

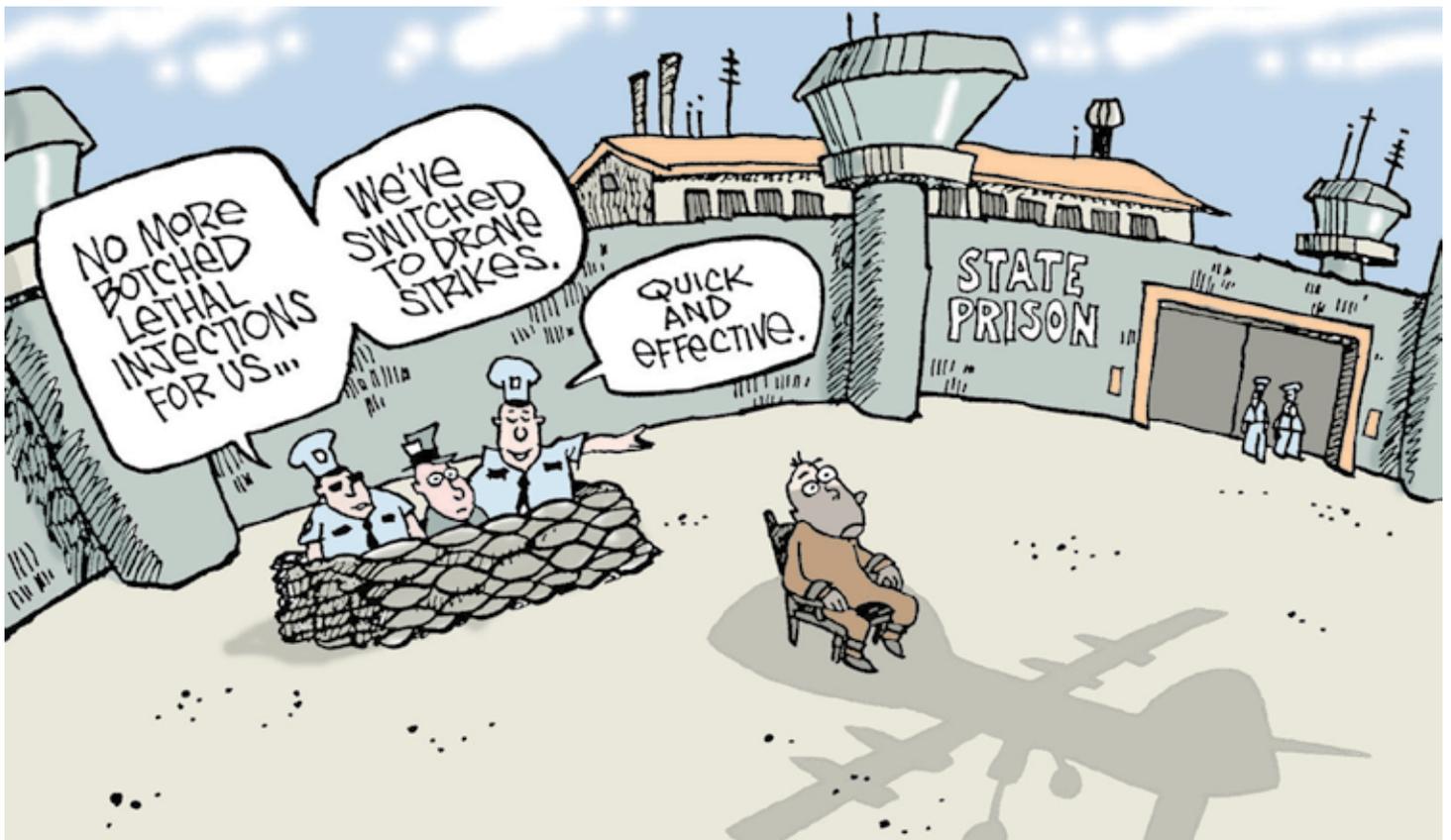
THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Death Penalty's Demise?

*As A Blue-Ribbon Panel Declares The System Broken,
A Renowned Oklahoma Attorney Makes Case For Abolition*



Special Report on Capital Punishment: Pages 12-18



THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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VOLUME 49, NO. 5

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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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Helen B. Troy [1932-2007]

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy [1933-2017]

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

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Observations

The Revolution

The murder of public education is occurring in plain sight. It's not like a crime of passion, sudden death wrought by a single bullet. Rather, it's a slow, tortuous execution – drip, drip, drip – carried out by elected leaders who profess their devotion to Oklahoma's schools.

The Capitol charade would be comical were it not so serious.

As teacher pay raise bills sailed through both houses last month – not worth the paper they're printed on because there is no money to pay for them – state officials notified local school boards of yet another funding cut: \$17.4 million, nearly \$87 million for the year.

As tightening budgets forced nearly one in five districts to cram instruction into four-day school weeks, higher-paying, out-of-state school districts openly wooed Oklahoma's best teachers.

And still, too many lawmakers refused to put all revenue-generating options on the budget negotiation table, lest they anger a handful of deep-pocketed political supporters who've cashed in on tax cuts and business incentives that drain state coffers of the resources necessary to fund vital services.

Sadly, the Republican supermajority hasn't paid a political price for its fiscal mismanagement and misplaced priorities, despite Capitol rallies and protests – even a "teacher caucus" slate of legislative candidates last year.

Believe it: There will come a tipping point that ignites Ron Burgundy-style fury in enough Oklahomans to yield change at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

Classroom crowding hasn't done it. Neither has losing great teachers to neighboring states. Or black-eye inflicting national studies that show Oklahoma scrapes the bottom-of-the-barrel in per pupil investment – something that should alarm anyone who cares about their children and grandchildren.

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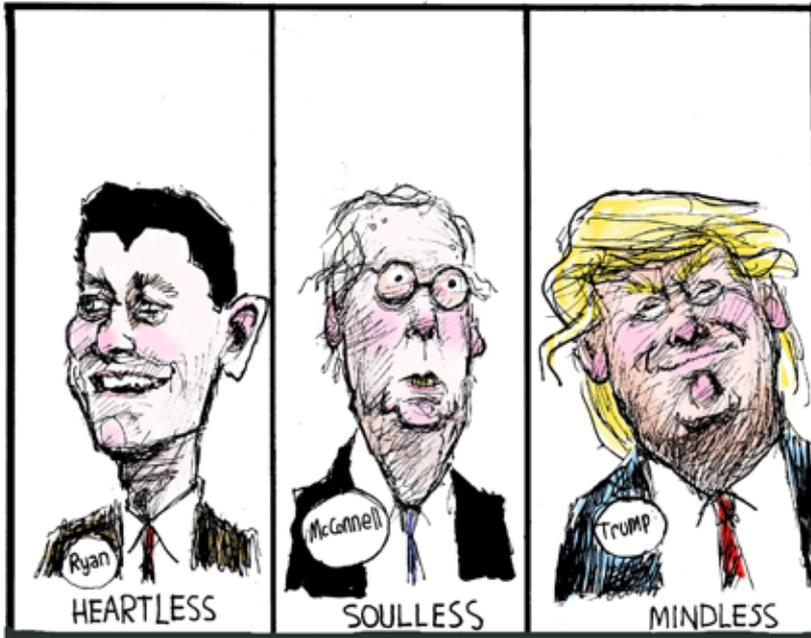
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Observerscope

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

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Laurel: To UCO Professor Terry Clark, retiring after 27 years of brilliantly preparing budding journalists for service as the public's watchdogs and of overseeing the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

Correction: In the April Observer, we misreported the percentage of Bernie Sanders' primary voters who cast general election ballots for Donald Trump, Jill Stein or Gary Johnson. As many as 20% are *estimated* to have voted Trump, third party or *stayed home*.

Dart: To the OK Bureau of Narcotics' Mark Woodard, deceitfully claiming in an Edmond Sun interview that overdoses and crime spiked after Colorado legalized marijuana. He's been prevaricating about cannabis for years.

State Finance Director Preston Doerflinger drains the Rainy Day Fund then asks AG Mike Hunter if it was legal for him to do so. Doerflinger's boss, Gov. Mary Fallin, just appointed Hunter to be AG. An "independent" opinion?

Laurel: To Rep. Brian Renegar, D-McAlester, deploying the Heimlich Maneuver to save a rancher choking on a piece of steak at an OK Association of Conservation Districts banquet. Renegar, a veterinarian, learned the maneuver while an undergraduate at Northeastern State.

Three scandal-induced Senate resignations in 20 months: Rick Brinkley, Ralph Shortey and now Kyle Loveless. Will evangelicals still embrace the GOP as the sanctity party?

Dart: To Slaughterville Rep. Bobby Cleveland, who proposes funding Donald Trump's preposterous border wall with asset forfeiture funds. He should spend his time on the state's finances, not on enabling Trump's xenophobia.

Never ceases to amaze that folks get riled about proposal to add state sales tax to OKC Thunder tickets yet remain passive about nation's lowest drilling taxes, strangling public ed and other vital services.

Laurel: To former Oklahoma GOP Congressman Mickey Edwards, unafraid in a New York Times op-ed to point out that Eddie Munster ... oops! ... Speaker Paul Ryan too often serves the White House not the U.S. House.

How bad are things at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.? Even the Oklahoman - whose chief editorial writer formerly shilled for House Republicans - smacked GOP majority with an editorial headlined, *Ideological sideshows need to end at Capitol*.

Dart: To virulently anti-abortion Rep. George Faught, a legislative one-trick pony if there ever was one. Thankfully the Senate killed HB 1549, destined to waste precious tax dollars on a sure-fire court loser.

Don't look now but the nation's most populous state, California, is seriously looking at moving its traditional June presidential primary to February, right after Iowa and New Hampshire. #ResistTrump

Laurel: To the late, great OKC Gridiron Foundation, closing out its books by awarding \$42,723.80 each to journalism programs at UCO, OSU and OU. The group's annual political spoof was considered must-see for more than 80 years.

Good news: The House derailed SB 393, latest effort to sneak creationism into state science curriculum. Someone who can speak slowly enough needs to explain the difference between science and religion to Sens. Josh Brecheen and Rob Standridge.

Dart: To U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin, R-Westville, filing a 2018 FEC declaration of candidacy - just in case he decides to break his three-terms-only pledge. Another four-alarm Tea Party phony.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Laurel: To longtime my friend Fran Morris for the apt story of "Post Tortoise" [April Observer]. And a salute to my non-related fellow Hamilton for sharing it!

Jeff Hamilton
Midwest City

Editor's Note: Jeff Hamilton served in the Oklahoma House from 1986-1994.

Editor, The Observer:

This octogenarian, yellow dog Democrat finds it increasingly difficult to muster a good amount of indignation. But you help me do so. I even get motivated to contact my elected representatives, such as they are – Gov. Mary, Mary; Inhofe, the entrenched; Lankford, the preacher.

The political pendulum has swung greatly from the 1950s to now. It gives more motivation for we liberal Dems to speak out because we need to be heard!

Keep on keepin' on.

Don Smith
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Just because a person is "opposed to abortion" doesn't neces-

sarily make him/her "pro-life."

In many cases a person's morality might be deeply lacking if all he/she wants is a child born, but not fed, nor educated, nor housed. Do you not want any tax money to go there? That's not "pro-life," that's just "pro-birth."

A much broader conversation on what the morality of "pro-life" means is sorely needed.

