaries placed on an already busy ballot four headline-grabbing, hot-button, emotion-leaden and mostly irrelevant state questions. Let's examine them:

SQ 776 relates to our death penalty. In short, it says, within the restrictions outlined by the U.S. Constitution, lawmakers can determine the methods for executing criminals. Of course, even a yes vote by a majority on this one won't invalidate the already proven ineptness displayed by officials when actually ending a life. On the bright side, our policymakers could authorize stoning, charge admission to watch, and earmark the money for new prisons. That would be killing two birds with one stone, so to speak. Probability of the question passing: 54%. I'll vote no.

SQ 790. This dandy will repeal Article 5, Section 2 of the Oklahoma Constitution – also known as the Blaine Amendment – which expressly prohibits the spending of public money on religious programs, artifacts, symbols, etc. Earlier efforts by our Christians first, lawmakers second, constitutionalists third crowd at the Capitol were, of course, struck down by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, whose principal duty is to “obey and defend” the laws that govern our state and nation.

Obviously, our legislators are much more interested in the weather – as in which way is the re-election wind blowing at the Capitol. Of course, they are gleefully encouraged in such ignorance by wannabe governor and current Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who has filed more frivolous and losing lawsuits that Hillary has lost emails. Probability of the question passing: 55%. I'll vote no.

Speaking of wasting time and your money, **SQ 777**, the so-called Right to Farm amendment, purports to solve a problem that doesn't exist. One would think that our tillers of the soil – or in my case, grower of pecans – are just overwhelmed with regulatory impediments in producing grains, meats, honey, wood, wool or whatever. The truth is, farming, in much of its productivity, is the most governmentally subsidized industry in the world.

Feed, seed, fertilizer, equipment, fuel and many other components necessary to produce the life-sustain-

ing commodities we all enjoy are tax-exempt. Of even greater benefit, the agricultural industry receives enormous direct subsidies from the entity it primarily pillories – the federal government – and is actually paid until billions not to produce certain things.

Additionally, vast physical improvements to privately held property are often planned, designed, and funded with your tax money in the name of free enterprise. Property taxes are also assessed at a lower rate than those on your home or business.

So why the urgent need for **SQ 777**? It's simple. Large agri-business interests want to “plant” in the Oklahoma Constitution restrictions that will, in the bogus name of Right to Farm, make it nearly impossible for future legislatures to change laws related to their industries.

I don't blame the mega-size pig and chicken producers for wanting the citizens to write them a blank check on Nov. 8, but the voters shouldn't – and I don't think they will. Probability of the question passing: 47%. I'll vote no.

Finally, **SQ 792** is the only one submitted by solons that deserves your support. It will settle the nearly 60-year-old question of where, when and at what temperature you can buy your beer, wine and strong spirits. Notwithstanding all the debate and alleged complexity surrounding the “hooch hierarchy,” it just means Sooners that imbibe will be able – *gasp!* – to purchase cold beer and wine in grocery stores even on Sundays. Wow! Talk about an earthshaking social and economic leap into the 21st Century for us Okies ... we never get in a rush about much except making sure most everyone who can walk upright can pack a pistol anywhere, concealed or otherwise. Got to keep our legislative priorities straight. Probability of the booze control question passing: 58%. On this common sense update of our liquor laws, I'll vote yes.

SQ's 779, 780 and 781 – education funding and criminal justice reforms – will all pass with more than 55% of the vote, including mine. 'Nuf said about those.

As busy as your ballot will be in November, it could be worse – or better – depending on your perspective. For example, California will determine the fate of at least 18 issues ranging from – and I'm not making this up – the imposition of a 10-cent tax on plastic bags at grocery stores to mandating the use of condoms in porn films.

Since medical marijuana is already legal and widely used in the Golden State, I urge voters there not to smoke a doobie before heading out to the polls. The potential for some on the Left Coast to mix up their votes concerning the various uses of plastic may already be high. No need to add another “high” to the process.

But as legislators in Colorado like to say to their



An Achievable Step Towards Justice For All: End Money Bail

BY RYAN GENTZLER

The majority of people incarcerated in jails – 70%, according to national statistics – have not been convicted of a crime.

In most cases, after a person is arrested, a judge sets a bail amount starting at several thousand dollars that the defendant must pay to be released as a guarantee that they will appear for their court date. If the defendant can't afford to post bail or to purchase a bail bond [costing at least 10% of the bail amount], they will remain in jail until their case is resolved.

That can mean months of imprisonment without being able to work. It's also a terrible deal for the cities and counties whose jails are filled with people charged with minor crimes. Across the country, at least \$3 billion is wasted on holding low-risk offenders before their trials.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Earlier this year, the Tulsa County Public Defend-

er's Office implemented a program to allow some low-risk defendants who can't afford attorneys to be released after signing a written promise to appear in court.

The Public Defender's Office recommends candidates who are likely to receive probation but can't pay their money bail, and the district attorney's office screens them and submits them to a judge to sign off.

The process has so far resulted in 64 people released from the Tulsa County Jail, saving the county more than \$50,000 in a little more than two months, according to Assistant Public Defender Jill Webb. This program has considerable room to grow. In 2015, public defenders represented four out of five felony defendants and one in three misdemeanor defendants in the county – over 8,000 cases in total.

Tulsa County's new program could be used as a stepping stone to a more comprehensive approach to assessing risk. Dozens of jurisdictions across the

country have integrated standardized risk assessments into their release decisions.

One of the most common assessments, the Public Safety Assessment developed by the Arnold Foundation, analyzed a database of 1.5 million cases to identify the best predictors of future crime or failure to appear in court. Low-risk defendants can be released and simply reminded of their court dates; defendants at high risk of reoffending or failing to appear may be denied pre-trial release or released under supervision.

In one county in North Carolina, the jail population dropped by almost 20% as the risk assessment was implemented. That means more resources can be devoted to guarding those who pose a real risk to public safety.

The recent murder of Khalid Jabara in Tulsa provides a tragic reminder of the failure of our current system to adequately assess risk. The man accused

of his murder had a long criminal history and, just a few months prior, had bonded out of jail while awaiting trial for an alleged hit-and-run that nearly killed Jabara's mother.

The Public Safety Assessment takes into account factors like "whether the current offense is violent" and "whether a person has a pending charge at the time of arrest." It's possible that, had a standardized risk assessment been in place, he would have been denied bail altogether.

The justice system favors those with money at every turn. Ending money bail would be a proven way to level the playing field.

When properly implemented, it saves counties incarceration costs at minimal risk to public safety and – most importantly – brings the system a little closer to ensuring justice for all.

Ryan Gentzler is a policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

Alternative Ed Cuts Will Haunt Oklahoma

BY DAVID BLATT

Nothing is as critical to a young person's future prospects as a high school diploma. Decades of research shows that those who drop out of high school are at significantly higher risk of being unemployed, living in poverty, and serving time in prison.

Over the past two decades, Oklahoma has been a national leader for alternative education programs that keep at-risk students in school and help them to graduate. Despite this proven success, education funding cuts have now slashed support for alternative education in half and are leaving our most at-risk students without the support they need for educational success.

Alternative education in Oklahoma is a statewide network of programs that provide customized educations for students who are identified as at-risk for high school failure due to various factors, which may include "academic deficiency, behavioral difficulties, excessive absences, pregnancy or parenting, adjustment problems, or juvenile justice involvement."

Building on the successful academy approach developed at Tulsa's Street School, which has operated since the 1970s, Oklahoma lawmakers phased in a statewide system of alternative education in the 1990s.

As Kathy McKean, who leads a center that provides evaluation and support for alternative education programs, has written, "These are engaging, authentic, nurturing environments that provide the kinds of supports researchers [and dropouts!] believe to be necessary: caring teachers, smaller classes, more in-

dividualized instruction, the chance to work at one's own pace, and at least one strong relationship with an adult at school."

In the 2014-15 school year, 267 alternative education programs served 12,332 Oklahoma students. Data on student achievement consistently finds that students who are enrolled in alternative education programs are suspended less often, miss fewer days of school, fail fewer courses, have higher GPAs, and graduate at a higher rate.

Between 1998, when alternative education was expanded statewide, and 2010, Oklahoma's statewide dropout rate was cut by more than half – from 5.5% to 2.3%. This success has brought national acclaim to Oklahoma's model of alternative education.

That's the good news. The bad news is that like many proven programs that are making a difference for Oklahoma students, alternative education funding has been decimated in recent years.

The Legislature appropriated \$19.4 million for alternative education in FY 2010, which included almost \$1.5 million for evaluation to ensure that schools were meeting all program criteria. Funding was reduced to \$14.9 million in FY 2012, which included a \$1.2 million cut for program evaluation. Funding was cut again in FY 2015 and again as a result of the FY 2016 mid-year budget cuts.

Now, this year, after the Legislature slashed the Department of Education's program and activities budget by \$38 million, funding for alternative education is down to \$9.8 million – a full 50% drop compared to

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Just How Stupid Is Donald Trump?

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

Many Americans think The Donald is pretty dumb. He seems to have alienated most segments of society. He has insulted the lame, the ill, judges, immigrants, people of every color, and members of every social class. Yet he continues to have a significant number of admirers willing to vote for him because he sees what they see, a system that doesn't work for them.

These Trump followers now have a hero, one who will make things right for them and restore their rightful place in society. America will become great again and all will be right with the world.

It sounds pretty good to a lot of people. People who once had good jobs, nice homes and cars. Donald Trump is good at business and makes billions and creates jobs for thousands, so he tells us. Many frustrated people believe in him; I work with some

of them. We also have family and friends who may vote for him, who think he's the savior and Hillary the devil incarnate.

Trump has high negative numbers, but so does she. Does it all come down to who'll have the lower negative numbers on Nov. 8?

While Donald Trump continues to make serious gaffes daily, Hillary remains relatively silent. She and running mate Tim Kaine are touring the country and getting good-sized crowds to surround them and listen to them. But will it be enough to soothe the national psyche? Or will the louder Trump and his daily blunders attract more attention and even propel him to the White House?

Are we fearful enough of the changes that fly at us everyday and make us feel uncomfortable? Will we soon just become irrelevant, cease being important

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to anyone anymore, quietly sink with the evening sun everyday? Most people don't want that to happen, but events seem to point towards it. Needed no more, poor company even for family, disappear into that nursing home never to be heard from again. It's called loss of identity and family and it's no fun.

But one day along comes this brash man with a shock of blondish hair [doubt if it's really his or at least its color]. But he tells us he can fix everything, and many want to believe him. Want to return to the good old days when they were happy, productive, surrounded by loving family.

It's difficult to accept people different from our former neighbors, co-workers and friends. New people of a different skin color, eye color, and hair texture and color. Why, they don't even speak English very well! They have way too many children, extended family in their homes, cars of all kinds on the lawn and in the street.

Yes, it's hard to be an American today. We don't do things the way we used to. Everything's different from before. But hold on, here comes Donald to the rescue. He'll save America so we'll all be better off.

Truth is that things will not and cannot be the same again. Maybe most of us will not have enough to make ends meet at the end of the month. But life goes on. We live in the greatest country there has been in recent years and opportunity still exists if we will but look for it and develop it when we find it.

No one is capable of saving us from ourselves but us. No one can make the U.S. great except us. It's called a democracy and it requires all of us doing our part to continue being the greatest country in the world for some time to come. It requires us to help ourselves and our neighbors; it also demands we share our good fortune with other countries and live in peace.

Donald Trump may be a lot smarter than many of us give him credit for. After all, don't his daily blunders keep him constantly in the news? Isn't he now a household name? Is he perhaps even the hero, savior and leader we have been waiting for?

Here's the deal: Donald Trump will be the next president if enough of us let him win the election because we do not want to do our part and work every day to keep this democracy functioning. It is not Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton who will preserve our union. No. It is us, all of us, and we all need to contribute in preserving and keeping this country great.

I hope I've answered the question about Trump. No, he's not stupid. In fact he's doing a damn good job keeping his name in the headlines and being newsworthy daily. He has name recognition, maybe enough to put him over the top in November. Pretty smart, if you ask me.

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

Burdensome Regulation

BY BOB DARCY

Donald Trump is not alone in fingering Burdensome Regulation as a cause, if not the cause, of America's manufacturing decline, the loss of jobs to China, India, Vietnam and elsewhere.

I have spent some time in China and India, Estonia, then in the former Soviet Union, South Africa, Kenya and Egypt among others. Fortunately, I lived in Dalian, China and Nagpur, India where the air could be breathed. But I did spend time in Beijing, Shenzhen, Calcutta and Delhi.

In 2014 the World Health Organization [WHO] ranked Delhi as the world's most polluted city, followed by a bunch more Indian cities, cities in Pakistan, China, South Africa, Turkey, Bangladesh and the developing world generally. The worst city list does not have a U.S. city until No. 160, Fresno. The 227 least polluted cities are all in the United States, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Japan.