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

On a sidewalk in downtown Coweta, OK [population 10,000] there is a glass front cabinet with unlocked doors. Inside you see canned food, dried beans, etc. A sign says "Take what you need, Leave what you can."

This, in a state and nation where people elect politicians who ruthlessly cut funding for food stamps, health care and other services for the poor, so that millionaires don't have to pay taxes. A nation that spent \$30 million on missiles to attack a Syrian airport because children and adults had been killed with poison gas, while coldly ignoring hundreds of refugee children drowning at sea as they

try to escape being killed by war.

Yet, in this state and nation, there still is goodness in the hearts of a few who place food in a cabinet in Coweta. I wish a person with a smart phone would post a picture of that cabinet.

Brad Byers
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

If you've heard that the Democratic Party is on the way out in Oklahoma, let's review Democrats' success in special elections right here in our state.

In April 2015, voters elected former Democratic state Rep. Kevin Matthews to represent Senate District 11 in a special election. His departure left a vacancy in House District 73, which was filled by Democratic Rep. Regina Goodwin in another special election.

In September 2015, Rep. Cyndi Munson won a special election in House District 85, flipping that district to the Dems for the first time in 50 years. Rep. Munson won again in 2016.

J.J. Dossett became the first Democrat elected to Senate District 34 since 1990 in a January 2016 special election. He replaced Republican Sen. Rick Brinkley, who was convicted of stealing \$1.8 million from his employer to support his gambling habit and lavish lifestyle.

More special elections are on the way after two Republicans accused of wrong-doing resigned within 90 days of each other. News broke in December 2016 about Rep. Dan Kirby's sexual harassment charges and the \$44,500 settlement paid by taxpayers to his former assistant. Sen. Ralph Shortey, District 44, surrendered to authorities in March after police arrested him with marijuana and a male teen in a motel. Shortey was charged with child prostitution.

Apparently, Democrats do pretty well if voters have the facts, even

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



The Oklahoma Standard Just Ain't What It Used To Be

BY CAL HOBSON

On April 19, 1995 U.S. Army veteran Timothy McVeigh callously and maliciously parked a Ryder truck in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. He then lit the fuse to a huge bomb, ran down an alley like the coward he was and drove away in a hidden getaway vehicle. Seconds later, his fertilizer-fueled device exploded, taking the lives of 168 innocent men, women and children while also terribly injuring over 1,000 more. Until the Twin Towers tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, McVeigh's madness was the worst terrorist act in our nation's history.

From the rubble, destruction and deaths suffered that horrible day there soon developed a phrase

that has become known and respected worldwide – the Oklahoma Standard – and it is understood to be synonymous with excellence in all endeavors. Other Americans and, indeed, citizens around the globe admired our responses to a monstrous action that might have decimated lesser souls.

Sadly, there appears to be little motivation, energy or leadership from our current political class to extend TOS to other of their responsibilities, such as providing adequate funding for public education, access to health and mental health care, modern and functional infrastructure systems like roads, bridges, technology, public safety and communications. Facts – provable, hard and damning facts – clearly indicate

Oklahoma in almost every quality of life measurement is now one of the two or three *worst states* in which to work, raise a family, plan for retirement or even pay taxes that are remotely fair, logical or make any sense.

An endless stream of irrational, irresponsible and nonsensical proposals, which professional staff then must convert into laws, tumble unabated from the mouths of those who draw their ample pay checks while mostly just planning future campaigns. In reality these novices are just ideological brats trying their best to make a \$1 billion budget hole worse – a task thought to be impossible in the recent past.

Following are a few random examples of what masquerades today as lawmaking:

1. Rather than using their remaining, limited and precious time to concentrate on workable, meaningful solutions for our state's financial implosion, the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Budget [JCAB in Capitol slang] fiddles while Oklahoma burns. It is chaired by Rep. Leslie Osborn, R-Mustang, who in her freshman year proposed zeroing out state funding for public television. Numerous new or increased fees, assessments, tolls – any word you can think of except tax – are being applied to disparate activities and/or products without regard for fairness or common sense. Vending machine licenses have been increased by 33%, down from the obscene 75% first proposal; forensic tests doubled; sports tickets will have a new “charge” applied to those with nosebleed Thunder Loud City seats being hit the hardest while luxury box and floor accommodations are dribbled on the least. There are dozens more of these dumb-offs on the fast-track for implementation.

2. Meanwhile, corporate giveaways are passed in the name of economic development and job creation when they are nothing more than further ruination of the already shredded tax base. My nominee for worst ripoff of the year is HB 2131 which will toss a cool \$25 million dollars of your sales tax money into the pockets of new owners of First National Bank in downtown Oklahoma City. To earn the moola, the empty edifice, perhaps where your granny used to bank, will be designated as a tourist destination. Makes sense to me. If granny were still alive I'm sure she would want to go down there, recall happier days, and check on her

CD rates. Maybe even have lunch at Anna Maude's Cafeteria located just around the corner. Oops. Ms. Maude is dead, too, and the former dining establishment is a parking lot.

Footnote: The authors of this travesty happen to be the floor leaders in both the House and Senate, their names being Jon Echols and Greg Treat, and it's no accident both represent districts in OKC. As usual rural and Tulsa solons slept while this business welfare scheme smoothly sailed past them to the governor's desk for signature.

3. Speaking of money, millions more have been taken from the Department of Transportation's budget with the Republican author promising that it will all be fully restored when gasoline and diesel taxes are raised. However, the maker of this guarantee wasn't even born yet when such assessments were last bumped up three cents per gallon because that was exactly 40 years ago in 1987.

4. Unlike robber Willie Sutton, who knew where the money was, our budget writers, resembling the clueless Inspector Clouseau, couldn't find any serious dough to deal with the deficit if sealed for a week in a bank vault. Why? Because, unlike Willie, they don't want to. Only by restoring some, just *some*, of the foolish, short-sighted and economically counter-productive tax reductions over the last seven years can our version of the Three Blind Mice regain even a semblance of public services found in other states.

But they probably won't. More likely what they will do is this: Cobble together about \$53 million from currently unknown sources, earmark it for a \$1,000 teacher pay raise, declare Job No. 1 done and go home by the last Friday of this month.

And for the umpteenth time in a row, our Me, First crowd will win the unwanted but highly deserved Helen Keller Trophy bestowed on those who can see but won't look, hear but not listen and behave toward all with malice and meanness.

I know these words are harsh and certainly don't apply to all at the Capitol. But for those they do properly characterize, my commentary about them isn't as remotely damaging or hurtful as their repetitive and negative policies have been to hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens.

In closing, the only folks deserving more disdain than our Republican legislators are the know-nothings who repeatedly re-elect these leaderless layabouts. However, unlike truly insane people, who keep doing the same thing expecting different results, those voters by now *know* exactly what they are going to get.

Which, for me, and probably many of you, finally and fully answers the age old question: Why is Oklahoma the way it is?

Because a large majority of the plebiscite want it to be.

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

Deborah Astley

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Putting State's Future Ahead Of Self-Interest

BY MICKEY THOMPSON

I ran the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association [OIPA] for 15 years. I was the lead lobbyist for Oklahoma independent producers at the state and national levels for more than 20 years. Today, I implore the leadership of the Oklahoma oil and natural gas industry to reconsider its opposition to restoring the gross production tax.

I understand the OIPA's position in favor of maintaining the special tax provisions now in place, but today I believe their rationale is self-centered and misguided. I helped invent their arguments – in the mid-'90s! That was in a much different time both for our state and its most vital industry.

Today, with circumstances dramatically different, especially in terms of the state budget, I believe it's imperative that oil industry leaders re-examine, and abandon, their desire to preserve their special tax treatment.

The OIPA is correct in asserting that the oil industry already pays a disproportionate share of taxes in Oklahoma. The new leaders of the group contend that number is 25% of total state taxes collected.

I believe that number is outdated and a gross exaggeration. The current gross production tax represents somewhere between 3%-5% of total state tax revenues. Where do they get the other 20%? Maybe when oil was \$100-plus. And before thousands of Okies were laid off from oil and other related jobs in 2014-16. Maybe when virtually all production paid GPT at 7%.

But the biggest caveat to their tax rationalization is that state taxes aren't the only taxes that matter in this discussion. Shouldn't local property taxes be included in any calculation of total tax burden? Of course they should. But the OIPA's number carefully omits local taxes, perhaps because the oil industry is virtually exempt from ad valorem taxes in Oklahoma. How convenient.

Let me digress for a moment. The oil industry remains our most important industry. We need the active drillers to be profitable. We need those jobs. We need a healthy "oil patch." And I acknowledge that oil at \$50 a barrel and natural gas at \$3 per mcf create a challenging environment for our companies to make a profit. But the vast majority, large and small, is currently profitable.

We also need state government to function, especially our schools. Really, this debate should be about the tough questions related to balancing the interests of our most important industry while recog-

nizing current realities for funding our public education system and all of state government.

The reality is our state is in a crisis situation at the Capitol. Republicans have led a charge to reduce all sorts of tax sources. As it turns out, they have charged us off a cliff. Republicans rebuked Gov. Fallin's attempt to create a new, significant and sufficiently broad tax source. We are less than a month from adjournment and we are arguing over nickels and dimes. And anticipating even more draconian cuts.

It's time for leaders in both the private sector and public sector to lead. The Oklahoma oil industry once was full of real leaders, men and women who put the welfare of all Oklahomans ahead of their personal fortunes, men and women who focused on the importance of the success of Oklahoma's students over out-of-state stockholders.

Here is the crux of the matter related to Oklahoma's gross production tax: Is it accurate that restoring the GPT to 7% will have a chilling effect on drilling and jobs?

Sure, it will have some negative impact, but the overriding fact here is that these companies will still have the lowest overall tax rate in the nation even with the GPT at 7%.

So, if Oklahoma has the best geology, best regulations and best taxes, these oil folks aren't going to decide to drill elsewhere.

I'm betting our legislative leaders will do nothing about restoring any part of the GPT. They are ideologues who lack the vision and courage to solve these difficult tax issues. Where is the leadership in examining other ideas? For instance, we could levy a storage [environmental/security] fee on all oil in storage in Oklahoma. Perhaps it would be a transportation fee. Or maybe a property tax on the oil in storage. Think of all that oil in Cushing – 60 to 70 million barrels! Even a tiny levy could generate billions of dollars for schools, roads, and other services.

That's just one idea. There are many others, but our industry and our Legislature seem locked into a dogma that demonizes anything that raises revenue for state government. It is a disastrous path. I hope our leaders wake up before they do permanent damage to our state.

Oklahoma City resident Mickey Thompson served as president of the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association for 15 years and is former publisher of the Ada Evening News.

Fight For Science Ed Far From Finished

BY TRUDY STILLWELL WHITE

On March 31, we were thrilled when our seventh grade granddaughter was presented an award at the Oklahoma State Science and Engineering Fair at East Central University in Ada.

Our elation was short lived, however, for at the conclusion of the awards ceremony, Dr. Rahmona Thompson, professor of biology and master of ceremonies for the evening, tearfully announced that she was presiding over the last Oklahoma science fair. The Oklahoma State Legislature defunded all science and engineering competitions in the state and had no plans for reinstating funds in the future.

In 2018, she said, Oklahoma would be the only state in the union not to hold a state science fair.

The defunding had actually taken place in 2016, but until that moment, few even knew about it. It took an internet campaign, spurred by a Facebook post, for the information to come to the notice of the media and become common knowledge. The news angered many and galvanized a public outcry.