I am old enough to remember London's Great Smog of 1952 killing 4,000 in a few days and the 1966 New York City smog killing at least 169 persons. In 1943

sudden severe smog caused Los Angeles to believe it was under Japanese chemical warfare attack.

Why was air pollution so bad in America and Europe during my childhood and not now? Why have Third World cities become so unlivable? The simple answer is burdensome regulation – and its lack.

Federal, state and local regulation of industrial and auto emissions "burdened" the auto, power, and manufacturing industries here along with similar efforts in Western Europe and Japan. Polluting industries and cheap autos were welcomed into the Third World.

Remember when Cleveland's Cuyahoga River caught fire in 1952? Over \$1 million in damage to boats, bridges and buildings. It burst into flames again in 1969.

In the early 1970s friends and I would swim in the Potomac. We went in at Glen Echo, MD, just above the weir. The water was clean and clear. There were fish. Below the weir industrial pollution gave the Potomac the stench then associated with Washington politics generally. A rendering plant in Georgetown was notorious for its unregulated dumping into the

river.

As kids my dad and my father-in-law swam off Brooklyn's East River docks. They did not know better. By the 1940s New Yorkers had wised-up and any contact with the East River was known to be dangerous. New York flushed its toilets into the river while industry helped out with whatever it could find to dump.

Starting in 1969 the Clean Water Act, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency started regulation of industrial and agricultural river dumping. Today the Cuyahoga and Potomac are relatively clean and the East River, on some days at least, is swimmable enough to host the annual Brooklyn Bridge Swim from Brooklyn to Manhattan.

Third World rivers, especially in China and India, are filled with industrial and agricultural waste due to a combination of sparse regulation and lack of enforcement.

Burdensome regulation goes on and on. There is trucking. Long-distance trucks must meet safety standards and drivers are limited to the hours they can drive without a break and how fast they can go. Not so in the Third World.

We have child labor laws that do not burden industry in Vietnam, Bangladesh and Pakistan. We burden industry with requirements protecting workers from hazardous chemicals and fumes. American coal mining is crippled with regulation and inspection designed to prevent deadly underground explosions.

Federal regulators inspect and over-regulate the meat industry, shut down ice cream plants when there is a deadly salmonella outbreak – rather than trying to cover it up as might happen in China. Burdensome regulations force manufacturers to absorb the expense of identifying and accurately labeling what they put into food products.

In the 1960s the Food and Drug people forced the

manufacturer of Carter's Little Liver Pills to stop advertising they cured headaches, constipation, dyspepsia and biliousness because the company could not demonstrate any efficacy for their pills. Regulation essentially put them out of business.

About the same time the Federal Trade Commission got all over the manufacturers of Geritol, then heavily advertised to old folks as a cure for "iron-poor tired blood." Turns out for most of its targeted consumers Geritol was harmful.

What has burdensome regulation done to America's tobacco industry?

Between 1970 and 1972 the U.S produced over 50% more cigarettes than China. By 1999 China produced 160% more cigarettes than we did. South Korea more than doubled its cigarette production whereas ours increased by only 10%. In Europe, Japan and the United States regulators force cigarette manufacturers to label their products as deadly and not fit for human consumption. Can you imagine what that does to tobacco sales? To tobacco jobs?

Paradoxically, Chinese Communists are more understanding of the tobacco industry than our own government.

I am sure readers can come up with their own lists of burdensome regulations. Airplanes, trains, automobiles – all regulated. The airways – no one can broadcast without complying with regulations. Want to fly your drone? Check with the federal government first. Forget about owning a machine gun or doing some private experimentation with anthrax. The Feds are all over that.

What is curious is that Donald Trump and others complaining about burdensome regulation do not seem to be able to come up with their own lists of regulations they would get rid of on Day One. Perhaps this will help.

Bob Darcy is a retired Oklahoma State University professor of political science and statistics.

Why I Oppose SQ's 777 And 779

BY BOB BEARDEN

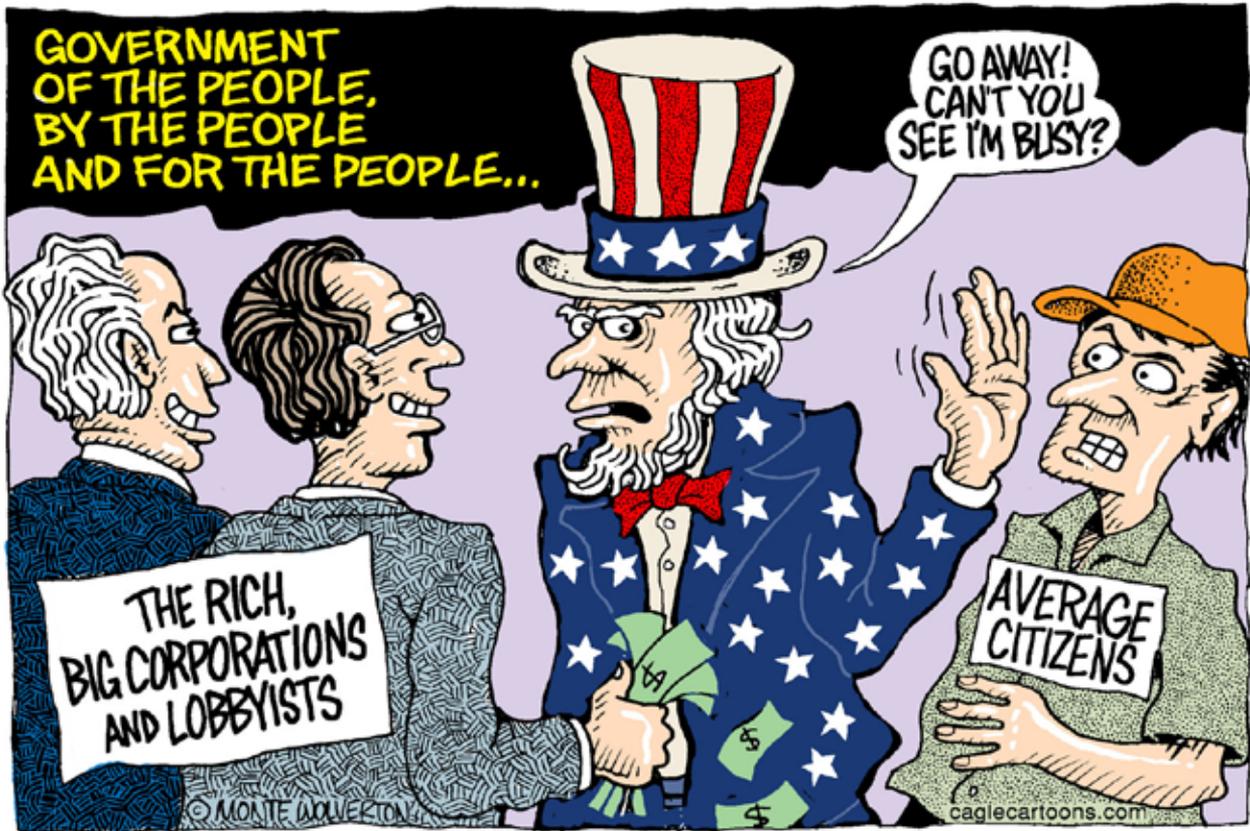
There are two state questions that are receiving high praise and are being advocated by special interests for passage.

SQ 779 which would increase the state sales tax by a penny is being advocated widely throughout the state by such prominent dignitaries as OU president, former governor and U.S. Sen. David Boren. This tax is proposed to fund a much needed teachers' pay raise.

While I agree Oklahoma teachers need a pay raise, I disagree with Boren and the method he wants the

state to take in providing that much needed pay raise. Sales taxes are the most regressive taxes that exist, as they fall unfairly upon workers and especially the working poor and the poor and disadvantaged. Most corporations pay little or often no sales tax, so once again Boren is shilling for corporate interests.

The way to fund teacher pay and to improve education in our state would be to quit giving welfare to corporate interests. End the many tax cuts and subsidies provided to corporations who suck money from our children to stick into the pockets of the wealthy.



People who benefit from corporate welfare are just such people as Boren, who continually sucks up to corporate donors who have grown rich and fat off the backs of working people.

SQ 779 should be voted down on Nov. 8 and our state legislators and our know-nothing, do-nothing-to-anger-all-of-her-corporate-welfare-buddies governor should be told through the ballot box to either properly fund education or take a hike!

As to SQ 777, it would more properly be labeled 666. It is another attempt to destroy not only the small independent farmer but also to allow huge corporate farms to pollute our environment and at the same time take the products they produce and ship them to China and other parts of the world.

It is totally and deliberately misnamed as The Right to Farm. It should be more properly named The Right For Corporate Farms to Pollute and Destroy, because that is exactly what it will do if passed.

If this proposal is passed, the state will no longer be able to do anything about protecting our environment from corporate polluters. They will be free to dump wastewater and waste products from their corporate farms into our rivers and streams and the state of Oklahoma, the governor and the state Legislature will not be able to prevent that from happening.

SQ 777 should be voted down on Nov. 8. It is a bill written by that corporate shill ALEC and is definitely was not written with the best interests of the small independent farmers nor the citizens of our state in

mind.

Bob Bearden is a Central Oklahoma Labor Federation trustee and a member of Mayflower Congregational Church in Oklahoma City.

Alternative Ed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

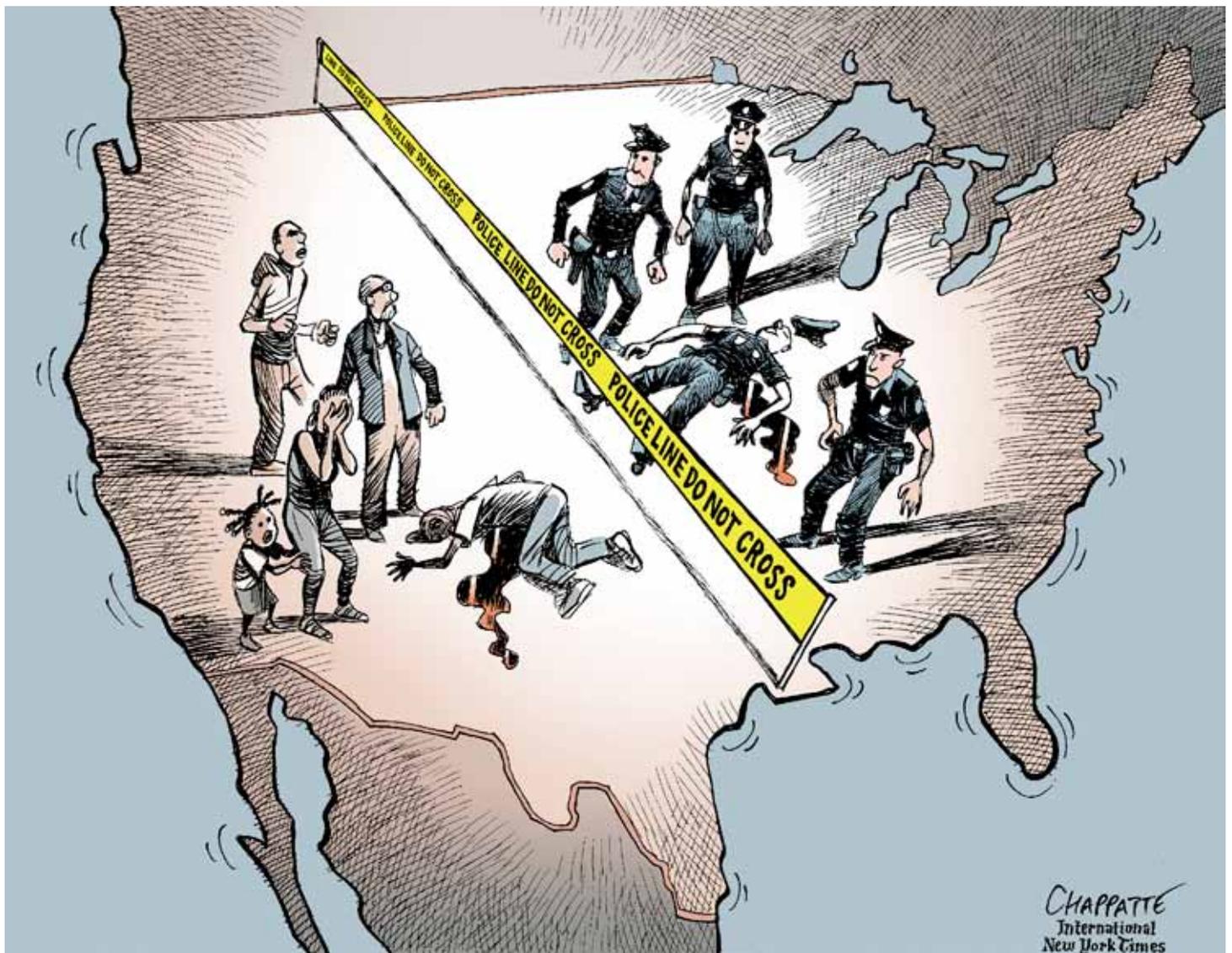
seven years ago.