When the distressing information reached Dr. James Young, a retired teacher and dentist from Ardmore, he wrote a personal check to the State Department of Education for \$50,000 to fund the 2018 competition. His incredible generosity has given the Oklahoma regional and state science fairs a one-year reprieve.

This is not a permanent fix. What about the next year and the next? Private contributions, though generous and laudable, do not take the place of adequate support and budgeting by the state of Oklahoma. Thank you, Dr. Young, for your leadership and generosity; shame on the Oklahoma Legislature for making it necessary.

When asked by a constituent about the Legislature's defunding of science fairs, Rep. Kevin Calvey claimed in his written response that "K-12 education had record budget last year, the highest in state history. But instead of spending its money on raising teacher pay, the education establishment instead spent it on excessive administration and other waste." About waste, he wrote, "The state Department of Education spent \$18 million on 'swag' last year – awards, trophies, etc."

In relegating science fair awards to educational "swag," Rep. Calvey misunderstands the role and significance of science competitions. Science fair preparation is an important tool in the science curriculum if for no other reason than it teaches the scientific method, which students must understand to be educationally competitive and to become citizens not easily duped by "Fake [Science] News!"

In addition, science fairs provide tangible benefits

to students through scholarships, cash awards, and paths to national and international competitions and recognitions.

Science fair participation can also have intangible but powerful consequences in the lives of students. As a Bethany High School student, I received a third place award in the regional science fair. I cannot now remember the details of my investigation of the best diet for newly hatched chicks, but I will never forget the affirmation that it was OK to be a smart girl – no small thing in 1960s America. The cost of my third place ribbon, my educational "swag:" a few cents; the validation that accompanied it: priceless!

When the Oklahoma House recognized Dr. Young's gift on its website, Rep. Pat Ownbey reframed the Legislature's failure to create adequate revenue for education funding as a problem which provided an opportunity for civic giving. Rep. Ownbey said, "It is the generosity of spirit of individuals like Dr. Young that make Oklahoma such a great place to live and work. He saw a problem and instead of complaining, he decided he personally could do something to help."

I, too, applaud Dr. Young, but I also recognize that it was complaining that brought the "problem" to his attention!

Defunding science fairs was not the only threat to science education in Oklahoma. SB 393 struck at the very heart of a valid science curriculum, opening the door to teaching non-science ideas in the classroom. The bill would have allowed science teachers to teach anything they please, even ideas which conflict with the state's established standards for science education, while preventing responsible educational authorities from intervening [the National Center for Science Education].

Ironically known as "The Oklahoma Science Education Act," it was an egregious attempt by Sen. Josh Brecheen – his seventh since 2011 – to commandeer science instruction and insert his own personal beliefs about such issues as evolution and climate change.

David L. Evans, executive director of the National Science Teachers Association [NSTA] wrote, "As science teachers, it is our responsibility to provide students with quality science education that is not compromised by pseudoscience or by political influences."

As citizens, it is our duty to safeguard educators' ability to do so. Contrary to Rep. Ownbey's advice, we should complain, loudly and to the right people. The bill won Senate approval, but died in the House when a late April legislative deadline passed without it coming up for a vote.

It is certainly cause for celebration that the state

science fair has been saved for one year, and that Sen. Brecheen's bill was defeated, but the struggle for a quality science education for Oklahoma students rages on.

We cannot be distracted from these broader issues: the Oklahoma State Legislature woefully underfunds

education in general and repeatedly attacks science education in particular. We must not win the battle only to lose the war.

Career educator Trudy Stillwell White lives in Oklahoma City.

Why Working Families Saw Smaller Tax Refunds This Year

BY COURTNEY CULLISON

If you are one of the more than 300,000 Oklahoma households that claim the state Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC] you may have noticed that your tax refund is lower than it was last year, even if there was no change in your income. That's because the Oklahoma Legislature slashed the state EITC to help close last year's budget hole. The state EITC is no longer refundable in Oklahoma, so most people who qualify for the credit will no longer get the full benefit.

The EITC is a tax credit that encourages work by supplementing income from lower wage jobs. You must have earned income to claim the credit, and the amount of the credit depends on a family's earnings and number of children. In 2017, a family with one adult working full-time at minimum wage and two children can claim an earned income credit of \$5,572 on their federal tax return and a credit of \$278.60 [5% of the federal amount] on their Oklahoma tax return. The state EITC was adopted in Oklahoma in 2000 with strong bipartisan support. People all across the state in every legislative district benefit from it.

Families that claim the EITC pay most of their taxes through sales taxes and payroll taxes. Since they have low incomes, the EITC is often worth more than they owe in income taxes, so they receive refunds. Families use that money to pay for basic needs that cannot be easily covered with their monthly income [like home or car repairs], to pay down debt, or to save. The EITC and the tax refund it generates are a

critical part of the yearly financial plan for thousands of Oklahoma families.

So how did the EITC change in Oklahoma last year? The EITC is still available in Oklahoma, but it's no longer refundable. This means that if the credit is larger than the amount an individual owes in income taxes, the difference will no longer be refunded to them. This change impacted more than 200,000 low-income families across the state this year, with an average loss of \$91 per family. However, some families will see a much bigger loss. A single parent working full-time at minimum wage with two children lost \$279 this year because of this change. A married couple with two children and an income of \$20,000 lost \$260.

Taking money from Oklahoma families at the bottom of the income ladder was not the right way to address our budget crisis. We should be expanding programs that reward work – not limiting their benefit.

Though three different bills were introduced this session that would have restored the EITC's refundability in Oklahoma [HB 1311, HB 1474, and SB 434], none were given consideration by the Oklahoma Legislature. Making the EITC non-refundable was a mistake, and now those who will pay for it are the least able to afford it.

Courtney Cullison is a policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

'The Poor Even Help Arrange It'

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

Just seven days after the Stock Market Crash of 1929, Will Rogers famously reported, tongue in cheek, that the poor people who had lost their money should take great consolation that it had "fallen in the hands of Mr. Rockefeller, who will take care of it and see that it has a good home and never be allowed to wander around

unprotected again."

While Will's prognostications were mostly comprised of good humor and a disarming smile, they often ended with a barb aimed at wealth and privilege. The conclusion to his Oct. 31, 1929, remarks were as follows: "There is one rule that works in every calamity. Be it pestilence, war or famine, the rich get richer

and the poor get poorer. The poor even help arrange it.”

Nowhere are the effects of this rule more evident than in Oklahoma where the state’s tax policy has been driven by trickle down theorists whose single minded focus on corporate welfare has destroyed the state’s ability to educate its children, repair its roads and bridges, treat the mentally ill and pay essential state employees more than a subsistence wage.

Day in and day out, lobbyists battle for their corporate clients, lining the pockets of campaign treasurers with enough money to stave off political challengers.

The end game of the lobbyist is plain and simple: perpetually cut and eventually eliminate all corporate income taxes; establish corporate tax credits and incentives so lucrative that the state treasury becomes a debtor; eliminate the ability of local school boards to determine the means of educating their community’s children; and prevent municipalities from protecting the quality of life of its citizens.

A few years after the crash of ‘29, Will Rogers observed that Wall Street was being investigated. He reminded the American public that massive tax cuts that benefitted the wealthy didn’t just happen on their own: “You see where the Senate took that tax off the sales of stocks, didn’t you? Saved ‘em \$48,000,000.

Now why don’t somebody investigate the Senate and see what got them to get that tax removed? That would be a real investigation.”

Today, Oklahoma’s budget is in shambles because income taxes on the wealthy have been cut and gross production taxes on oil and gas companies have been slashed and hundreds of millions of dollars are being shuffled out the back door of the Oklahoma Tax Commission in the form of corporate welfare. Lobbyists have done their job well.

Paraphrasing Will Rogers, “Why don’t somebody investigate the Legislature and see what got them to get those taxes cut. That would be a real investigation.”

Over the next four weeks, there will be attempts to replace the lost revenue. Unfortunately, instead of reversing the income tax cuts and reversing the gross production tax cuts, tax proposals will unfairly target poorer Oklahomans and the proposals will be by the very lawmakers that poor Oklahomans elected.

Hence, the foresight of Will Rogers when he said, “The poor people even help arrange it.”

That resonates just like another one of Will’s anecdotes: “Ain’t it funny how many hundreds of thousands of soldiers we can recruit with nerve. But we can’t find one politician in a million with a backbone.” *David Perryman, a Chickasha Democrat, represents District 56 in the Oklahoma House.*

Higher Education Is Great Equalizer

BY JOY MCDANIEL

There’s a popular ad campaign that recognizes local citizens as landmarks of their communities, and in writing this piece about funding for higher education, I began to wonder what makes someone or something a landmark? Do landmarks change lives; do they give people of different backgrounds a common connection?

In defining a landmark as something or someone that is important and changes lives, I believe Murray State College is a landmark of historic proportions. And just like its sister institutions throughout the state, Murray State College is monumental in the lives of students and communities it serves.

Higher education is of tremendous importance here in rural, southern Oklahoma because it allows students to rewrite their own histories. These are the colleges and universities from which residents have come to expect access and achievement. And not just open-door policies, but actual open doors. These are landmarks of the most important kind.

In a recent opinion piece for the Tulsa World, State Chancellor of Higher Education Glen D. Johnson points out that current appropriations to higher education are below 2001 levels. That funding reality, he says, has set Oklahoma higher education back a generation. *A full generation!*

According to Wikipedia, the definition of a generation is “all the people born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively.” “The average period is generally considered to be about 30 years, during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children of their own.”

In those terms – or in any terms – the set back of an entire generation is a huge loss.

To illustrate what a 30-year set back looks like, let’s take minimum wage which would revert to \$3.35 per hour, paying employees a grand total of \$26.80 per eight-hour work day. At that rate, employees would be making \$536 per month after four 40-hour work weeks. At current levels of \$7.25 per hour, minimum-wage employees make \$1,160 in earnings during that same period. Most of us would push back against that kind of reduction in personal finances, so why aren’t we pushing back against the same sort of cuts for funding to higher education?

How can we accept losing a generation’s worth of progress? The short answer is that we cannot accept the unacceptable. We have no choice but to be bold, stand our ground and fight for the educated population Oklahoma deserves.

The need for an educated workforce in Oklahoma

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Oklahoma Contending For Misery Title

BY BOB BEARDEN

Oklahoma has made another list. This time is it the list for the most miserable or least happy of states. Oklahoma didn't come in last this time, but that isn't saying much since it came in next to last. Even though we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, we are 49th in poverty and 50th in education [or the lack thereof], so our misery index is high.

Why would we be so miserable? Well, that's easy to figure out. We are a state in which those who control the Legislature and all the statewide elected offices have all but crashed our state and placed it into the hole that it currently is in. We are among the worst states in the union in pay and benefits. We have slashed the state's social services several times in the past several years to the point where some social services are now pretty much non-existent. And it's not going to get any better anytime soon as we are again facing another massive shortfall in the state budget. In addition, the governor with the lowest approval rating of any Oklahoma governor in history and the lowest approval rating of any governor in the 50 states is set to essentially crash what government that is left.

There is a really quick fix to our problems in Oklahoma but Gov. Failure and her legislative henchpeople will not entertain even a modest raising of taxes on the wealthiest among us. Nor will they do like a lot of other oil rich states have done, which is to do away with tax cuts and oil subsidies or raise taxes on the oil industry to help cover much needed increases in social services and give our teachers and our schools desperately needed relief.

We have a minimum wage that is in the dumpster at \$7.25 [one of the lowest among all 50 states] and even though our poverty levels are rising each year Mary the Failure continues to wallow at the pigsty of big oil and big corporate welfare pigs, leaving the poorest among us to fend for ourselves while her oil and corporate buddies suck up the slop of tax cuts and tax breaks she and her cranky buddies in the state Legislature have provided them.

Teachers are fleeing our state in droves because they too are falling deeper into poverty and our children are suffering not only with a lack of educational possibilities, but one in four children are going to bed hungry every night because Mary the Failure and her buddy pigs in the corporate world are scared to death that their profits though still good aren't good enough for them to maintain their million-dollar binges and continue to pig out at the state welfare troughs.

My associate minister, Lori Walke, took the sorry collection of leaders in the state Legislature to task for their aiding and abetting of the corporate pigs

when she served as legislative chaplain and so angered them – speaking truth to power, detailing the error of their ways through her powerful use of the very scriptures they claim to follow – that many, cowards all, got up and walked out of their own chamber, because they couldn't take the heat.

Such is the reason we here in Oklahoma are now among the worst states in the union for our sorry treatment of the least among us. For our sorry and ill treatment of women. For the horrible way we dole out welfare to those who need it the least. We have truly become a state much like what Ronald Reagan, the guru of the far right now in charge of our state government, spoke of when he said, "Government takes from the poor and gives to the greedy!"

In Oklahoma, we have a governor and a group of right-wing nuts in charge of our government who practices just that. And they are once again set to ramp up the misery factor even higher with their abject failure to address the issue of budget funding in a manner that could or would solve our problem.

It's not that they are simply cowards but it's that they are abjectly so! And they individually and collectively seem to love the moniker of being Dumb and proud of it!

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

Teacher Fight Song

My first year of teaching in 1964, making the grand sum of \$3,800, I received a newsletter from OEA. In the letter was this: "Teachers Get 'Fight Song.'"

Ralph Lingenfelter, a Claremore service station owner and the father of Claremore High School Band Director Jerry Lingenfelter, wrote a "fight song" for Oklahoma Teachers, to be sung to the tune of "Oklahoma":

*Oklahoma, where the teachers need a good pay raise,
And you all must know that we will go*

Where they give their teachers more than praise.

*Oklahoma, where the teachers need a good pay raise,
Say we need more dough*

We're paid too low – as our living costs have gone so high.

*We know we belong to our jobs,
And the jobs we belong to are grand*

And when we say a yip-i-o-ee-ay;

*We're only saying – we need more pay Oklahoma
Oklahoma ... OK!*

It has not gotten any better – same song, second verse!
– Thanks to LaDonna Hunt for sharing

FROM THE COVER



The Case Against The Death Penalty

BY GARVIN ISAACS

It is time to abolish the death penalty. At no time in American history has this law been applied fairly and equally to people, regardless of race, color, creed, or corporate connections. Corporate criminals kill and go unprosecuted.

Go back to 1863 in western Oklahoma. Black Kettle, chief of the Cheyenne and wholly committed to representing his people and protecting their safety, was invited to Washington, DC. He travelled there with other Native Americans to meet President Abraham Lincoln. The president gave Black Kettle and his colleagues medals to wear, and the head of Indian Affairs, Colonel Greenwood of the United States Army, gave Black Kettle, at Lincoln's direction, a United States flag.

Chief Black Kettle was told as long as the flag flew above his camp, no soldiers would ever fire on him or his tribe. Chief Black Kettle was proud of his flag and it was mounted on the pole above his teepee.

With the flag flying above Black Kettle's teepee, a

A bipartisan, blue-ribbon panel reports Oklahoma's death penalty system is so flawed that it's "very likely" the state has executed an innocent, fueling new debate over whether a moratorium on state-sanctioned killing should be extended, perhaps even made permanent.

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great tragedy occurred.

It was Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27, 1868. Col. George Armstrong Custer and his troops stormed Black Kettle's Cheyenne Arapaho village on the Washita River in Beckham County near what is today Cheyenne, and killed an estimated 110 Native Americans, mostly women and children. The men in that camp had gone on a hunt to obtain food for the women and children. Custer was never court-martialed, prosecuted, or punished for the murders he committed illegally on Oklahoma soil.

President Lincoln's promise that as long as the U.S. flag flew above Black Kettle's camp they would never be attacked was broken by Custer's vicious action.

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Lincoln was assassinated on April 15, 1865, three years and seven months before Custer attacked Black Kettle. What would Lincoln have done to Custer had he continued to serve as president of the United States? Lincoln had changed our whole country as president. Slavery was abolished. Lincoln stood up for all people, including Native Americans and black people.

Fast forward to May 31, 1921, and the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa which at that time was called "Black Wall Street." What happened? The worst race riot in the history of the United States.

Buck Colbert Franklin was a black lawyer who lived in the Greenwood section and practiced law in Tulsa. He was the father of John Hope Franklin, who later became the distinguished black historian at Duke University. In the Tulsa race riot over 250 innocent people were killed by the Oklahoma National Guard and the Tulsa County sheriff. Buck Colbert Franklin wrote about being there in his autobiography, *My Life and an Era*.

After the riot he reopened his law office in a tent, and represented many black people, seeking justice for the injuries they suffered in the riot and its aftermath which included an attempt to keep black people from living in the Greenwood neighborhood. No one was ever prosecuted for murder.

Nobody is above the law – but in Oklahoma, Custer, his troops, the Oklahoma National Guard, and the Tulsa County Sheriff killed innocent people and there was no prosecution.

Today in Oklahoma and all over the United States, corporate criminals kill and go unprosecuted.

On Sept. 18, 2015, the Associated Press reported that General Motors agreed to pay \$900 million to "fend off criminal prosecution over the deadly ignition switch scandal." According to the article, the ignition switches were linked "to at least 169 deaths."

The Los Angeles Times reported that the Department of Justice found "certain supervisors and attorneys at the company in highly placed positions, had early knowledge of deadly defects with GM ignition switches, which cause crashes by suddenly shutting off moving vehicles. The supervisors chose to prioritize profits over safety the prosecutors allege."

The Wall Street Journal reported that U.S. District Judge Alison Nathan, in approving the deal, said, "If there's any doubt to the criminality of the conduct, that doubt

is put to rest today."

Despite all the evidence, no employees were charged.

According to the New York Times, the Justice Department agreed to defer prosecution of the company for three years if GM adheres to the agreement. This includes independent monitoring of its safety practices. If it adheres to them, the company can have its record wiped clean.

This is a disturbing example of the government allowing corporate America to buy its way out of killing people without facing the death penalty.

"They didn't tell the truth in the best way that they should have, to their regulators, to the public, about serious safety defects that risk life and limb," said U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of the Southern District of New York.

Still, Bharara defended the settlement, saying, "It has been a challenging case, for the agencies, for the prosecutors and for me. We've had to think long and hard about the appropriate resolution of this case."



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I read all of this after what happened in the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals in Richard Glossip's case. On Sept. 15, 2015, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals stayed Glossip's execution. He had not killed anyone but is alleged to have aided and abetted the murder of Barry Van Trease, the owner of a motel where Glossip worked.

When we consider the criminal culpability of defendants, we see the law is not applied fairly and equally. Compare Glossip with the federal motor vehicle safety compliance officers at General Motors, and other corporate criminals who are never prosecuted, even though their criminal culpability is no different from that of people who are executed.

APRIL 19, 1995

When Timothy McVeigh pulled in front of the Murrah Building, his truck loaded with fertilizer, he got out of the truck, lit the fuse, and left the scene. McVeigh knew that he would kill a large number of people at the Oklahoma City federal building, but he did not know any of the victims.

As he approached the Murrah building, McVeigh flashed back to the Feb. 28, 1993 shootout in which six Branch Davidians and four U.S. Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agents were killed. After a 50-day standoff between FBI agents and the Branch Davidians, the conflict ended on April 19, 1993 in a fire which destroyed the Davidians' headquarters. Seventy-four people were killed including women and children in the Branch Davidian compound and their leader, David Koresh.

As McVeigh walked back to his get-away car, he thought about the Branch Davidians and David Koresh.

On April 19, 1995, when the Murrah Building was bombed, 168 Oklahomans were killed. Among them were two of my friends, Clarence Wilson, a lawyer for HUD, and Mickey Maroney, a U.S. Secret Service agent. I still think about them often in the context of where we are in history.

McVeigh was indicted, tried, convicted, and executed for his crimes. McVeigh's criminal culpability amounted to knowing that he would kill people; however, it did not amount to his knowing the names of his victims or specifically intending to kill anyone. McVeigh killed in reaction to what had happened in Waco in 1993.

Where are we in history when we continue to execute people, but ignore corporations and their officers, directors, and agents who commit acts that kill hundreds of people, far more people than McVeigh killed?

As I write this article, I flash back to people in American history who were great leaders, and I think of Lincoln's comments at the end of the Gettysburg Address when he said, "That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this

nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

With Lincoln's admonition given at the end of the Civil War as a lawyer who stood up for people and became president of the United States, I see Lincoln as a great role model.

In 1858, and two years before he was elected president, Lincoln defended Duff Armstrong in a death penalty case. Duff was acquitted.

One of my role models, John Adams, who defended Captain Preston and British troops in several death penalty cases before he became president, had this to say about the experience:

The Part I took in Deference of Cptn. Preston and the Soldiers, procured me Anxiety, and Obloquy enough. It was, however, one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested Actions of my whole Life, and one of the best Pieces of Service I ever rendered my Country. Judgment of Death against those Soldiers would have been as foul a Stain upon this Country as the Executions of the Quakers or Witch-ers, anciently. As the Evidence was, the Verdict of the Jury was exactly right.

Death penalty cases are life-changing events for all of us. Lawyers who represent the accused in those cases are never the same after they have tried the case to a jury. After I defended Gene Leroy Hart, an innocent man who was falsely accused of murdering three Girl Scouts, and Michael Dennis Colby, another innocent man who was alleged to have started the New Mexico prison riot in which 33 inmates were killed, my life was changed. I have been able to understand what people go through who are accused of first-degree murder and face the death penalty. It is a great learning experience.

FIRESTONE'S FLAWED TIRES

Think back to Firestone Tire and Rubber Corp. On Aug. 9, 2000, Firestone recalled 6.5 million tires that had been cited in causing fatal accidents. On that day, at 8 a.m., I was driving on a vacation trip with my daughters Jennifer Isaacs and Eleanor Isaacs.

We stopped for breakfast at the McDonald's in Farmington, NM. I picked up a copy of the Farmington News and there on the front page was an article about the Firestone Tire recall. It scared me. I was driving a pickup with Firestone tires!

It shocked me and scared me because I had previously been involved in a products liability case against Subaru of America, and I had learned from that case about the recklessness of automobile manufacturers and how dangerous defectively designed automobiles were to the passengers.

I drove to a tire shop in Farmington, got rid of the Firestone tires, and had new tires put on my pickup. After we had new tires on the pickup, we drove to Monument Valley and the girls had fun taking pic-

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tures and enjoying the trip. My mind flashed back to the danger of the Firestone tires on our truck.

What would have happened had we not changed the tires or had not been notified by a newspaper article in the Farmington newspaper that Firestone was recalling their tires? Below is a picture of Eleanor photographing in Monument Valley, and Jennifer smiling at the camera.



As we drove through Monument Valley many of our driving moments were in remote areas, miles from hospitals, mechanics, and tire experts. In the newspaper article that I read the National Highway Traffic Safety Council that 46 people were killed as a result of the defective product. Later that number escalated off the chart.