Even with the reduced funding, school districts are still required to operate alternative education programs. This latest round of budget cuts will likely mean larger class sizes, less personalized counseling services, fewer course options, and an increasing reliance on exclusively computer-based curricula at the expense of teacher-led instruction, according to Kathy McKean.

Ultimately, it will mean more students who fall through the cracks as the result of not receiving the personalized instruction and counseling that they need.

How sadly ironic that just when we are finally seeing real strides towards criminal justice reform in Oklahoma, the programs that have a proven track record of preventing at-risk youth away from the criminal justice system are being dismantled.

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



A Practical Path To Unbiased Policing

BY DREW DIAMOND

Candlelight vigils, prayer services, makeshift memorials, and calls for unity. A police officer shot down, a community member killed in a police action, and crowds of innocent women, children and men murdered by cowards wielding assault-type weapons.

Sadly, this has become a typical day in America. Politicians are frozen in place. Even the simplest and most widely desired gun safety legislation becomes mired in absurd political rhetoric.

The gun lobbyists preach the need to protect us from our own government; the core of that protection is arming everybody. As a veteran of the military and police services, I find this position both disturbing

and confusing. It is clear that those who wrap themselves in this dogma fear the very soldiers and police officers they claim to support and respect. These soldiers and police officers are the government. They represent government day in and day out. The belief that we must arm ourselves against our own government means arming ourselves in fear of the very men and women who daily risk their lives for our protection. Ultimately, this is both disrespectful and unpatriotic.

It is time to ask if we have become a people defined entirely by violence, hatred and fear. Based on the seemingly endless reports of shootings, hate speech, and injustice the answer would be “yes.” However,

a deeper look into the daily life of our communities yields a more positive response.

Overall we are a peaceful and compassionate people. The violence and hatred around us is not who we are. Instead, it is a manifestation of our continuing struggle to move peace and nonviolence from a wishful desire to pragmatic actions. Violence is easy and destructive. Making and keeping peace takes persistent effort and steadfast commitment.

What constitutes action in pursuit of peaceful communities? For many communities the action taken has been the full implementation of Community Policing. Community Policing is daily meaningful engagement by police officers with the people they serve. Community engagement coupled with collaborative problem solving provides the core for delivery of successful and unbiased police service. Reinforced with continuous training and professional development, community engagement is the essential element to policing in a democracy. This is community policing at its best.

Transformation of police into community policing is an essential element in any community's quest for peace and justice. Police actions in cities around our country drive the current national dialogue over race, police use of force, and the role of police in America.

In policing, racial profiling has long been an issue. Each individual police officer's behavior, legal or illegal, right or wrong, ethical or unethical, is at the epicenter of race and policing in our country. Important questions are being asked about the relationship of an officer's training, education and experience to their decision-making and subsequent actions.

Fifteen years ago I was a member of a team of police practitioners and researchers from the Police Executive Research Forum, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, which produced and published research on racially biased policing practices along with recommendations for action.

The principles and recommendations in our book, *Racially Biased Policing: A Principled Response*, still today provides a practical path to unbiased policing.

The key policy recommendation is entitled "Addressing Racially Biased Policing and the Perceptions of Racially Biased Policing." The stated purpose of the policy is to reaffirm a police department's commitment to unbiased policing, clarify the circumstances in which race/ethnicity can be considered when making law enforcement decisions, and to reinforce procedures that serve to assure the public that the department is providing service and enforcing laws in a fair and equitable manner.

One key aspect of ensuring the equal treatment of citizens is the consistent application of the standards of reasonable suspicion and probable cause to the appropriate law enforcement interventions. This policy affirms these Fourth Amendment requirements and emphasizes their application to detentions, arrests and searches.

The policy prohibits the use of race/ethnicity as a general proxy for criminal behavior, but allows officers to use this identifying characteristic as a basis for making law enforcement decisions in particular situations. Communities-engaged police officers, supported by leadership and training, are proven to be significantly less biased in their behavior and much more effective if keeping the peace.

A police department that utilizes community partnerships and problem-solving efforts as part of its efforts to reduce crime and citizen fear of crime has different organizational needs and challenges than a traditional police department that does not engage its community in such efforts.

Transforming a police agency to community policing mandates promoting an agency climate and culture conducive to community policing; devolving power and decision-making authority to officers engaged in community policing activities; ensuring transparency and accountability; assigning officers to geographic districts; training officers to be "generalists" rather than "specialists;" recruiting, selecting, and hiring service-oriented officers; providing community policing training; evaluating officers on their community policing activities; and ensuring access to information systems that provide data about, and context to, community policing activities.

The ability to maintain peace in our community is based on trust and accountability between a community and its police by requiring each person to be held accountable for their actions. The philosophical construct of community policing has proved to be the best possible response to ensuring that police practices uphold the human rights, civil rights, and dignity of all people.

Drew Diamond is executive director of the Jewish Federation of Tulsa. A former Tulsa police chief known for his emphasis on community policing and affirmative action, Diamond also was director of training and technical assistance for the DC-based Police Executive Research Forum for 17 years.





Social Media's Challenge To Democracy

BY LEE H. HAMILTON

I've been involved in politics for the better part of a lifetime, and have spoken at a lot of public meetings over the years. There's one question, I think, that I've heard more than any other: "If I want to be an informed citizen, which sources of information should I consult?"

For many years, I had a set answer for this. Read one or more of the respected national news sources, I'd respond: The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, the Financial Times, The Economist, etc. I'm not sure how good that answer was at the time, but I know for certain it would be woefully inadequate now. Younger people, in particular, get far more of their information from social media than from traditional news sources.

The internet and social media have upended our expectations of what it means to be well informed. Platforms and websites that take advantage of online and mobile connectivity are like a firehose, providing enormous quantities of information, opinion, news, statements, videos, images, analysis, charts, graphs – all of it instantly available. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and other platforms have become the way many of our citizens communicate. They have become a force for mobilizing large groups of people to apply political pressure on short notice.

The question is, what impact does this have on the public dialogue, and on representative democracy?

Clearly, these are powerful tools. As the rise of the Tea Party and the alarm over price increases for the

EpiPen demonstrate, they can galvanize large, energetic groups of people who oppose a specific target. They make more information quickly available from more sources. They make it possible for users to do their own fact-checking [I can tell you, it's quite intimidating as a speaker to watch members of the audience checking up on what you just said].

They allow people to get into the action and take part in political dialogue. They give citizens multiple ways to engage the attention and interest of policy makers – and give policymakers multiple ways to gauge public opinion and seek to understand the interests and needs of constituents. They've brought new groups into the public dialogue that were not there before, adding fresh voices to the process and broadening our understanding of what it means to be American.

But if information has become more ubiquitous and powerful, so has misinformation. It spreads rapidly, passed along from user to user with no check. Posts tend to have no room for nuance; arguments can be explosive and arguers aggressive; drama and hysteria fuel polarization; special interests can't help but take advantage of the context-free nature of social media.

All of this makes it far more difficult for policymakers to sift through everything coming their way on any given topic. If a significant portion of the information that's available consists of misleading graphs, false facts, misstatements, and outright lies, the process of arriving at good policy becomes fragile and

laden with traps.

Which is why the sheer quantity of information bestowed on us by social media does not necessarily improve the quality of public dialogue. It does not always help citizens make good choices.

And that's really the key question: Does the ubiquity of information available through social media really help citizens understand complex issues, weigh competing arguments, and reach discriminating judgments about politics?

Or does it overwhelm them with bursts of information that is so mixed as to quality that people simply throw up their hands – or, worse, charge full-tilt ahead based on a false understanding of reality?

The answer, of course, is that it's a mixed bag. The jury's still out on whether we're becoming better citizens because we have more information and opinion at our fingertips. Certainly, the information world we live in today is putting more stress on individual voters to make discriminating choices and on our representative democracy, which rests on institutions that were designed in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Our political process has proved resilient over centuries, and has served us well. But social media pose a powerful challenge. They've brought great gifts and equally great risks, and we'd be prudent to be cautious.

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government. He served 34 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Foreign Policy Reform Urgent Task For 'Brand New Congress'

BY JEREMY KUZMAROV

Bernie Sanders supporters have started a grassroots initiative to transform the U.S. Congress in a more progressive direction by 2018, advocating a platform of greater economic equality, climate justice, civil rights, criminal justice reform and fair trade, according to *The Nation*.

Strong emphasis should also be placed by Brand New Congress [BNC] on reforming U.S. foreign policy, channeling money from foreign wars and the so-called military complex into domestic revitalization and reform.

During the Democratic Party primary, Bernie famously called Hillary Clinton out for her ties with Henry Kissinger and support for regime change, and lamented on at least a few occasions the obscene military spending totals.

Foreign policy generally took a back seat though to domestic issues.

Bernie's critique of the role of money in politics

could have more consistently extended to DynCorp, Bechtel, Science Applications International Corp. [SAIC – known as “NSA West”] and other private military contractors and war profiteers who influence elections and buy off politicians in a similar way to ExxonMobil, Goldman Sachs and the pharmaceutical giants.

President Barack Obama, as an example, was supported by the heads of General Dynamics, one of the largest weapons manufacturers in the world. His administration preserved record military budgets while lessening regulation on arms exports resulting in record levels of arms sales.

In 2012 General Atomics, the leading weaponized drone manufacturer, received \$1.8 billion in government contracts while donating \$505,000 during that election cycle, 61% to Republicans and 39% to Democrats in what was a good return for its investment.

Two of the top Congressional recipients, Buck

McKeon and Jerry Lewis, both R-CA, sat on the congressional drone caucus, while a third, Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-CA, was a consistent supporter of huge military budgets and had an assistant that became a paid General Atomics lobbyist.

These cases illustrate the hold of the so-called military industrial complex on Congress, which a genuine political revolution should aim to overturn.

The urgency of this latter task is spelled out by Noam Chomsky in his latest blockbuster book, *Who Rules the World?*

The Yoda of the American left quotes William J. Perry, Bill Clinton's former defense secretary and long a proponent of high-tech weapons systems, who believes the threat of nuclear holocaust is greater now than at the height of the Cold War.

Pressured by congressmen in the pockets of Bechtel, which runs the country's top nuclear weapons facilities, the Obama Administration has initiated a trillion dollar nuclear arms modernization initiative which has triggered a renewed nuclear arms race with the Russians and Chinese. The two countries feel encircled with the expansion of NATO and military "pivot to Asia."

Perry was among those to call for President Obama to kill a newly developed nuclear-tipped cruise missile with improved targeting and lower yield that might encourage "limited nuclear war," which could escalate to utter disaster.

Patrick Cockburn, recipient of the 2014 foreign affairs journalist of the year award, spells out another urgent reason for foreign policy reform in his chilling new book, *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution*.

Cockburn traces the evolution of ISIS to the wreckage bred by the U.S. war in Iraq and persecution of Sunnis by the sectarian Shiite government of Nouri al Maliki, and to the dissolution of Syria bred in part by the Western powers decision to prolong the civil

war by arming oppositionist rebels led by militant jihadists.

Cockburn's book goes into the importance of Turkey in providing a sanctuary for jihadists and the financing provided to Sunni militant groups by Saudi Arabia, recipient of record billion dollar arms packages by the Obama Administration.

Aiming to export their fanatical Wahhabi religious faith, the Saudis have stoked sectarian divisions fueling a lot of the unrest in the Middle East.

Since the 1980s, the U.S. has meanwhile poured billions of dollars into nuclear-armed Pakistan, whose intelligence services have financed the Taliban.

The 2011 U.S.-NATO war in Libya was another catastrophe which ruined Africa's wealthiest economy and turned the country over to sectarian militias and fundamentalist gangs.

With Iraq and Syria, Libya is now a vivid symbol of the failure of the U.S. War on Terror.

Despite billions of dollars spent and much blood that has been shed, the scourge of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism has extended to levels beyond Osama bin Laden's wildest dreams and threatens the West on a level greater than ever before.

BNC is a welcome development which urgently needs to focus on getting into office candidates who will end the failed War on Terror, and reverse Obama's nuclear weapons buildup and other militaristic policies that are contributing to a more dangerous world order.

Along with other progressive measures like fighting climate change and economic inequality, this platform would, I believe, be supported by a large number of Americans who see things falling apart at home and are tired of endless wars.

Jeremy Kuzmarov teaches at the University of Tulsa and is author of Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation Building in the American Century [Massachusetts, 2012].

Wall Street Opposition To Transaction Tax 'Pure Baloney'

BY ROBERT REICH

One of Bernie Sanders's most important proposals didn't receive enough attention and should become a law even without a president Sanders. Hillary Clinton should adopt it for her campaign.

It's a tax on financial transactions.

Putting a small tax on financial transactions would:

1. Reduce incentives for high speed trading, insider deal making and short term financial betting. Buying and selling stocks and bonds in order to beat others who are buying stocks and bonds is a giant zero sum

game. It wastes countless resources, uses up the talents of some of the nation's best and brightest and subjects financial markets to unnecessary risk.

2. Generate lots of revenue. Even a one tenth of 1% transaction tax would raise \$185 billion over 10 years, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center. It could thereby finance public investments that enlarge the economic pie rather than merely rearranging its slices. Investments like better schools and access to college.

3. It's fair. After all, Americans pay sales taxes on

all sorts of goods and services, yet Wall Street traders pay no sales tax on the stocks and bonds they buy, which helps explain why the financial industry generates about 30% of America's corporate profits, but pays only about 18% of corporate taxes.

Wall Street's objections are baloney.

Wall Street says even a small transaction tax on financial transactions would drive trading overseas since financial trades can easily be done elsewhere.

Baloney. The U.K. has had attacks on stock trades for decades, yet remains one of the world's financial powerhouses. Incidentally, that tax raises about three billion pounds yearly. That's the equivalent of \$30 billion in an economy the size of the United States, which is a big help for Britain's budget. At least 28 other countries also have such a tax and the European Union is well on the way to implementing one.

Wall Street also claims that the tax would burden small investors such as retirees, business owners and average savers.

Wrong again. The tax wouldn't be a burden if it reduces the volume and frequency of trading, which is the whole point. In fact, the tax is highly progressive. The Tax Policy Center estimates that 75% of it would be paid by the richest fifth of taxpayers and 40% by the top 1%.

So, why aren't politicians of all stripes supporting it? Because the financial transactions tax directly threatens a major source of Wall Street's revenue. And if you hadn't noticed, the Street uses a portion of its vast revenues to gain political clout. Which may be one of the best reasons for enacting it.

This article was originally published on Robert Reich's blog.

'It's What I've Got'

BY HARRY T. COOK

A political scientist I am not, neither an economist. A historian, yes, but of the eras during which the biblical texts proper now to Judaism and Christianity made their appearance in the human epoch. What I am is an aspirant scholar of those texts, and it is to some of them I find myself turning in this brutal season in America's civic life.

It's what I've got to offer that may or may not have much relevance to many. Nevertheless ...

More and more it seems that American voters will have two starkly different choices come November. They will vote for a presidential nominee who trades in fear, the other in hope. You'd think that hope would win the day as it did in 2008 and 2012. It is not at all assured that hope will end up the winner this time around.

Crime seems to be an obsession in Donald Trump's dystopian view of the America he wants to make great again. The Bible depicts a number of crimes – two of the best known, perhaps, being the myth of Cain killing his brother Abel over whether Yahweh preferred a sirloin steak over the vegetarian plate, and the rape of Tamar by her half-brother. Some would argue that the execution of Jesus of Nazareth was a war crime.

The biblical crime scene anybody can understand as such is the one fictionalized by the Evangelist Luke. He [or maybe she] located it on a treacherous road that wound 3,346 feet down the mountain from Jerusalem to Jericho – a direct drop of six-tenths of a mile. The fiction of the story notwithstanding, it is history that the road was a site frequented by thieves of the violent sort.

Luke placed there one we are expected to believe was a Jew. The story is that thieves mugged him, robbed him of his goods, beat him mercilessly and

left him for dead. Soon along came a priest with an assistant in tow. The former could not become involved because his ministerial status – and by extension that of the latter – would be compromised if he so much as touched a dead body, such being one of the taboos peculiar to the conduct of Jewish religious functionaries at the time. Consequently, Luke says, they “passed by on the other side,” thus becoming wrongly depicted as unfeeling jerks in some tens of thousands of sermons preached over time by that number of uninformed clergy.

Soon, in Luke's fecund imagination, a man from the north – a Samaritan – comes upon the injured man. He is not a priest with sacerdotal duties. He's on his way somewhere on business but stops to perform first aid on the victim, takes him to a hostel, pays his room rent plus money for his care and promises on his return trip to pay any other expenses. It is not told that he ever did return, but Luke expected readers to believe he did.

One nugget in the story is that the unnamed Samaritan was officially a religious enemy of the unnamed Jew. Why, you ask? Because some centuries before Luke's writing [ca. 85 CE and later], Jews in the northern province of Samaria had intermarried with Assyrians whose armies had overtaken that part of Palestine. The Judeans in the south were taught to believe that the Samaritans thereby had sullied the faith and made themselves unclean. Luke wanted his readers to consider why one thought by a Jew to be a dirty dog would end up caring for him, paying out money for his keep and more.

Having lived with this text for the past half century, I have come to the conclusion that its core message is often missed. The core message is that violence

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THE COMING STORM

When Our Old Brains Make Us Lose Our Minds

BY ANN DAPICE

I was sitting next to a man on the plane returning from the World Diabetes Congress in Australia two years ago when I first heard of a connection that hinted at a new major epidemic. The Congress had documented the terrible increase in diabetes numbers worldwide resulting from the American fast food industry that we've so generously shared with the world.

As an invited speaker I had just presented the relationship between Type 2 Diabetes and Alcoholism, previously unrecognized, but here was a connection I had not seen. The man sitting next to me on the plane told me that his wife had moved from researching Alzheimer's Disease to Type 2 Diabetes because of the connection she was seeing between the two. I would learn that relationship is now called Type 3 Diabetes.

In the recent election period we have had the Republican presidential candidate promising to end the Affordable Care Act. We have had the Democratic candidate promising policies to increase availability of health care – if not universal health care.

What we have not heard have been the statistics that the health care system is going to have to respond to rapidly or the combined relationships of these numbers. While these health factors have generally been left to the decisions

of individuals, resulting in victim blaming, the issues are actually physiological, anthropological, societal and economic – and beyond the simple advice to just “lose weight and exercise.”

Most people have known the relationship between obesity and cardiovascular disease. Most have known the relationship between obesity and Type 2 Diabetes



and between Type 2 Diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney disease. Many have known the relationship between obesity and some cancers. What has been less recognized is the growing understanding of the relationship between Type 2 Diabetes and Alzheimer's Disease. It is a connection that most people would want to know.

We've already known that the older we become, the more likely we are to develop Alzheimer's Disease. We've known that a few people have a family predisposition to Alzheimer's.

Now we were learning that the results of what we eat correlates with one of the diseases we dread most – the loss of our minds. With the ballooning of obesity and related Type 2 Diabetes worldwide happening as the elderly population rapidly accelerates, we have a clear call for action.

Research that predicts a coming epidemic:

- Americans ages 65 and older are projected to more than double from 46 million today to over 98 million by 2060 and obesity rates among older adults have increased to 40% in 65-to-74-year-olds [Population Reference Bureau, 2016, "Aging in the United States"].

- Nearly 30 million Americans suffer from diabetes – a rate that has nearly tripled in the last 40 years. Many remain undiagnosed [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention].

- People with Type 2 Diabetes often experience a sharp decline in cognitive function and almost 70% ultimately develop Alzheimer's [Alzheimers.net].

- The term "Type 3 diabetes" accurately reflects the fact that Alzheimer's Disease represents a form of diabetes that selectively involves the brain with physiological features that overlap with both Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes [National Institutes of Health].

- Currently more than five million Americans and 46 million people worldwide are estimated to be dying from Alzheimer's – more than have HIV/AIDS, cancer or chronic heart disease – a number that is expected to triple in the coming decades [usagainstalzheimers.org].

- At present, individuals with Alzheimer's are cared for by 15.9 million caregivers in the U.S. and over 100 million worldwide [usagainstalzheimers.org].

- The financial cost of Alzheimer's care is enormous. The average family caring for a relative with Alzheimer's can expect to spend \$215,000 throughout the entire course of the disease. It is presently the most expensive disease in the nation – in 2016 costs totaled \$236 billion; and global costs exceeded \$600 billion [usagainstalzheimers.org].

In a previous article, Addictions R Us – What Do We Do? [July 2016, Oklahoma Observer], I noted that our old brains interpret stress as a need to store food in our bodies [fat] for times of famine to come. The increased easy access to fast food has resulted in our high rates of obesity and Type 2 Diabetes.

Over the post-Depression decades, much has changed. Old messages to "waste not, want not" and "finish your food because children are starving" remained in our psyches as we changed to "all you can eat buffets" and increased serving sizes – especially for sodas and other carbohydrates. Eating only at mealtimes changed to snacking and grazing all day long.

Meanwhile a variety of stressors continue that our old brains interpret as bad times coming, so we do

what our old brains tell us – and eat! Along the way, most of our jobs have changed from heavy physical activity to desk work.

Two worker households have made fast foods attractive and often necessary. Cheap carbohydrates and trans-fatty acids have been purposely designed to be more attractive to consumers.

Meanwhile, the same old brain not only tells us to eat, but also causes our bodies to hold onto the extra pounds for the famines it believes are bound to come.

So substantial marketing, trade and economic policies, as well as societal habits, are at stake in modifying the kinds and amounts of food available to individuals at grocery stores and the relatively new "convenience" stores.

Unlike England's recent tax on sodas, when U.S. cities have tried to change serving sizes and tax sodas, an outcry has often been made that these are "big brother" interventions and that food choices should be left to individuals.

There are well-researched methods to decrease appetite and lose weight such as eating healthy proteins and fats that dampen appetite for high carbohydrate foods, as well as using smaller plates and serving dishes. Surgical options are available for extreme obesity.

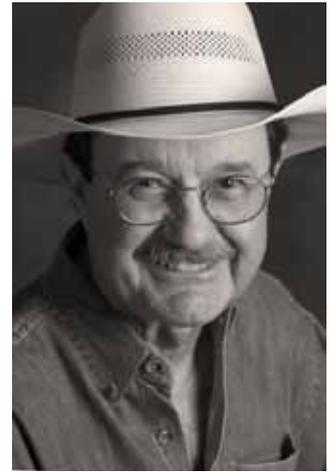
We are beginning to make fresh fruits and vegetables and important proteins more available to food stamp recipients and at food distribution centers, but much remains to be done.

As the disease numbers show, minorities and the poor who have been most affected by cheaper, unhealthy foods are most at risk. Families with higher incomes and nutritional education, with more time to prepare healthy foods, are making healthy changes and fast food restaurants are beginning to respond to consumer demand.

However, already existing obesity and Type 2 Diabetes rates still foretell hard times ahead. Meanwhile, probably well-meaning spokespersons condone obesity by stating that the obese are being discriminated against – instead of admitting to the serious challenges for both the obese and the society at large.

Given our old brains, it is not easy to prevent weight gain or to lose weight, but compared to the realities of major illness and the loss of our minds – and thus who we are – it seems important to develop realistic goals and policies in response to the terrible numbers.

Tulsan Ann Dapice, PhD, has taught and/or served as administrator at a number of universities including the University of Pennsylvania, Widener University, Penn State University, Rodgers State University and Goddard College. She is Director of Research and Education for T.K. Wolf, Inc., a 501(c)(3) American Indian organization where she and staff have done research and treated clients with addiction, obesity and Type 2 Diabetes, publishing the results in book chapters and academic presentations regionally, nationally and internationally.



How Can A CEO Feel Good About Being Vile?

Corporate price gouging is never nice. But gouging people on the price of medicines they rely on to stay alive is worse than not nice – it’s predeceously evil.

And if you think corporate morality can’t go lower than that, how about gouging people on the price of a life-saving medicine in order to jack up the personal pay of a drug maker’s CEO? That’s the bottom level of grotesque immorality where Heather Bresch dwells. She is chief executive of Mylan, a pharmaceutical profiteer that markets the EpiPen medical device, which literally is a lifesaver for people who suffer deadly anaphylaxis allergy attacks.

These allergy attacks kill nearly 200 people a year in the U.S. alone. Within seconds, something as common as peanuts or a bee sting can cause sever rash, swelling of the airways, drops in blood pressure, shock, and if not treated right away, death. So, naturally, we would want to increase access to the life-saving medicine that prevents these attacks, right?

Increasing that access is hard to do at today’s price. For years, a two-shot packet of EpiPens cost under \$100, but Mylan bought the rights to the injectable drug in 2007, gained monopoly control of the market, and in 2012 suddenly began sticking dependent patients again and again with drastic price hikes. Now, the two-pack averages more than \$600, with some paying above \$900!

Drug makers routinely claim they must charge high prices to recoup their cost of developing their products – but Mylan didn’t develop the EpiPen, taxpayers did. The original research was initiated by the Pentagon back in 1973.

Today, the device and the medicine in it cost Mylan only a few dollars to produce, and the product itself is essentially unchanged from when Mylan bought it. So the company’s only real contribution to the EpiPen has been to raise its price by more than 600% – a shameful act of sheer profiteering that rips off hundreds of thousands of users and endangers the lives of those families who simply can’t afford it.

Mylan’s CEO, the one responsible for this price

gouge, regards herself as a self-made corporate success story – a woman who came out of hard-scrabble West Virginia and scrambled to the top of the food chain at Mylan. “There is a work ethic and grit about [West Virginia] that allows me to help make a difference,” Bresch told the New York Times.