I took the photograph below of the girls near Farmington, when we saw a rainbow. These pictures cause me to re-live the events in my mind and remember what happened and how dangerous and frightening it was to learn that Firestone tires had been recalled.



EXPLODING GAS TANKS

Fast forward 15 years. On Sept. 23, 2015, Associated Press writers Dee Ann Durbin and Geir Moulson trace the history of corporate murderers beginning in Ford Pinto deaths of 1971 when 27 people were killed in Ford Pinto explosions due to defective gas tanks.

Firestone tires were recalled in 2000 because the

tires would shred and blow out. In their article Durbin and Moulson report Firestone killed 271 people, 103 more than McVeigh killed, and injured 800 others, and that General Motors' faulty ignition switches have been linked to at least 169 deaths – one more than McVeigh killed.

When will we stop this corporate criminal misconduct which is murder in the first degree?

An investigation revealed Firestone's federal motor vehicle safety compliance officer had written to distributors stating it was cheaper to pay the damages in civil law suits than to recall the tires. What is the difference between his criminal culpability and Timothy McVeigh? McVeigh knew he would kill people. Firestone's compliance officer knew he would kill people. Why hasn't Firestone been indicted and prosecuted?

Corporate murderers are not above the law. Nobody is above the law. When will we apply the law fairly and impartially to corporate murderers just like we did with Timothy McVeigh? So many manufacturers are more concerned about profit and loss than the injuries and deaths caused by defective products.

Another example of corporate murder is the A.H. Robins Company which manufactured the Dalkon Shield, a female birth control device, an IUD which killed numerous women and their babies and injured many others.

In 1986, I was visiting my friend Mark Donatelli, a lawyer in Santa Fe whom I met when we were representing clients in death penalty cases after the 1982 New Mexico prison riot. On the coffee table in Donatelli's living room was a copy of Grand Street, a literary journal. I picked it up, looked in the index, and saw an article called Murder, Inc. by Robert Sherrill. I was fascinated with what Sherrill said about the death penalty and his observation that there were over 1,500 men and women on death row in America. Sherrill opined that they were sentenced to be executed, "Not because they were murderers, but because they were inefficient."

Sherrill's clearly stated opinion was that the death penalty should be abolished because it was not applied fairly across the United States. He said:

Had they used asbestos, mislabeled pharmaceutical drugs and devices, defective autos, and illegally used and illegally disposed chemicals, they could have killed, crippled, and tortured many thousands of people. And they could have done it without very much fuss.

Corporate criminals, as we all know, live charmed lives. Not until 1978 had a corporation ever been indicted for murder [Ford Motor Co., which was acquitted], and not until 1985 had corporate executives ever been brought to trial for murder because of the lethal mischief done by their company.

Sherrill goes on in his article to point out that there is no statute of limitations on murder charges, and

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that prosecutors have a duty to protect the public in cases such as the Ford Pinto and Dalkon Shield. At the time of his article, Ford Motor Co. sent the Pinto into circulation knowing its gas tank was poorly designed and that a rear-end collision could kill people.

What really drew me in was his knowledge and discussion of the Dalkon Shield, which infected thousands and caused an unknown number of deaths.

A.H. Robins was sued for never recalling the Dalkon Shield and never sending warnings to doctors about possible deadly side effects. Roger Tuttle, Oral Roberts University Law School faculty member, was a lawyer for A.H. Robins. When his bosses told Tuttle to search through company files and burn documents he thought might be used against them in future lawsuits, he refused to do so and took possession of the documents and kept them. He left the A.H. Robins Company, but continued to maintain possession of many of the incriminating documents.

In the 1970s, the A.H. Robins Company started distributing the Dalkon Shield. In June 1973, the Centers for Disease Control conducted a survey of 34,544 physicians to determine how many women had been hospitalized or died as a result of using the Dalkon Shield IUD in the previous six months. Based on the survey, the CDC estimated that 7,900 women had been hospitalized during this time period. When Tuttle finally decided to disclose the documents, everything changed and A.H. Robins Company was sued all over the country.

More than 300,000 lawsuits were filed against the A.H. Robins Company for distributing the device. In 1985, the company sought bankruptcy protection. It is believed that the Dalkon Shield IUD sold from 1970-74 caused at least 18 deaths and thousands of injuries.

After the A.H. Robins Company was sued in United States District Court for Minnesota, the case was assigned to United States District Judge Miles Lord.

I became acquainted with Judge Lord 20 years ago at the Trial Lawyers College. Judge Lord is one of the best people I have ever known. He was fair, impartial, and committed to upholding the law even against corporate criminals. For him, the A.H. Robins Co. case was a learning experience and an eye-opener.

In a courtroom confrontation Judge Lord had with three A.H. Robins defendants and E. Claiborne Robins, Jr., he read the following statement in open court:

Today as you sit here attempting once more to extricate yourselves from the legal consequences of your acts, none of you has faced up to the fact that more than 9,000 women [the figure two years ago] have made claims that they gave up part of their womanhood so that your company might prosper. It is alleged that others gave their lives so you might so prosper. And there stand behind them legions more who have been injured but who had not sought

relief in the courts of this land ...

If one poor young man were by some act of his – without authority or consent – to inflict such damage upon one woman, he would be jailed for a good portion of the rest of his life. And yet your company, without warning to women, invaded their bodies by the millions and caused them injuries by the thousands. And when the time came for these women to make their claims against your company, you attack their characters. You inquired into their sexual practices and into the identity of their sex partners. You exposed these women – and ruined families and reputations and careers – in order to intimidate those who would raise their voices against you. You introduced issues that had no relationship whatsoever to the fact that you planted in the bodies of these women instruments of death, of mutilation, of disease.

In the court hearing Judge Lord admitted that he did not have the power to make A.H. Robins Co. and officials recall the Dalkon Shield, but he begged them to do it on their own: “You’ve got lives out there, people, women, wives, moms, and some who will never be moms ... You are the corporate conscience. Please, in the name of humanity, lift your eyes above the bottom line.”

Why was A.H. Robins never prosecuted for murdering these women? The conduct of the officers, directors, and agents of A.H. Robins was no different than McVeigh’s. They knew the Dalkon Shield would cause infections and kill women, yet they did nothing about it.

When will we decide to stop seeking the death penalty against little people? We need to abolish the death penalty. It would save millions of dollars for the state of Oklahoma every year and would uphold the principle that nobody is above the law, and that the law should be applied fairly and equally.

It is time for lawyers and people to stand up for the constitutional rights of Due Process and Equal Protection of the Law for everyone, regardless of whether the defendant is a corporate entity or a human being.

What would Lincoln do if he were president today?

What would Lincoln have done when Black Kettle and 110 women and children were murdered by Custer?

What would Lincoln have done when 250 innocent black people were murdered in the Greenwood section of Tulsa in 1921?

Lincoln would not have excused the murder of 250 black people in the Greenwood section of Tulsa. If Lincoln had been president he would have demanded prosecution of these murderers. Lincoln would not have excused Custer and his troops who murdered Black Kettle and the Cheyenne Arapaho women and children. Military justice required that Custer be court-martialed. It never happened. No leadership.

We need to all stand up as lawyers and educate the public in the duty and responsibility of the Judicial Branch of government. We are officers of the court and required to follow the law.

Leo Tolstoy once said that Lincoln was the greatest leader who ever lived. Lincoln speaks to us from the grave. Let us rally and meet the standards of the greatest leader who ever lived – Abraham Lincoln.

I rest my case!

Former Oklahoma Bar Association Garvin Isaacs has practiced law in Oklahoma and New Mexico for decades. An Apache native, former TCU basketball standout, and OCU Law grad, he is an ex-prosecutor and public defender who in 1993 helped Gerry Spence launch the Trial Lawyers College, which has trained trial lawyers from across the U.S.

Death Penalty Review Details Broken System

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

For at least a half century, the Oklahoma Standard was unequivocally tough on crime. Lock 'em up, throw away the key. Three strikes, you're out.

The inmate population skyrocketed. So did the number of executions: 112 between 1990 and 2015, nearly 30 percent more than in the state's first 83 years.

Which makes last month's report from the Oklahoma Death Penalty Review Commission all the more remarkable.

After spending a year studying every aspect from arrest to execution, the blue ribbon, bipartisan panel declared the state's capital punishment system is broken and urged a moratorium on executions be extended indefinitely.

Coupled with strong voter support last November for two criminal justice reform initiatives and legislative action this spring on proposals from Gov. Mary Fallin's task force, the commission's report reflects a new, still-evolving Oklahoma Standard on law-breaking and punishment: Smarter, fairer, less knee-jerk punitive.

Regrettably, the panel, led by former Gov. Brad Henry, former Appeals Court Judge Reta Strubhar and former U.S. Magistrate Judge Andy Lester, did not

urge abolition of the death penalty, despite conceding it's entirely likely Oklahoma has executed innocents.

But let's not miss the significance of this moment. Until the state botched Clayton Lockett's execution in April 2014 then put a moratorium on lethal injections after Charles Warner's in January 2015, the state's powers-that-be were near-unanimous in their support of the death penalty.

There were vocal opponents, to be sure. The Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty works tirelessly to end state-sanctioned killing. So does its current chair, former state Sen. Connie Johnson, who views capital punishment through the prism of a victim's family: Her baby brother John Kevin was murdered in 1981.

Still, the state's loudest voices demanded vengeance. And state policymakers heeded their calls, despite mounting evidence the criminal justice system was anything but foolproof – 158 death row inmates exonerated nationally so far, including 10 in Oklahoma, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

The Oklahoma Death Penalty Review Commission sharpened the public's focus on the system's flaws – Henry, in particular, conceding it is “very likely” the state already has executed someone wrongfully convicted.

We'll likely never know, of course, whether it actually happened. But just the fact it might have – and still could – ought to give sleepless nights to all clear-eyed, fair-minded Oklahomans.

After all, there's no reversing lethal injection. No release from prison. No cash settlement to assuage our collective guilt for wrongful punishment.

The review panel's 300-page report detailed myriad flaws in Oklahoma's death penalty system – you can read the entire report at okdeathpenaltyreview.org/the-report/ – including serious underfunding of essentials for a fair trial like public defenders, defense investigators, and forensic research.

“They are just overwhelmed with felony cases,” Henry said of the public defenders' office. “They don't have enough attorneys. They don't have the funding they need, especially in death penalty cases, to hire investigators, to hire experts.”

Oklahoma, he said, has “a decision to make: Do we want to pay for the death penalty? ... If you're not willing to pay for it, if you're not willing to do it right, you shouldn't be doing it.”

Former Sen. Johnson, a Democratic candidate for governor in 2018, hailed the panel's findings, saying they are “commendable and represent a step in the right direction for our state” – especially “in the aftermath of two gruesomely botched, high profile executions” resulting from “cavalier and politically driven attitudes about the drugs to be used.”

Oklahomans appear to be re-thinking the death

FROM THE COVER



penalty – its flaws increasingly evident as DNA leads to exonerations, as the state struggles to carry out lethal injections and as taxpayers become aware that it costs far more to execute an inmate than to carry out a life-without-parole sentence.

It is true, however, that three-fourths of respondents in a 2016 statewide SoonerPoll expressed support for the death penalty. It also is true that two-thirds of voters last fall endorsed a referendum enshrining capital punishment in the state Constitution.

Still, it's revealing that voters, in the same election, approved by wide margins the two criminal justice reform measures that would help end the decades of tough-on-crime policies that have proven costly and ineffective.