Well, yes, grit, hard work – and having the advantage of being the daughter of the state’s former governor and current U.S. Senator, Joe Manchin III.

Take the MBA degree she got from West Virginia University, an academic credential bestowed on her 10 years after she left the school, having completed only about half of the coursework required to get a degree. The state university later conceded that Bresch was awarded this business degree ... well, because her father was governor at the time, overseeing the school’s budget.

It’s this sort of ethical “grit” that Mylan’s chief exec has employed to pick the pockets of thousands of vulnerable customers who rely on EpiPen.

Heather’s greed has sparked a furious public backlash, leading to congressional investigations. But, again, her “grit” might pay off, for she has bought off several top allergy-patient advocacy groups who are not backing the people. Why? Because she’s been dispensing millions of dollars to them in PR grants, making them “allies” in her blatant price-gouging scheme.

One thing that has risen higher than EpiPen’s price: CEO Heather Bresch’s paycheck. It’s up by 671% since 2007, and last year alone she pocketed \$18.9 million! But I wonder – is that enough to make her feel good about being so vile?

Of course, Congress and the courts will do nothing to deter her and the other Big Pharma gougers – but surely the lowest level of Dante’s Inferno has rooms reserved for all of them.

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Donnie's Little Lies Are Huuuuuge

An old saying asserts that falsehoods come in three escalating levels: “Lies, damn lies, and statistics.” Now, however, we’ve been given an even-higher level of intentional deception: Policy speeches by Donald Trump.

Take his recent highly publicized address outlining specific economic policies he would push to benefit hard-hit working families. It’s an almost-hilarious compilation of Trumpian fabrications, including his bold, statesmanlike discourse on the rank unfairness of the estate tax: “No family will have to pay the death tax,” he solemnly pledged, adopting the right-wing pejorative for a tax assessed on certain properties of the dearly departed. Fine, but next came his slick prevarication: “American workers have paid taxes their whole lives, and they should not be taxed again at death.” Workers? The tax exempts the first \$5.4 million of any deceased person’s estate, meaning 99.8% of Americans pay absolutely nothing. So Trump is trying to deceive real workers into thinking he’s standing for them, when in fact it’s his own wealth he’s protecting.

What a maverick! What a shake-’em-up outsider! What an anti-establishment fighter for working stiff!

Oh, and don’t forget this: What a phony!

Sure, The Donald sounds like a populist on the stump, bellowing that the system’s been jerry-rigged by and for the corporate and political elites, which is killing the middle class. Well, he’s right about that, but what’s he going to do? Don’t worry, he says smugly, I’ll fix it, I’ll make the system honest again – trust me!

As Groucho Marx said, “To know if a man is honest, ask him – if he says he is, he’s a crook.” Or, in the case of this phony populist, just look at the specific policies he laid out as his fixes for our economy. Trumpeting the package as his blueprint for the “economic renewal” of America’s working class.

But Trump’s idea of “working class turns out to be millionaires and billionaires, for that’s who would get the bulk of benefits from his agenda – rewarding the very corporate chieftains he denounces in his bluster speeches for knocking down middle-income families and grabbing all of the new wealth our economy is creating. His proposed tax cuts, for example, don’t benefit low-wage workers at all and provide only a pittance of gain for those with middle-class paychecks, but corporations are given a huuuuuuuge windfall with over a 50% cut in their rate. His tax giveaway

will also take \$240 billion a year out of our public treasury – money desperately needed for such basics as expanding educational opportunities and restoring our nation’s dilapidated infrastructure.

In his policy speech, he offered a new tax break to help hard working people reduce their cost of child care “by allowing parents to fully deduct [such] spending from their taxes.” Trump even gave this push a personal touch, saying his daughter Ivanka urged him to provide a helping hand to working parents because “she feels so strongly about this.” Before you tear up over their show of dad and daughter working-class empathy, however, note that 70% of American households don’t make enough to warrant itemizing tax deductions. Thus, the big majority of Americans that are most in need of childcare help get nothing from Trump’s melodramatic gesture. Once again, his generosity is for his own elite class, for the tax benefits would flow uphill to wealthy families like his who can purchase the platinum packages of care for their children.

What we have here is the same old failed, establishmentarian, economic elitist hokum that Republicans have been peddling for decades, only bigger and more extreme. Rhetoric aside, the reality of Trump’s plan is to replace Ronald Reagan’s trickle-down theory with his own arrogant, anti-worker scheme of tinkle-down economics. As an early 19th Century labor leader noted, “Figures don’t lie, but liars do figure.” That fits The Donald perfectly. – *Jim Hightower*

Populist Insurgency Ratcheting Up

What an amazing Democratic primary season it was! And we now have this happy result: WE WON!

“We” being the millions of young people, mad-as-hell working stiff, independents, deep-rooted progressives, and other “outsiders” who felt The Bern and forged a new, game-changing, populist force of, by, and for grassroots Americans. True, this progressive-populist coalition did not win the White House on its first go ‘round behind the feisty Sanders insurgency [which the mug political establishment had literally laughed at when he began his run]. But they are not laughing now, for even they can see the outsider revolt against the power elites won something even more momentous than the 2016 election: The future.

Back in April 2015, when the blunt, democratic socialist from Vermont issued a call for disenfranchised voters to join him, not merely in a campaign for the

presidency, but in a long-term movement to “revitalize American democracy so that government works for all of us,” even his more optimistic backers couldn’t have dreamed the movement would come so far so quickly. Let’s reflect on some fundamental changes this progressive uprising has achieved in the past 15 months:

- It yanked the national debate out of the hands of the Washington and corporate elites: both devoted for more than 30 years to rigging all the rules to further enrich the 1 percenters at the expense of everyone else – and proved that future success requires Democrats to abandon their effete namby-pambyism and embrace the vision, message, and issues of unabashed populism.

- It revived true bottom-up campaigning through innovative social media outreach, the empowerment of hundreds of thousands of engaged supporters and volunteers, instantaneous mass communication via cell phones, and turning people out by *turning them on*: by finally addressing inequality head-on and proposing bold policies that appeal directly to the workaday majority’s interests.

- It lifted from the political scrap heap up to the top of our national discourse the concerns of middle- and low-income families: creating good, middle-class jobs through a national program of infrastructure repair and development of the green economy; enacting a \$15 minimum wage; removing crushing education debt from the backs of students; coping with the imminent crisis of climate change; repealing the Supreme Court’s democracy-destroying Citizens United

edict; implementing pay equity for women; stopping the war machine’s constant adventurism; expanding Social Security; providing Medicare for all; halting the unjust mass incarceration of African Americans and Latinos; defunding the disastrous drug war; demilitarizing our police forces; replenishing our public treasury by taxing Wall Street speculators; and generally restoring economic fairness, social justice, and equal opportunity for all as central purposes of public policy.

- It raised some \$229 million in more than eight million small donations [averaging only \$27 each], including millions from low-income people who sent in \$5 or even \$1, thus debunking the myth that Democrats can only be competitive by joining Republicans in taking corrupting big money from corporations and setting up “dark money” SuperPACs.

More importantly, the Bernie movement created a hopeful, formidable and growing populist political channel that is both insistently democratic and independent of the Democratic Party.

This state-based, national network of Berniecrats will keep building its connections, pushing its agenda; and backing populist candidates in the House, Senate and other races this fall.

Then, on to next year’s campaigns for mayor, city council, etc., which will be charged by the 20,000 Sanders supporters who have, according to Bernie, signed up to get info on running. Then on to the 2018 midterm congressional elections. And then to the 2020 presidential campaign. Onward! – *Jim Hightower*

Pay For Play? Scandal Is Judicial Watch Misleading Gullible Media

BY JOE CONASON

Listening to the national media over the past few weeks, many Americans may now believe that the Clinton Foundation was set up as a “pay to play” scheme for Hillary Clinton to squeeze millions of dollars from wealthy foreigners and rich Americans. According to this theory, popularized by a lavishly funded right-wing organization called Judicial Watch, the former secretary of state would only deal with people and governments that had donated big money to her husband’s foundation.

But that story is itself a fraudulent scam, perpetrated by Judicial Watch with misleading information fed to gullible, lazy Washington journalists.

Consider the tale of Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the crown prince of Bahrain, one of America’s primary allies in the Persian Gulf. While rummaging through thousands of Clinton’s emails, Judicial Watch discovered that the prince had requested a meeting with

the secretary of state in 2010, via Clinton Foundation executive Doug Band to Clinton’s aide Huma Abedin.

In a hysterical press release, Judicial Watch denounced this request as an outrageous example of unethical and possibly illegal behavior, saying, “By 2010, [the crown prince] had contributed \$32 million to CGI,” or the Clinton Global Initiative.

That damning narrative, usually condensed into “Bahraini prince gave \$32 million to Clinton Foundation,” appeared in news outlets across the country.

By leaving out the most important facts, which show there was no unethical conduct, Judicial Watch could confidently assume that gullible [or malicious] journalists would omit that crucial information as well. And of course, they did.

The simple fact is that not one cent of that \$32 million ever went into the bank accounts of the Clinton Global Initiative, The Clinton Foundation or any

member of the Clinton family. Every cent went instead toward the college education of Bahraini students, which was the purpose of the crown prince's "commitment." But as Judicial Watch itself has acknowledged, his commitment was announced at the very first Clinton Global Initiative meeting in Sept. 2005 – more than three years before President Obama asked Clinton to serve as secretary of state. Unless the crown prince was clairvoyant, he had no way of knowing that his 2005 CGI commitment would induce the nation's top diplomat to meet with him five years later.

So, the money didn't go to the foundation, and it was committed long before Clinton went to work in the State Department. That doesn't fit any sane definition of "pay to play." But it does reveal the deception behind those screaming press releases from Judicial Watch, an outfit whose claims deserve to be treated like anthrax by any journalist with integrity.

Unfortunately, many Washington reporters seem eager to repeat any accusation brandished against the Clintons, even from a dubious source, without rudimentary checking. Upon receipt of that dishonest press release from Judicial Watch, any reporter could have called the Clinton Foundation to learn the truth. Indeed, any reporter could have discovered the same facts by entering a few data points into a search engine like Google.

From the context of the emails quoted by Judicial Watch, it is obvious that Clinton was initially reluctant to meet with the crown prince on a particular day on short notice. Any reporter who believes that the secretary of state would simply refuse to see the head of state of one of America's principal allies in the Persian Gulf, whether he made a CGI commitment or not, is too stupid to write about foreign affairs.

Similar stories have emanated not only from Judicial Watch but also from the Associated Press and other outlets in recent days. And so far, all are similarly flawed, relying on the omission of essential facts and the emphasis of false narratives.

It is important to recall that when Obama asked Clinton to serve in his cabinet, she first resisted. When she agreed, her advisers and Obama's transition team negotiated a set of rules to govern her husband's philanthropic and business activities. With very few and minor exceptions, they adhered to those rules – and have continued to disclose all of the Clinton Foundation's donors long after she left government.

Unlike the Clinton Foundation, however, Judicial Watch doesn't disclose the names of the donors who provided almost \$30 million in 2014 to finance its ongoing harassment of the Clintons and their aides, which has continued for decades. Unlike the Clinton Foundation, which has saved millions of lives, Judicial Watch exploits its nonprofit status to advance the partisan objectives of its unnamed donors. And unlike the Clinton Foundation, which enjoys a four-star rating from the watchdog Charity Navigator, the "charitable" nonprofit Judicial Watch only gets two

stars because its operations are inscrutable and it spends an excessive percentage of its revenues on salaries and fundraising.

Perhaps it is time for someone in the media to investigate its conduct.

Faith

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

was not answered by violence, evil of one kind by evil of another. The Samaritan could have taken off after the thieves, Yosemite Sam-style, to avenge their offense, could have reported it to the police force of the time and just gone on his way or, for different reasons than the priest, passed by safely on the other side of the road with nothing more than a shake of the head and a "tsk-tsk, crime today."

What the Samaritan did was turn a crime scene into a neighborhood.

The genesis of Luke's story was a conversation the author depicted as having taken place between the Sage of Nazareth and a lawyer who wanted to know how he could be assured of eternal life – the term here meaning not a life that does not end but a life so full of meaning that one would wish it actually to last forever.

The Sage, not to be outdone by a lawyer, answered with a question of his own: "What does Torah say about that?" The lawyer cited Leviticus 19:18: Love your neighbor as yourself. He is praised for his knowledge. The barrister in retort – as I would have heard it – said: "Yeah? Well, just who is my neighbor?" Thus ensued the story of the crime committed on the road down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Why was not the Samaritan depicted as being grasped by fear when his eyes first fell on the injured man? Why did not Luke depict him as running away as fast as his feet could carry him, weapon at the ready to protect himself?

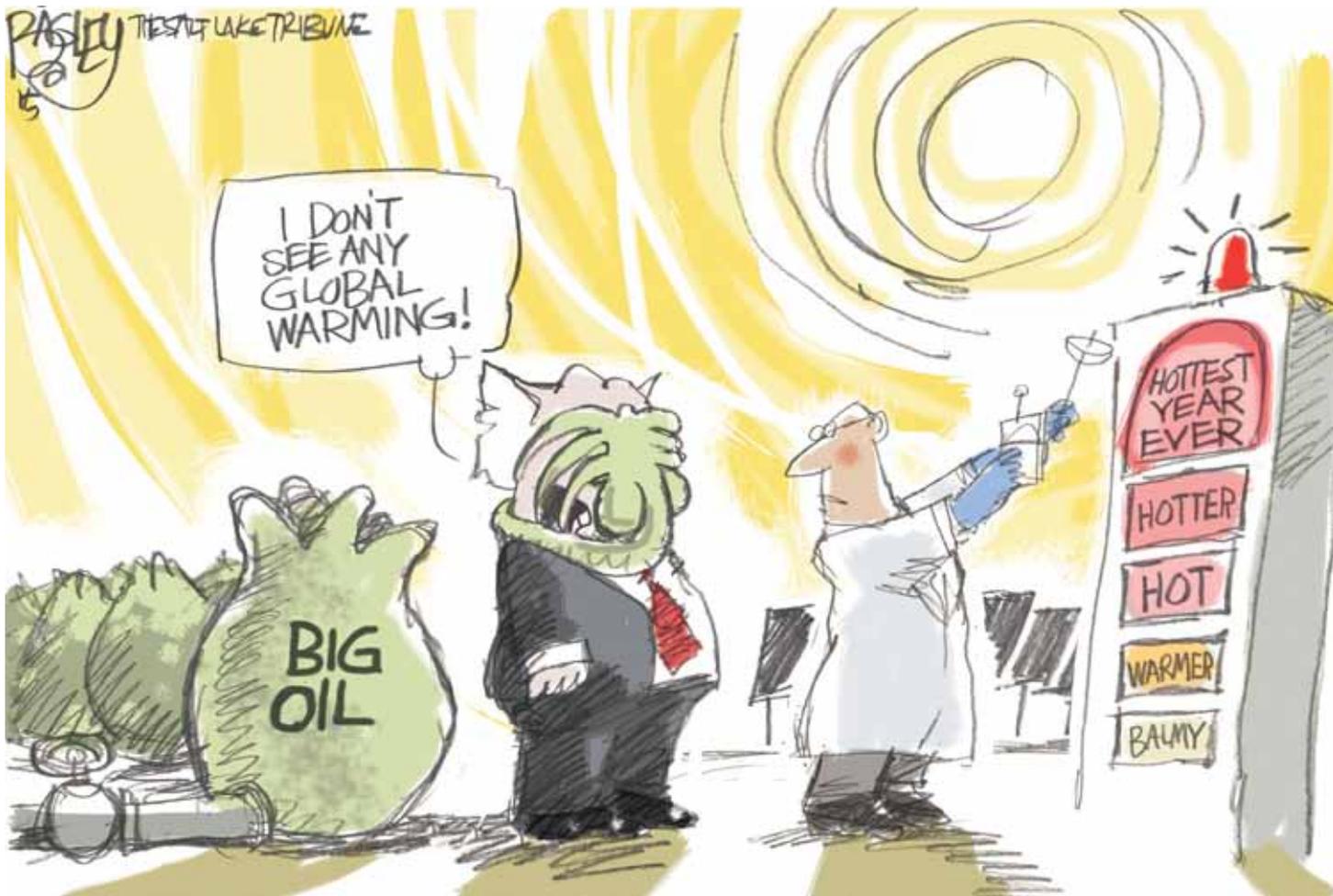
Answer: because he did not trade in fear. He traded in a kinetic hope that a badly beaten fellow human being could survive and should be helped to do so. The Samaritan chose not to return violence with violence and one kind of evil with another. His focus was on healing, not retribution, on turning a potential adversary into a neighbor.

Keep in mind that there is no mention of a deity in the story. It's all about human beings and about how large or small a neighborhood can be – large enough to bridge a centuries-long and bitter division of enemy states, and small enough that a person would stop at a crime scene to rescue the perishing, not allowing fear to intercede but hope to prevail.

Those of any faith and of no faith at all could do well to ponder this altogether human story before Nov. 8 when the lever is pulled or the bubble inked in.

It's what I've got.

Harry T. Cook is a Michigan-based Episcopal priest, journalist and author.



Evidence: Oil Industry Wrote Big Tobacco's Playbook, Then Used It To Lie About Climate Change

BY REYNARD LOKI

A recent analysis of more than 100 industry documents conducted by the Center for International Environmental Law [CIEL], a Washington, DC-based advocacy group, has revealed that the oil industry knew of the risks its business posed to the global climate decades before originally suspected.

It has also long been assumed that, in its efforts to deceive investors and the public about the negative impact its business has on the environment, Big Oil borrowed Big Tobacco's so-called tactical "playbook." But these documents indicate that infamous playbook appears to have actually originated within the oil industry itself.

If that is true, it would be highly significant – and

damning for Big Oil – because the tactics used by the tobacco industry to downplay the connection between smoking and cancer were eventually deemed to have violated federal racketeering laws by a federal court.

The ruling dashed efforts by Big Tobacco to find legal cover under the First Amendment, which just happens to be the same strategy that ExxonMobil and its GOP allies are currently using to defend the company against allegations of fraud.

If the playbook was, in fact, created by the oil and gas industry and then later used by ExxonMobil, it ruins the company's argument of plausible deniability, making it highly likely that the company violated federal law.

This latest development is a major blow to Big Oil, which has been trying to rebuff comparisons to the tobacco industry. It also comes as a group of state attorneys general are pursuing an investigation into possible fraud committed by ExxonMobil.

The probe, which could ultimately extend to include other oil and gas companies, was launched in November by New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who has since been joined by 16 other state AGs in a historic national coalition seeking to find out if America's largest oil company intentionally hid critical climate-related information about their future business from investors and the public.

Environmentalists and corporate accountability advocates have cheered the investigation, contending that ExxonMobil has engaged in a decades-long campaign of climate denial and deception, ultimately delaying action on climate change and putting the planet at risk.

"We began with three simple, related questions," says Carroll Muffett, president of CIEL, about the recently analyzed documents, which are housed at the tobacco industry document archive at the University of California-San Francisco medical center. "What did they know? When did they know it? And what did they do about it? What we found is that they knew a great deal, and they knew it much earlier and with greater certainty than anyone has recognized or that the industry has admitted."

SOWING DOUBTS ABOUT CLIMATE SCIENCE

"Big Oil created the organized apparatus of doubt," Muffett said. "It used the same playbook of misinformation, obfuscation and research laundered through front groups to attack science and sow uncertainty on lead, on smog, and in the early debates on climate change. Big Tobacco used and refined that playbook for decades in its fight to keep us smoking – just as Big Oil is using it now, again, to keep us burning fossil fuels."

To wit: Exxon's own Corporate Citizenship Report from last year revealed that the company is still funding climate denial groups.

The documents suggest that the tactics in question were developed by the Smoke and Fumes Committee, a group launched 70 years ago by the American Petroleum Institute, the national trade association that represents the U.S. fossil fuel industry, to study oil industry pollution and present its own spin to the public.

If that is the case, it appears those same tactics were likely co-opted by the tobacco industry, which was later found guilty of committing fraud following a racketeering lawsuit filed in 1999 by the Department of Justice. The documents reveals that the deceptive actions taken by the oil industry so many decades ago prevented the possibility of early action on climate change – action that may have prevented potentially millions of climate-related deaths across the globe.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking is responsible for

more than 480,000 deaths per year in the United States alone. The World Health Organization estimates that around six million people worldwide die from tobacco-related illnesses. Between 2030 and 2050, WHO estimates that climate change will cause approximately 250,000 deaths per year, from heat stress, malnutrition, malaria and diarrhea. That number does not include the deaths caused by climate-related natural disasters, which have more than tripled since the 1960s, resulting in over 60,000 deaths each year, mainly in developing countries.

Neva Rockefeller Goodwin, co-director of the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University, is also the great-granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller Sr., founder of the American oil giant Standard Oil Company, out of which ExxonMobil was born. Earlier this year, Goodwin decided to divest her shares of ExxonMobil stock and use the proceeds to fight climate change and climate denial. In an interview with AlterNet, she contrasted the impact of tobacco and fossil fuel:

In the large picture ... tobacco and fossil fuel emissions are quite different. Tobacco kills people one by one. Climate change will increasingly cause events like hurricanes that will destroy large swathes of property, kill numbers of people, make many homeless. While it can be argued that smoking tobacco is a matter of individual choice, the production and use of fossil fuels is more obviously a social issue. In the long run, producers of fossil fuels will have to lose. The only question is how much the people and ecologies of the world will lose before our economies cease to make the situation worse.

UN: CLIMATE CHANGE 'IRREVERSIBLE'

While the climate situation can certainly become worse, the actions of ExxonMobil and Big Oil have helped to put the planet on what many scientists are now saying is an unstoppable path. In 2014, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change offered a grim assessment: "Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts."

That has left environmentalists not only angry at the oil industry, but also wondering how the narrative might have been different had the industry been honest and open about its early findings.

"It's increasingly clear that the fossil fuel industry knew a lot more about the causes of climate change – and its effects – much earlier than anyone else," said Annie Leonard, the executive director of Greenpeace USA, about CIEL's findings. "It pains me to think how much better shape the planet and vulnerable communities could be in if the fossil fuel industry had taken positive action based on this knowledge instead of trying to profit from it."

Climate activist Bill McKibben, the founder of 350.org, has been a long-time critic of the oil and gas industry. "The ongoing revelations about the depth of

oil industry research into – and obfuscation of – the greatest crisis humans have ever faced are hard to read; thanks to them, we wasted vital time,” he said in a press statement.

In a CIEL video, Muffett explains how “the world’s most powerful industry used science, communications and consumer psychology to shape the public debate over climate change,” noting “it begins earlier, decades earlier than anyone recognized.” He points out that in 1968, API commissioned a report titled “Sources, Abundance, and Fate of Gaseous Atmospheric Pollutants,” which revealed rising levels of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas produced by the combustion of fossil fuel, in the atmosphere.

The report’s authors, Elmer Robinson and R.C. Robbins of the Stanford Research Institute, warned of significant climate risks posed by the continued use of fossil fuel.

“If the earth’s temperature increases significantly, a number of events might be expected to occur including the melting of the Antarctic ice cap, a rise in sea levels, warming of the oceans, and an increase in photosynthesis,” they wrote, adding, “there seems to be no doubt that the potential damage to our environment could be severe.”

Notably, Muffett said, is the fact that the report’s authors “recognized that the most important remaining uncertainties were technological: How would we respond and how would we modify our technology to reduce emissions?”

Now, nearly half a century later, the question becomes: Why did the oil industry hide this information from the public?

Of course, we know the answer to that question: Profits. Instead of responding responsibly to the dire warnings that came with this information by moving the nation’s energy portfolio and infrastructure to a low-carbon future, the oil industry kept on drilling, kept businesses and consumers burning their primary retail products, which continued to pollute the environment and damage the Earth’s climate.

70 YEARS OF DENIAL AND DECEPTION

The question for Schneiderman and his fellow state attorneys general is, did ExxonMobil, and possibly other oil companies, intentionally mislead investors, consumer and the public, hiding the damning scientific evidence that their own industry paid to discover?

With CIEL’s analysis of industry documents, it appears that Big Oil may be even guiltier than originally suspected, as the group traced the origins of the 1968 API report to a meeting of oil and gas industry executives in Los Angeles more than two decades earlier, in 1946.

That was the year API established the Smoke and Fumes Committee. “Faced with growing public concern about air pollution,” Muffett said, “the industry embarked on what would become a well-funded, carefully coordinated, multi-decade enterprise of funding scientific research and using that research to pro-

mote public skepticism of environmental regulations the industry considered hasty, costly and potentially unnecessary.”

One of the tactics used by the oil industry was to delay any climate action that might harm its business by sowing seeds of doubt. “The worst thing that can happen, in many instances, is the hasty passage of a law or laws for the control of a given air pollution situation,” wrote Vance Jenkins, executive secretary of the Smoke and Fumes Committee, in a 1954 trade journal article about smog pollution.

The ties between the oil and tobacco industries run deep. In the 1950s, Monroe J. Rathbone, the president and director of Standard Oil, sat on American Cancer Society’s committee on smoking and public policy. In 1968, Esso Research and Engineering Co., an affiliate of Standard Oil, filed a patent claim for a new type of cigarette filter, made out of polypropylene, a thermoplastic polymer that was first synthesized by Phillips Petroleum, an American Oil Co. In 1979, R.G Baker, the chair of British American Tobacco, the second largest tobacco company in the world, also sat on the board of Exxon, the world’s biggest publicly traded oil company. In the 1970s, R.J. Reynolds, America’s second-largest tobacco company, diversified into the energy business, acquiring American Independent Oil Co., Burmah Oil and Gas Co. and Burmah Oil Development, Inc.