Moreover, in the same SoonerPoll, nearly 53% of respondents expressed willingness to abolish the death penalty in favor of life-without-parole, so long as convicts were required to forfeit all property and pay restitution to victims' families.

ACLU-Oklahoma Executive Director Ryan Kiesel, a former state representative, urged state policymakers to embrace the death penalty panel's recommendations as "a blueprint" to address "the failures of Oklahoma's entire criminal justice system, not just those in capital cases."

"... The report clearly outlines the many inherent and unavoidable problems that exist where the criminal justice system intersects with race, class, and gender," Kiesel said. "In the context of capital punishment, we believe these inherent prejudices make the application of the death penalty unavoidably arbitrary and discriminatory.

"The only immediately apparent deviation we would make from the commission's findings is that the moratorium on executions in the state of Oklahoma should not be indefinite; it should be permanent."

Not surprising, some are slow to recognize shifting public opinion. In fact, some lawmakers have done everything possible this session to undermine the will of the voters on criminal justice reform.

It took new Attorney General Mike Hunter less than 48 hours after the commission's report was unveiled to announce he not only opposes extending the moratorium, but also that he is taking steps to jump-start the execution conveyor belt.

Whether Hunter gets his wish or the death penalty panel's 46 recommendations are implemented, this much is certain: No one can guarantee – 100% – that Oklahoma will not execute an innocent.

That should be reason enough to end this draconian punishment.

Indigent Defense Needs \$1.5 Million To Avert Constitutional Crisis

BY RYAN GENTZLER

In recent weeks, the Legislature has scrambled to provide enough funding to hold agencies over until the end of the year: nearly \$35 million to DHS, and over \$700,000 to the Oklahoma Indigent Defense System [OIDS].

Though it's a relatively unknown and small agency, OIDS plays a critical role in the justice system, ensuring that people accused of crimes have the right to a "fair and speedy trial" as guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Oklahomans who are charged with crimes but can't afford an attorney to represent them are provided one by OIDS, either through a staff attorney or a contract with a private attorney [Tulsa and Oklahoma Counties have separate public defender offices which do not receive appropriations from the Legislature]. When these offices don't receive enough funding to fulfill their duties, they risk violating our constitutional right to representation.

OIDS has been inching toward insolvency for years, as the need for representation continues to grow while funding drops. This year, in order to avoid a legal crisis, the agency's budget must be returned at least to the barely-adequate level of funding provided at the beginning of FY 2016. That will require \$1.5 million more than what they got in FY 2017.

If the Legislature does not fund Oklahoma's constitutional duty to provide indigent defense, we risk a crisis like the one happening in New Orleans, where public defenders are refusing felony cases they can't represent properly and insisting that innocent clients were sent to prison for lack of representation.

Out of that crisis, Oklahoma could be forced to release thousands of defendants, innocent and guilty alike.

It wouldn't be the first time Oklahoma faced a crisis over indigent defense. In 2002, the OIDS was sued by the Kay County District Court for failing to provide an attorney for two defendants.

The agency argued that it did not have enough money to do so, and the Supreme Court ruled that the two defendants be released if they were not provided counsel. Ultimately, the court stepped in to hire

an attorney for the defendants, who were charged with drug crimes, assault and battery, and burglary.

Since that year, OIDS has seen their total caseload rise by nearly 50%, while their appropriations have dropped by almost 35%. Just between 2015 and 2016, the total number of cases they handled rose by 17%, mainly because overworked attorneys had to carry over cases from previous years. Last year, OIDS staff attorneys handled caseloads that were 2.6 times higher than national standards.

This year, the Legislature was able to avoid disaster again by providing emergency funding. But as lawmakers have instructed emergency agencies to prepare scenarios for cuts up to 14.5% this year, that may be even harder to accomplish.

More budget cuts could force Oklahoma to release thousands of defendants due to lack of representation. OIDS reported that 5% cuts could mean the release of 2,300 defendants, and 15% cuts could mean the release of up to 11,200 defendants in 21 counties.

Compared to other obligations, like funding education and health care, the price to bring OIDS up to a minimally adequate level of appropriations is relatively minor — about \$1.5 million to return to FY 2016 levels, according to Deputy Director Craig Sutter.

Fulfilling this request may not be easy in the state's dire financial straits, but the alternative is failing to perform a basic constitutional duty.

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

Read The Observer On-Line
www.okobserver.net

Oklahoma Friends Meetings (Quakers)

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

- Author unknown

MEETING FOR WORSHIP SCHEDULE AND CONTACTS

OKLAHOMA CITY: 333 SE 46th St, 73129. Worship Sunday evening at 7pm. FMI 405.632.7574
<http://www.rsaf-okc.com>

STILLWATER: Sunday morning. Call 405.372.4839

TULSA: Sunday afternoon. Call 918.743.6827

NORMAN: Sunday morning. Call 405.321.7971

KAIAMICHI WORSHIP GROUP (SE OK): Monthly. Call 918.569.4803.



Dear Governor: Please Veto Harmful Payday Loan Bill

BY JANET E. NEW

Dear Gov. Fallin:
On April 27, 2017 the Oklahoma Senate passed HB1913, the "Oklahoma Small Loan Act," by a vote of 28-16. This action following approval by the Oklahoma House of Representatives March 13, 2017 by a vote of 59-31. I had previously written to my senator, Kyle Loveless, and my representative, Chris Kannady, author of HB 1913, about my concerns. Though Rep. Kannady extended the courtesy of a reply, he did not specifically address the issues, subsequently voiced by many others, including the AARP, Catholic Charities, Oklahoma Women's Coalition, Oklahoma Conference of Churches, and Oklahoma Policy Institute. Additionally, there were statements and letters signed by over 100 clergy and various denominational leaders and several strong editorials opposing the predatory

lending practice of a 17% per month interest rate provided in the bill.

You often speak proudly of "The Oklahoma Standard," and that phrase represents the care we exhibit for Oklahomans who have experienced the devastating effects of disasters, but in a more general sense, it also represents the compassion and care we exhibit for fellow Oklahomans who are in need, sickness, or other adversity. It speaks to our values as human beings. What does it say about us if we codify a law that allows a branch of the financial services industry to charge Oklahomans a 17% per month interest rate on a small loan?

In years past, I've assisted family members and others with understanding the problems associated with high interest, "payday" loans and working their way through repayment to a better place. I'm con-

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cerned about the state of Oklahoma enabling this practice through legislation. I understand there are currently \$1,500 loans available at high, but more favorable interest rates than those sanctioned by this bill.

Certain senators defend HB1913 as a better alternative to tribal, off-shore or online lending practices. They point to Section 2. 6. [a-d] and Section 11. B. and C. as affording additional protections for the borrower by 1) limiting the principal amount to \$1,500 and the term to one-year; 2) establishing equal periodic payments; and 3) improving financial literacy by clearly revealing all loan terms and fees. These senators also point out that such a small loan would enable a “woman without the necessary savings, to replace an \$800 refrigerator using this small loan,” and that such an individual would “be protected” by loan limitations. These arguments are red herrings, designed to distract from the exorbitance of the interest rate – in this case, raising the price of the refrigerator from \$800 to a total repayment of \$1,924 – at an annualized interest rate of 204%!

How can codifying a usurious law like this ever meet the “Oklahoma Standard” of caring compassionately for the least fortunate of our Oklahoma neighbors? The businesses it rewards are the 650 loans companies not otherwise excluded from participation in the program under Section 3.C. of HB 1913.

These new, small loans will negatively impact people who are already insolvent and therefore captive to such financial alternatives – people with health needs and no insurance or people coming out of prison with significant fines, fees and other expenses. In short, should the state of Oklahoma [or any state] be in the business of enabling excessive gain by one sector of the financial services industry at the expense of the average Oklahoman. While Sen. [James] Leewright indicated the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau [CFPB] was considering the elimination of other payday loans, Sen. [Michael] Bergstrom informed the Senate that there was significant industry opposition to eliminating other payday loans. If other loans will continue to be available at higher but more reasonable rates, there is no compelling need for this new extortionate loan.

Additional concerns are also reflected in the pejorative comments appended to a Tulsa World article that appeared in March. In it, Rep. Kannady was quoted by Randy Krehbiel as saying, “I don’t like this type of loan any more than you do,” but went on to say the bill was an “an improvement on current law and better than sending desperate borrowers to unregulated loan sharks.” Even if some consider a 204% annualized interest rate better than other financial alternatives, it’s difficult to see how Oklahomans are well-served by this potential law.

Finally, though I urged Sen. Loveless, its House author, Rep. Kannady, and others in the Legislature to vote “No,” HB 1913 now comes to your desk for approval. It’s not surprising the bill passed by the margins it did in the House and Senate; the most positive note is that it drew bipartisan opposition. It’s difficult to see how this bill can possibly better the lives of Oklahomans, and I would respectfully urge its veto. Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Janet E. New lives in Oklahoma City.

How A Nuclear Event Impacts All Of Us

BY FANNIE PASCHALL BATES

Who will be hurt if Donald Trump drops a nuclear bomb on North Korea? South Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Alaska, the state of Washington, Oregon, California, the coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean, billions of fish, lobster, whales, dolphins and shrimp, the seaweed which millions of people depend on as part of their daily diet ...

Do you think Trump understands this? Who is telling him? Who is talking about it?

What would it take to treat millions of people to avoid additional exposure to nuclear fallout? What are the Centers for Disease Control doing? Are they helping us get prepared for such an event? Are they only preparing enough medication for our citizens? Wouldn’t we have a moral obligation to provide these medications to the exposed citizens of China, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia if we are the country who drops the bomb?

The pundits are talking as though one bomb dropped on North Korea would be an incident involving only North Korea and Donald Trump.

Does Trump think that killing millions of innocent people is going to take the attention off of his relationship with Putin? He is probably correct. We would all be so worried about avoiding exposure to nuclear fallout and obtaining safe food that we would not be thinking about Trump and Putin.

I am a 67-year-old teacher living in Texas. I have nightmares where Donald Trump is trying to choke me but I always fly away. Unfortunately, I cannot fly away from nuclear fallout or a food shortage or food

contamination or mass hysteria.

So what can we do? We can hold all the appropriate parties accountable now! The city, county and state health departments. Schools and universities. The CDC. City, county and state governments. Every government agency needs a citizens advisory board and needs to be listening to that board now. Everybody needs to be a part of the solution to this problem.

First, we must make Donald Trump aware of the huge impact that one nuclear bomb can have and, secondly, we must get prepared now.

“Duck and cover” isn’t the answer, folks.

Fannie Paschall Bates is a fourth generation Oklahoman currently living in Texas where she serves as Master Teacher at Dunjee International School including Women and Girls, a free school providing English classes and other educational services to Afghan people, both female and male, of all ages, no matter where they are currently living.

Preservation Or Destruction?

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

We have a choice: preserve or destroy, Vishnu or Siva. Which do we choose? Choose based on the whims of the moment or the direction that leads to a sustainable future, Shiva or Vishnu?

On April 26, in an unprecedented move, President Donald Trump ordered Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review two decades of national monument designations to determine the feasibility of opening more public lands to energy exploitation. He would increase our pursuit of fossil fuels and subject our national treasurers to drilling/mining.

It’s truly senseless to continue old practices of energy production when renewable energy is now cheaper than fossil fuels. Wind, solar, geothermal and tidal [renewable] energy is far less destructive to develop. Renewable energy [RE] produces little pollution, if any, to develop, particularly if associated with energy efficiency [Remember LBJ switching off lights or Jimmy in a sweater in the White House?]. So why destroy our national legacy when we no longer need vast quantities of oil and gas, or for that matter coal?