In a CIEL video, Muffett explains the key events that reveal the oil industry didn’t just borrow the tobacco industry’s playbook, but was actually behind behind it all along:

As evidence mounts of the oil industry’s decades-long campaign of climate deception and denial, Exxon and its allies assure us that oil is not the new tobacco. The 14 million documents at the Tobacco Archives prove Exxon right: Oil is not the new tobacco. But six decades ago, tobacco was the new oil. In December 1953, tobacco executives met in a New York hotel room to hatch a plan to confront the rising tide of science linking smoking with cancer. To help craft that plan, tobacco turned to PR firm Hill and Knowlton. Hill and Knowlton, in turn, drew on its long expertise supporting the oil industry. Richard Darrow, the principal architect of tobacco’s strategy, also represented Hill and Knowlton’s biggest oil company clients.

In the years that followed, the tobacco conspirators looked repeatedly to oil industry campaigns on smog, lead and other air pollutants for models, for resources and for people. They turned to Stanford Research Institute, a key player in the oil industry’s “Smoke and Fumes” effort to develop a suitcase-sized testing kit that would sample smoke without attracting attention. They turned to Truesdail Laboratories, which in 1958 was doing the earliest documented climate research for the American Petroleum Institute, and to a former Standard Oil executive who recommended an array of scientists for the tobacco industry’s scientific advisory board, nearly all with

proven links to the oil industry and many of whom would go on to work for tobacco.

Suffice it to say, CIEL's analysis has uncovered the deep and complex relationship between the oil and tobacco industries that goes back many decades, and continues to this day.

From advertising campaigns and marketing tactics to PR firms and scientists, the two industries have shared a wealth of information, strategies and human resources. The relationship was formed on mutual dependence, which consistently placed profits above public and environmental health.

As Muffett points out, "For Big Tobacco, gas stations were vital retail outlets. For Big Oil, cigarettes were their biggest retail product after gasoline."

"These documents are the tip of an evidentiary iceberg that demands further investigation," said Muffett. "Oil companies had an early opportunity to acknowledge climate science and climate risks, and to enable consumers to make informed choices. They chose a different path. The public deserves to know why."

THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

ExxonMobil and its allies on Capitol Hill – a coterie of GOP legislators who have received political contributions from the oil industry – have attempted to stop the AGs' fraud probe by claiming the investigation is a violation of the company's First Amendment rights.

In June, ExxonMobil filed a complaint in federal district court in Fort Worth against Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, who had subpoenaed the company under consumer and securities fraud statutes, in an effort to secure company records going back 40 years.

In its lawsuit, which is seeking an injunction to stop Healey's probe, ExxonMobil said Healey's investigation is "nothing more than a weak pretext for an unlawful exercise of government power to further political objectives," adding that the attorney general is "abusing the power of government [and] ... has deprived and will continue to deprive ExxonMobil of its rights under the United States Constitution."

Unfortunately for ExxonMobil, the First Amendment claim has already been discredited. In *United States vs Philip Morris Inc.*, a federal appeals court found that the First Amendment does not protect fraudulent statements.

Likewise, Healey's office has dismissed ExxonMobil's claims.

"For many months, ExxonMobil has engaged in an unprecedented effort to limit the ability of state attorneys general to investigate fraud and unfair business practices," said Cyndi Roy Gonzalez, Healey's communications director.

"Our investigation is based not on speculation but on inconsistencies about climate change in Exxon documents which have been made public," Gonzalez said, and echoing the tobacco lawsuit, added that "the First Amendment does not protect false and mislead-

ing statements in the marketplace. Exxon's assertion that we cannot investigate it because the company has not engaged in business here in Massachusetts is completely preposterous."

However, a similar battle between ExxonMobil and U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General Claude Walker ended in a ceasefire, as Walker agreed to withdraw a similar subpoena in exchange for ExxonMobil's withdrawal of its lawsuit against him. Walker's withdrawal hasn't been viewed as a setback for the ongoing probe, as legal experts contend that the primary battlefields will be Massachusetts and New York.

So far, Exxon is cooperating with New York's investigation and has already relinquished more than 700,000 pages of documents to Schneiderman's office.

But 100 or so recently analyzed documents may reveal the true origin of Big Tobacco's infamous playbook.

Reynard Loki is AlterNet's environment editor.

Priorities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

constituents, "Roll 'em and smoke 'em if you got 'em because now we can tax 'em."

Hmmm. There's an idea. If Gov. Mary Fallin ever were to call a special session, maybe our Okie Dopes in the Lege could agree to pass a dope tax to fund a teacher pay increase. And if they did it in the middle of the night, like they do their other important law-making, neither they nor the voters would notice.

One group would be asleep; the other rolling up an Aunt Mary in celebration of the first educator salary boost in a decade. Now that's a win-win-win situation ... so put it in your pipe and smoke it!

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



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Mythologizing Steering U.S. To False Dichotomy Of Theocracy, Secularism

FOUNDING FAITH

*How Our Founding Fathers Forged
A Radical New Approach To Religious Liberty*

By Steven Waldman

Random House Publishing Group

304 pages, \$17 [paperback]

BY JOHN WOOD

I discovered *Founding Faith* while at George Washington's Mount Vernon bookstore, since I'm a political science nerd I guess. I enjoyed Steven Waldman's book enough that when I opened it up to read the opening story, I momentarily forgot where I was.

Waldman, the founder and editor of BeliefNet and former Newsweek national correspondent, begins painting an unexpected picture of President Thomas Jefferson standing in front of his door at the White House in 1802. A carriage swiftly, unexpectedly drives in front of the door carrying a four-foot-long block of cheese, running more than 1½ feet high. Remarkably, it was milked by 900 cows and weighed more than 1,200 pounds. On the side of the cheese it read: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

This was a strange present, not only because it was from a Baptist minister, John Leland [think the Jerry Falwell of his day] of western Massachusetts, but also because Leland opposed Jefferson in his tumultuous and rather messy campaign two years prior.

In the campaign of 1800, Adam's side called Jefferson an atheist, Francophile, and devil. Jefferson won these evangelicals back, though. Waldman writes: "Jefferson became a hero to evangelicals – not despite his advocacy of separation of church and state, but because of it."

Baptists, unlike today, thought state-supported religion sullied the teachings of Jesus. They valued Jefferson's work to keep religion and government as far apart as possible.

My best guess is that Baptists were minorities at the time who felt the establishment clause kept the majority denominations in check. Today, the shoe is

on the other foot with the Baptists as the largest denomination in Oklahoma.

In our culture war, conservatives and liberals get religious history and what the founders thought absolutely wrong, Waldman says. He further points out that liberals think you have to be secular to be a scientist, but you don't. It's also not true the Founders were Deists, with a distant God receded from the scene.

They did, though, often have skepticism about the Bible and organized religion. But for the most part, they all commonly believed that God intervened in their lives.

Conservatives also get it wrong about the Founders. Waldman asserts that we are not a Christian Nation and we never were. Our culture wars, Waldman points out, distorted how we gained religious freedom, one of the greatest strengths in our history – our diversity.

For example, Waldman points to one of our most secular, reason-based Founders, Ben Franklin, who at the Constitutional Convention, was exasperated by the impasse between large and small states – known as the Connecticut Compromise.

A tired Franklin is said to have taken the stage and ask: "I wonder why we haven't thought of humbly appealing to the Father of Lights to illuminate our Understanding?" he said. "In the war, we appealed to Divine Providence and it worked. Our prayers were heard and answered."

Part of the lessons Waldman imparts to the reader is that it is hard to interpret what the Founders meant. They did not agree with each other, as they call it a "bundle of compromises." They got over impasse

by creating vague language in the Constitution, essentially “kicking the can” for future generations to grapple with. These founders were not gods, but politicians who counted votes.

Therefore, the intent of the founders is not helpful to us in a clear way. It was never meant to be.

Would Madison, the “father of the Constitution,” be proud of our current status with the separation of church and state?” Walden asks. He believes Madison would. He says Madison would be astonished to see, for example, that a Quaker, Baptist, Unitarian, Catholic, and Jehovah Witness have run as candidates for president.

I think it is interesting now that Donald Trump has “Let’s Make America Great Again” as his campaign slogan, but what does he mean?

Before the 1820s, the Bill of Rights only related to federal matters, so religious mixing of church and state flourished. For example, Walden says, several states – including New Hampshire and Georgia – taxed citizens regardless of their belief system to pay for churches and ministers. Only two states did not discriminate against outsider religions in terms of holding office, owning land, or working at a business. Not surprisingly, blasphemy was punished sometimes severely.

From what I can tell, several state-level theocracies were essentially running the show at this time. For the theocrat, times were rather “great,” but for the person who is for a wall of separation to protect minority denominations, like the Baptists, it was likely a segregation hell. It took hundreds of religious freedom-based court battles over the years to extend basic rights to a broad array of religious beliefs in America.

Madison really struggled with this battle brewing at the time. Madison found his nemesis in Patrick Henry – you know, the “give me liberty or death” guy. Henry, at the time, was governor of Virginia, which was established as an Anglican – or what we call Epis-

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copalians today – state. He urged George Washington to promote a new Bill of Rights that would promote religion.

However, Madison opposed Henry, creating instead an alliance with the evangelicals and Baptists.

Why would this division oc-

cur? It's partly because Madison thought that government intervention in religious activity – even for good – would eventually devolve in oppression. Madison knew that establishing a church can give a very few certain advantages, while the majority is rather marginalized

just because they hold a different belief system.

During this fight, Henry blocked Madison's Senate run by stacking the state Senate against him and then later tried also to block his running for the House. Henry also tried to block Madison by gerrymandering the district, but that didn't work, either. Henry finally recruited the soon-to-be fifth U.S. president – James Monroe, the tall war hero from a fine family – to oppose this rather sickly-looking, 100-pound nerd. Madison countered by promising the Baptists that if they backed him, the first thing he'd propose was a Bill of Rights, specifically with the freedom of religion in it. Madison won.

Walden takes you on a trip, nearly 230 years ago,

where you find that our mythologizing has taken us down two dangerous ideological paths – theocracy and secularism, a false dichotomy. It reminds me that we have to live together E Pluribus Unum, “From Many One.”

The Founders did not intend to secularize government; instead, they wanted religion to flourish – but only by its obvious separation and the government's explicit hand's off, because they could not agree on the path forward.

This is why we can't simply say: “This is what the Founders thought.”

John Wood is an associate professor of political science at the University of Central Oklahoma.

When Death Sneaks Up On The Young And Successful

WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR

By Paul Kalanithi

Random House Publishing Group

256 pages, \$25

BY FROMA HARROP

Stagnant wages, weight gain, in-laws staying too long. A canceled flight, a stolen bicycle, a flooded basement. Bounced checks, a cold sore, refrigerator on the fritz. Getting fired.

All irritating but also microscopic in the grand scheme of things – the grand scheme being our mortality, the fact that we're going to die. Busy, busy, focusing on to-do lists to propel ourselves toward fitness, social and career excellence. So tightly scheduled that the smallest glitch unravels the day.

Such was the world of Paul Kalanithi as he was finishing his intensive medical training at the age of 35. Kalanithi's professional rocket booster had just ignited. As he was about to lift off to a splendid future as a celebrated neurosurgeon, a terrifying CT scan shut it down. The scan showed the blots of late-stage lung cancer, his own.

Kalanithi found himself on another kind of countdown, the one marking months or years he had left. He spent much of that time – two years – writing a book about his dual experience as a doctor practiced in delivering terrible news and a patient on the receiving end. The result is a remarkable book, *When Breath Becomes Air*.

Some of you may have read this best-seller. Those who haven't might consider picking it up. This doesn't sound like a summer read, but while the topic is not light, Kalanithi's observations are revelatory. Sum-

mer is when many of us have the space to reflect and perhaps reorder priorities. To the young and hearty spared big-stuff crises, *When Breath Becomes Air* shrinks everyday anxieties down to size.

Their default is to assume they have 20, 40, 50 years left – and who's thinking that far ahead? People who've received dire diagnoses, or those close to them, know otherwise.

Kalanithi sweeps away the “you can get what you want” sunglow of self-help guides. But that also brings some relief. Squarely facing the certitude of death helps liberate one from wanting so much of so little consequence.

“Severe illness wasn't life-altering, it was life-shattering,” Kalanithi writes. “It felt less like an epiphany – a piercing burst of light, illuminating What Really Matters – and more like someone had just firebombed the path forward.”

Gone were the expected offers from elite medical institutions and a job that would have paid him six times what he was used to. Plans to have children became highly complicated. [With medical intervention, his wife was able to bear him a daughter shortly before he died.]