Often dubbed the nation’s “conservation president,” President Theodore Roosevelt did not consider our national resources inexhaustible, as many of his fellow citizens did. He wrote:

“We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation.”

President Roosevelt protected 230 million acres of public land through invoking of the 1906 American Antiquities Act. His legacy should not be destroyed by a reckless directive of President Trump.

This administration may lead to the destruction of our nation’s natural and cultural history in pursuit of dirty fossil fuels despite an abundance of cleaner renewables awaiting development.

President Roosevelt, the first president of the 1900s, a time of great expansion and development, had a vision to preserve our natural and cultural history, something to cherish and protect.

“It is also vandalism wantonly to destroy or to permit the destruction of what is beautiful in nature, whether it be a cliff, a forest, or a species of mammal or bird. Here in the United States we turn rivers and streams into sewers and dumping grounds, we pollute the air, we destroy forests, and exterminate fishes and mammals – not to speak of vulgarizing charming landscapes with hideous advertisements. But at last it looks as if our people were awakening.”

TR provided a counterbalance to those who would exploit the cultural/natural world for personal gain. When Congress fought his attempt to create a national park at the Grand Canyon, he used his executive power to protect it.

Unfortunately, President Trump is using the same executive power to destroy that reminder of our greatness. He fails to see the need to preserve some of our land, national parks and monuments. For example, he directs Secretary Zinke to review any national monument created since Jan. 1, 1996, that is at least 100,000 acres in a move he said would “end another egregious use of government power.”

Trump refers to the 1906 Antiquities Act as awarding the federal government unlimited power to lock up millions of acres of land and water as an abusive practice. Trump’s executive order creates a sweeping review which he predicts will “end these abuses and return control to ... the people of the United States.”

Note that this executive order could include areas designated not only by President Obama but also by the 42nd and 43rd presidents, i.e. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

This president would change the boundaries of a 1.35 million acre national monument Obama declared in Utah – Bears Ears. According to Trump, “I’ve spoken with many state and local leaders, a

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number of them here today, who care very much about preserving our land and who are gravely concerned about this massive federal land grab. And now we're going to free it up, which is what should have happened in the first place."

Trump's executive order calls on Zinke to consider "the requirement and original objectives" of the Antiquities Act. That would include reservations of land not exceeding "the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected."

Zinke says he will make a specific recommendation within 45 days. Bears Ears enjoys support from a broad coalition of environmentalists and tribes but it's opposed by every elected GOP official in Utah.

In a cautionary comment, John Gale, conservation director for the Montana-based Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, states: "Yet the administration's announcement – which seems to be spurred by anti-public lands members of Congress in Utah

– could create unintended consequences that jeopardize important fish and wildlife habitat on public lands and invite unproductive dialogues that distract us from enhancing management of our public lands and waters."

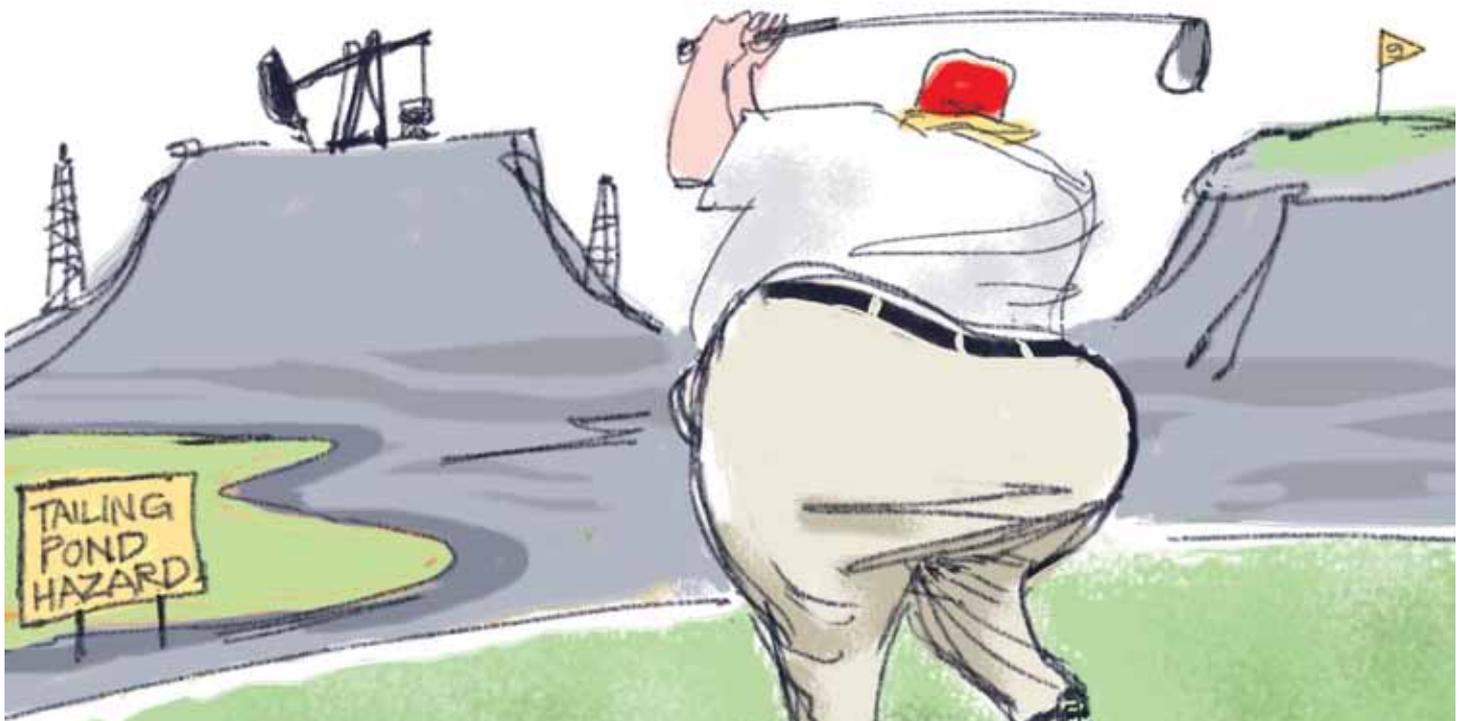
Donald Trump may be using his presidential powers to fulfill his promise to create jobs for the unemployed and the underemployed. So far, however, this action will likely only increase the misery of his supporters, replaced by improved technology in the fast-changing Century 21.

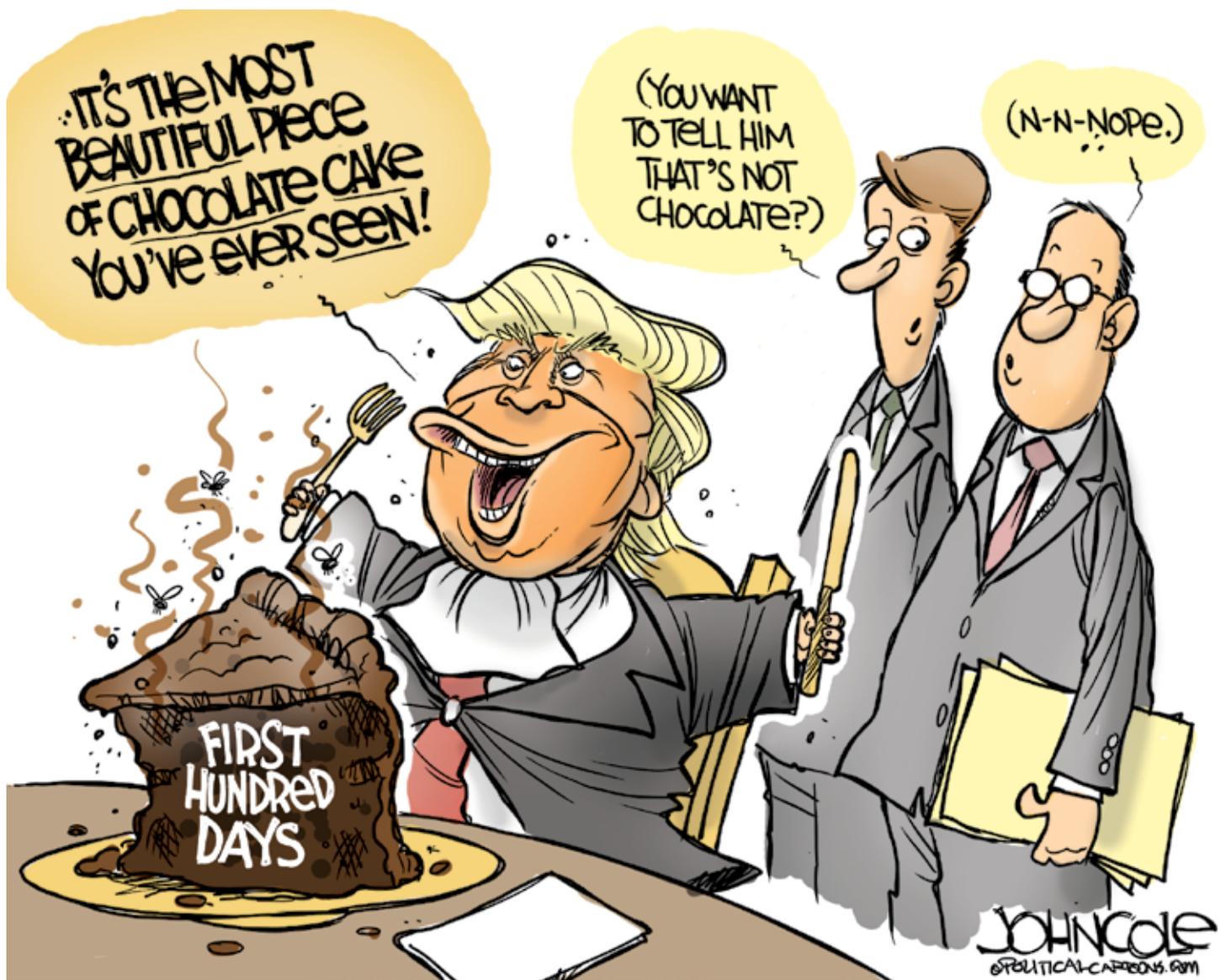
This Trump executive order, like several others, is likely to create an intense political and legal battle which will consume valuable time in creating a meaningful life for us and our families. Therefore the question remains for all: preservation or destruction.

Oologah resident Bob D. Rounsavell is president of the Carrie Dickerson Foundation. His wife, Paz Maria Rounsavell, serves as his editor.

TRUMP ON REVOKING MONUMENT STATUS:

"POSITIVE THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN ON THAT INCREDIBLE LAND"





Trump's First 100 Days

BY MARK Y.A. DAVIES

I agree with the president that in many ways he has accomplished more than any other president in his first 100 days ...

He has accomplished more rounds of golf than most other presidents in his first 100 days.

He has accomplished spending more taxpayer money on himself and his family than any other president in his first 100 days.

He has created more conflicts of interest in relation to his and his family's global business interests in his first 100 days than all presidents combined in the entire history of the United States.

He has accomplished hiring and firing more persons who were foreign agents than any other president in his first 100 days.

He has accomplished more weekend trips to Florida than any other president in his first 100 days.

He has accomplished more nepotism in the White House in his first 100 days than any other president in the entire history of the United States.