The expectation for amassing prizes and gratitude for saving sick peoples' lives had vanished. Instead, he would bounce from his own grief to hope to terror

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Observations

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Tax Foundation.

Policymakers and health experts here already fret about widespread food insecurity that affects an estimated 650,000 Oklahomans and about the quality of food being consumed – a worry heightened by the recent release of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey showing obesity jumped from 11% in 2003 to 17% in 2015.

It's past time for Oklahoma lawmakers to eliminate the grocery tax and overhaul current tax policies that all-too-often fail basic fairness tests.

Trump Factor

It's increasingly likely Oklahoma could be the only state to give a majority of its votes to Donald Trump. Shameful, yes. Cataclysmic, not necessarily.

You see, everywhere Oklahoma's Republican elite go these days, Trump and his demagogic musings are sure to follow – a huge public relations headache. Yet it's nothing compared to the political migraine Trump could give the state GOP Nov. 8.

The fact is, despite mid-summer polls showing Trump with a double-digit lead over Hillary Clinton, he could be a drag on down-ballot Republicans, particularly those seeking re-election to the statehouse.

One reason? Turnout.

It's plausible that a presidential contest featuring an unhinged GOP nominee and an unpopular [in Oklahoma] Democratic standard-bearer could further discourage an already apathetic electorate.

"I think there's going to be a downturn" in participation because both major party nominees have such high negatives, says Dr. John Wood, a University of Central Oklahoma associate professor of political science – perhaps down from a woeful 52.4% of registered voters in 2012 to as few as 48% this year.

He isn't just guessing. He points first to lagging voter registrations this year – a sure sign of unhappiness with the political landscape, in general, and the general election choices, in particular. And then to history: voter turnout in Oklahoma has declined for years, with the exception of 2008 when Barack Obama became the first African-American president.

Another reason Trump's presence atop the ticket could actually hurt GOP lawmakers seeking re-election: the anti-incumbent fever sweeping the land.

No doubt mad-as-hell Oklahomans will – at least in part – be venting when they back political newcomer Trump. The question is, will they vent down ballot?

If they do, it's bad news for Republicans. A late July, statewide Sooner Poll found widespread disgust for both the GOP-dominated Legislature and governor: Fallin's unfavorables at 54.5%, the Legislature at

52.8%.

Of course, voters are notorious for gritching about elected powers-that-be then voting to re-elect incumbents. But the old rules may not be applicable this year. See, Donald Trump, GOP nominee.

Even so, Trump's inane blabbering is certain to lead to lots of sleepless nights for incumbent Republicans between now and the general election.

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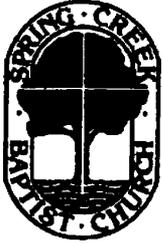
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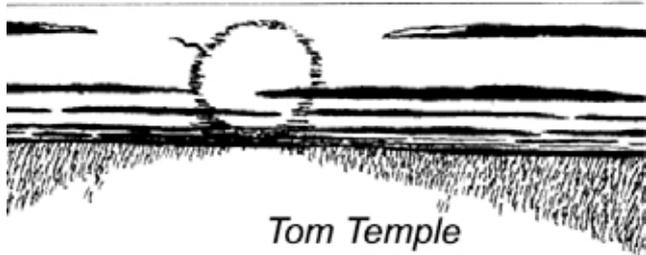
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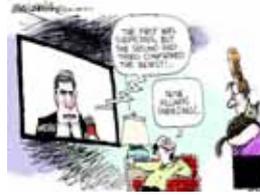
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Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Sen. Anastasia Pittman, a Seminole Nation member, was recently elected vice-chair of National Caucus of Native American State Legislators. Former state senator and Seminole Chief Kelly Haney established the group in 1992.

For the record: President Obama's visit with wounded service members at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center last month was his 28th to a military hospital, according to Mark Knoller, CBS White House correspondent.

Laurel: To Jo Pettigrew, Kathryn Turner and Kate Frank, newest members of Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame. Combined, they devoted more than 90 years to serving students.

The Daily Disappointment headlined an editorial on paucity of women lawmakers with this keen insight: *More female candidates will produce more female legislators.* Masters of the obvious!

Charles Koch calls the notion he'd support Hillary Clinton for president "blood libel" – an anti-Semitic term. The billionaire is living proof that just because you have lots of dollars doesn't mean you have lots of sense.

The Tulsa World refuses to endorse in presidential race. By contrast, the reliably conservative Dallas Morning News supports Hillary Clinton – first Democratic nominee to win the paper's backing since FDR.

Sen. Kyle Loveless' fight to reform civil asset forfeiture laws resulted in his dirty laundry exposed: an outstanding arrest warrant, suspended driver's license and court judgments. Political Hardball 101.

One reason you don't hear much talk these days of energy independence: U.S. producers shipped an average 501,000 barrels per day to 16 countries in first five months since 40-year export ban was lifted. – U.S. Energy Information Agency

Trump Legacy? Only one in five Millennials lean Republican – while half lean Democrat, according to USA Today/Rock The Vote poll. Now if they just vote in November ...

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

disposal techniques used in Oklahoma were shut down or severely curtailed many years ago.

The lubricious, lubricating lust for vast wealth binds and blinds its recipients to the equally vast harm dumped on Oklahoma's citizens. The Friends of Mary cannot escape their responsibility for the destruction.

Instead of escaping drought as the 1930's Joads did in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Okies of the 2020s will be escaping water undrinkable, poisoned by a witch's brew of fracking chemicals, and air unbreathable, made a weaponized gas by vented fumes of methane.

James Nimmo
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

On Sept. 3, about 7:00, a lot of Okies who normally sleep in on Saturdays didn't get to. We are pretty sure who is waking us up, and they, themselves, are beginning to admit it. Not all of them.

Oklahoma had about two quakes a year until about 2009 and then it really got worse each year. USGS says about 7.9 million of us in Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas have the same risks as California for earthquakes. The one we had on Sept. 3 was felt from Omaha to Houston. That is nearly 1,000 miles when driving.

Six buildings in the Pawnee nation were left uninhabitable, according to Gov. Mary Fallin. I like to call her Contrary Mary, but am considering Felling Fallin, Falling Fallin or Mix Master Mary. Mary's top industry for campaign contributions is the OIL AND GAS GUYS, and of those the top contributors are Chesapeake, Devon and Anadarko.

Mary and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission shut down 37 wells on Sept. 3 out of somewhere around 2,500. The guy leading the Corporation Commission for almost 30 years is Bob Anthony, a Republican who definitely is opposed to term limits, especially for himself. Then there are Todd Hiatt, who was term-limited out of the speaker's chair in the Oklahoma House, and Dana Murphy, who beat my friend, Jim Roth, but only by five points or so. In fact, the GOP runs the state. We are redder than a watermelon margarita, well shaken by fracturing and stirred by twisters.



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WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

The admitted leader in hydraulic fracturing – or as they like to say, “tight oil producing” – is, wait for it, Continental Resources. Guess who is the CEO, go on guess? He was one of the people who was not ashamed to speak at the GOP/Trump convention, Harold Hamm.

Hamm and Fallin may have shared a lift to the GOP convention where she was sucking up for the job Pence got.

After Continental, the leaders across the U.S. are Newfield, Devon, Chesapeake, Cimarex, Antero, St. Mary’s, XTO, Pablo, Petroquest and Range.

In 2014 we had 580 earthquakes of 3.0 or better and that was a 50% increase over 2013. In 2015 we had over 800. Between 2009 and August 14, 2016 we have had about 2,186 quakes of 3.0 or better, 71 4.0 or better and two greater than 5.0 and then we had another 5.6 on Sept. 3.

I have a suggestion for the next time they need to get rid of waste-water. They can take Mix Master Mary, Harold Hamm, Bob Anthony, Todd Hiett, Dana Murphy, throw in the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board, headed by a Democrat, Danny Morgan, who was the mayor of Prague where the 2011 5.6 hit, and every other oil executive and member of the Oklahoma Republican caucus, some of the Democratic caucus and line them all up and give all of them a waste-water enema.

Then you can line up the Oklahoma Congressional delegation and do the same. Only one of them even voted for aid to Oklahoma after the 2013 tornado. They all wanted offsets, but they never offset aid for the rest of us by reducing the corporate welfare to the

oil and gas industry.

The results from all of that high-colonic waste-water irrigation could fertilize the entire state of Oklahoma.

P.S. I am not happy living in the town with the most tornado hits inside the state with the most earthquakes.

Karen Webb
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Last month marked the 71st anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, thus an opportune time to reflect on the event that is credited with ending the Second World War in the Pacific.

The exact casualty figures will probably never be ascertained because countless people died from radioactive poisoning for many years after the actual bombing. 100,000 is the likely approximate figure, matching the best estimates we have resulting from the preceding Aug. 6, 1945 bombing of Hiroshima. That number is also very likely for the deaths caused by the fire bombing of Tokyo earlier in 1945. The “maiming of civilians” total is near impossible to determine.

A good question to ask is: “were these really military attacks or, more genuinely, acts of terrorism?” You be the judge.

With Respect For All of the War Dead and the Maimed on All Sides,

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Death

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

while being ground through the machinery of heroic medicine.

There were moments of comfort, though, at the hands of caring doctors and nurses – and he talks lovingly of them.

The point came when Kalanithi recognized that he would not be the special case, a statistic that similarly afflicted patients would look to for hope. He, who had everything to live for, was not going to see much more of life. That’s when he turned to the spiritual through religion.

It doesn’t have to be terminal illness that changes young people’s understanding of mortality. Anyone can die suddenly in a car accident or terrorist attack. Serious illness just gives one time to ponder it.

This may be Kalanithi’s most profound insight:

“I would have to learn to live in a different way, seeing death as an imposing itinerant visitor but knowing that even if I’m dying, until I actually die, I am still living.”

Wisdom that we – anesthetized by our imagined entitlement to long life – might all share.

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Oklahoma Friends Meetings (Quakers)

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

- Author unknown

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Michael Moore for President

If nominated, I will run. If elected, I will serve.

Excerpts from Michael Moore's essay in the April 6, 2015 edition of The Nation:

Should I decide to throw my ball cap into the ring, this is what I would propose to do if elected:

1. One charge cord for all electronic devices. Just like all electrical appliances have used the same two-prong cord for the past 100 years.

2. Lower the voting age to 16. A teenager who can die for her/his country at 18 should have a say in just who it is that will be sending them off to war.

3. If there is a call to invade another nation, first to be sent into combat must be the conscripted adult offspring of all members of Congress, the president and the president's cabinet, the children of the CEOs of the *Fortune 500*, all military contractors and the top media executives.

4. Free HBO for everyone.

5. Forgive all student debt. Go back to work study, grants, scholarships and minimal, interest-free loans. College in America, as in many other countries, should essentially be free.

6. I'll reduce the Pentagon's budget by 75%. That will pay for my ideas. We will still have the biggest militaries in the world and the ability to blow it up many times over – just not as many times as before.

7. All Americans will get the same free health plans that members of Congress have access to.

8. Universal health plan will include free mental and free dental. If Americans could get their teeth and head fixed when needed, the cost (and need) of seeing a medical doctor will decrease.

9. The wealthy will pay the same percentage in Social Security tax on their *entire* income as every middle-class person does. There would be enough money in the Social Security trust fund to last close to the

next century.

10. We will return to the income-tax rates that existed when Gerald Ford was president.

11. Bullet trains. 'Nuff said.

12. A ban on high-fructose corn syrup – cheap “poison” (lawyers made me insert the quote marks).

13. Anyone caught using their mobile device inside movie theater will be subjected to enhanced “rectal rehydration.”

14. Do what the Canadians do: a near ban on handguns and semi-automatic weapons. An eight-week election season. A return to the paper ballot. No pharmaceutical ads on TV. Strict banking and financial regulations. A refusal to eliminate civil liberties after the terrorists attack. Trade with Cuba. And reduce the number of downs in football to three.

15. All schools teaching civics class. Young people are going to vote at 16, they should know how it works.

16. All students learn cursive writing.

17. We will not back theocracies.

18. Four-week paid vacation.

19. Prisons owned and run by the public. No longer places of punishment but training and rehab centers. Nonviolent people will not be locked up. If they have stolen, they will make restitution. Yes, that means you, corporate criminals.

20. As Americans, we will seek to be kind – to each other, to the world, and to ourselves. Place education and enlightenment at the top of every agenda and elimination of ignorance as my worthy goal. Ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hate, and hate leads to violence.

This is no time for levity.

Vote for Hillary and straight Democratic ticket.

Get others lined up to vote (minimum of 3).

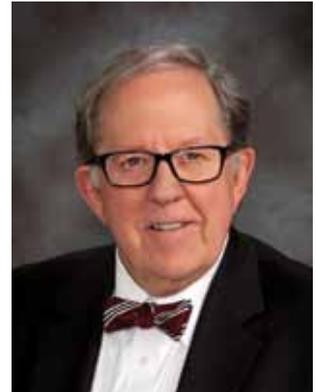
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