He has accomplished creating the need for more investigations into the possible collusion of a presidential campaign with a foreign government than any other president in his first 100 days.

He has accomplished more cringe-worthy and embarrassing moments in his first 100 days than in the entire history of the presidency.

He has accomplished getting more white nationalists into high levels of his administration in the first 100 days than any other president.



RADICAL CHANGE

Younger Americans Reject Right-Wing, Corporate Economic Propaganda

BY LES LEOPOLD

A new survey conducted by the Runaway-inequality.org Educational Network shows that younger Americans [ages 18-40] overwhelmingly support bold proposals to reverse inequality – policies such as Medicare for all, free higher education, ending mass incarceration, wealth taxes on multi-millionaires, financial speculation taxes on Wall Street, public banks, immigrants rights, worker rights, a guaranteed job at a living wage, campaign finance reform, and a sustainable environment.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration is doing all it can to accelerate inequality. The billionaire appointees, the Goldman Sachs economic advisors, the hol-

low health care and tax proposals all are designed to move more money into the hands of the few.

Unfortunately, the mainstream Democrats are hardly better when it comes to runaway inequality.

Over the last 37 years, America's top 10% saw their incomes rise by 115% and the top 1% saw an incredible rise of 198%. Meanwhile, the bottom half of all American earners not only failed to see any gain at all, but their incomes actually declined by 1% from 1978 to 2015, according to research by Thomas Piketty.

During the Obama years “the top 1% of families captured 52% of total real income growth per family from 2009 to 2015 while the bottom 99% of families

got only 48% of total real income growth,” reports inequality expert, Emanuel Saez.

Most politicians and pundits throw their hands up in despair. They argue there is really nothing we can do about rising inequality because of the powerful impacts of global competition and automation. Those who are falling behind just don't have the skills needed to prosper in the modern world. Life is unfair. Get used to it.

But these fatalists are dead wrong. There is ample evidence to show that many other nations have far less inequality but are also using the most advanced technologies, and are more open to foreign competition.

Furthermore, the mainstream Democrats have convinced themselves, that despite the Sanders surge, most Americans do not support bold policies to reverse runaway inequality. These officials believe that most Americans reject “socialistic” programs.

Does a social democratic program appeal to most Americans?

We decided to test the mainstream Democratic Party phobias by asking 200 randomly selected 18- to 40-year-olds to evaluate a strong platform aimed at reversing runaway inequality.

[The response choices were “Strongly Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.” The results below combine the “Strongly Agree/Agree” categories, and the “Strongly Disagree/Disagree” categories. Given the sample size the margin of error is a 7%. The survey was conducted April 20-22.]

The results clearly demonstrate that these younger people are more than willing to embrace bold proposals. Please keep in mind that approximately 30% to 40% of these respondents voted for Trump.

Money and Politics: The right to fair and equal representation, free from voter suppression and the influence of big money. For our democracy to endure, we must overturn Citizens United, enact public campaign financing and enforce the Voting Rights Act.

Agree 65.8%, Disagree 5.0%

Medicare for All: The right to universal health care. Expand and improve Medicare [for all] to provide every American with access to quality, affordable healthcare.

Agree 75.6%, Disagree 12.7%

Environmental Protection: To prevent catastrophic damage to our planet's life support systems, we must accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy; protect our water and air from pollution; and prevent companies from moving to countries with weaker health, safety and environmental standards.

Agree 84.5%, Disagree 4.0%

Job at a living wage: Everyone who is willing and able to work is entitled to a decent paying job in a safe and healthy workplace. If the private sector can't provide such jobs, then the public sector should.

Agree 65%, Disagree 20.5%

Free Public Education: The right to free public ed-

ucation from Pre-K through college or trade school. Pre-K for 2- to 5-year-olds should be available free of charge for all families. And everyone who qualifies for entrance to higher education should be able to attend tuition free.

Agree 72%, Disagree 13%

Impartial criminal justice: Biased law enforcement in poor urban and rural communities must be ended, and we must stop using mass incarceration as a substitute for decent employment and educational opportunities.

Agree 75.1%, Disagree 16.9%

Pathway to citizenship: Every resident of the U.S. should have a comprehensive pathway to citizenship, and be afforded the rights to due process and a fair hearing that the Constitution guarantees to all.

Agree 68.2%, Disagree 10.4%

Worker Rights: To protect and enhance worker rights and fairness on the job, the freedom to unionize, free from employer coercion, must be promoted.

Agree 58.6%, Disagree 10.5%

Public Banks: As an alternative to Wall Street's predatory lending, every state should charter a public bank, modeled on the Bank of North Dakota, whose first and only goal is to serve its people. Also, like many other developed nations, the U.S. should charter a national postal bank to provide fair and accessible financial services in all our communities.

Agree 59.0%, Disagree 9.5%

Taxing Wall Street: To move money to Main Street, a small sales tax should be imposed on stocks, bonds and derivatives. This also would discourage high frequency computer trades which make up the majority of all stock market activity.

Agree 49%, Disagree 10.7%

End Stock Manipulation: CEOs and their Wall Street partners should not be permitted to enrich themselves by using corporate funds to buy back their own shares in order to artificially raise share prices. This was illegal before 1982 and should be again.

Agree 71.5%, Disagree 6.5%

Wealth Tax of 1% on those whose net worth is over \$10 million: Those who have grown super-rich in our financialized economy must pay their fair share of taxes. A wealth tax, currently used by Spain, France, Switzerland and Norway, is an excellent way to recoup those losses.

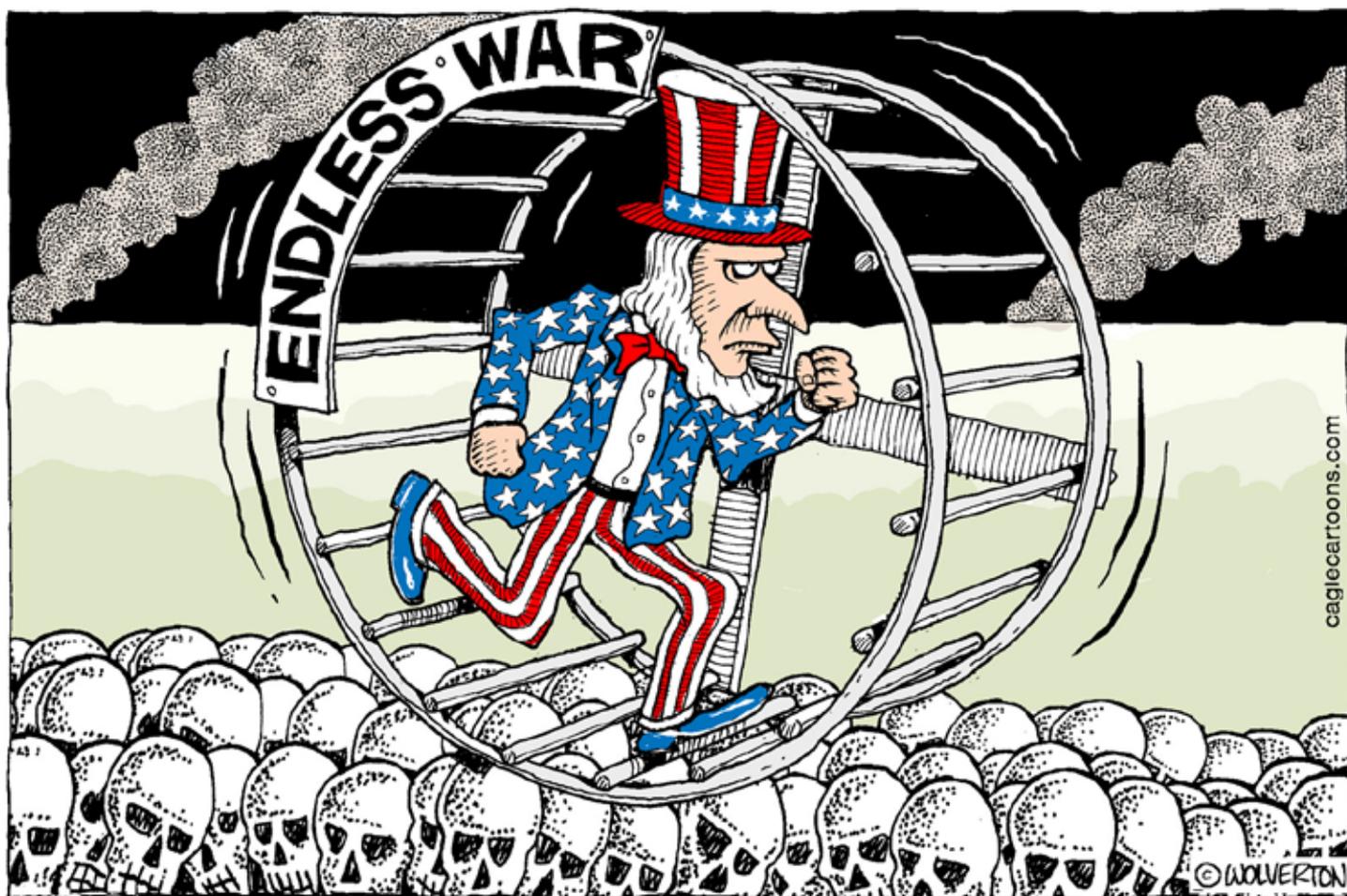
Agree 72.1%, Disagree 10.1%

What will it take to wake up the Corporate Democrats?

The Democrats now are trying to move “economic issues” into their core message. That's not good enough. As we see from our survey, younger Americans in particular are hungry for more than platitudes about economic opportunity, public private partnerships, reduced tuition loans and other half measures.

What the Democrats are offering can be co-opted by Trump's faux populism. But a strong agenda to re-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



The Violent American Century

BY JEREMY KUZMAROV

In a famous 1941 essay heralding a new “American Century,” Life Magazine publisher Henry Luce denounced the “virus” of isolationism which he believed “subverted America’s destiny as a beacon of democratic idealism and freedom under law.” The United States in his vision needed to “accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.”

This prescription sounded very much like that of other imperial powers who also saw it as their duty to shape the world order in a manner conducive to their interest.

MIT historian John Dower in his new book *The Violent American Century: War and Terror Since World War II* [Haymarket Press, 2017] argues that if Luce were around today, he would probably be enthusiastic about the specter of flourishing consumer societies around the world and collapse of the Soviet Union, and approve of the missionary rhetoric of government

leaders.

However, as an opponent of intrusive government, Luce might also lament the country’s transformation into a national security and surveillance state, and question the gargantuan military budgets as a betrayal of George Washington’s ideals.

The American Century, Dower notes, will be remembered by future historians above all else for the tremendous violence and global instability it has helped engender.

Between 1946 and the end of the 20th Century, the United States invaded over a dozen countries and used its own armed forces in hundreds of military conflicts.

The Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] carried out at least 81 covert operations that left well over a million dead, securing the overthrow of at least 24 Latin American governments.

The United States furthermore engaged in illicit drug testing on unsuspecting victims, allied with the mafia and sponsored state terror campaigns as in the Operation Condor in South America and Phoenix in

Vietnam that left at least 20,000 dead.

The American government meanwhile evolved into the world's leading arms merchant and created a nuclear stockpile of over 22,000 warheads at the peak of the Cold War, prompting the Soviets to initiate their own build-up in a race to Armageddon.

Fitting a long tradition of imperial apologetics, a recent vogue of scholarship claims the world is more peaceful than ever, casting U.S. global leadership as a stabilizing factor. Yale historian John L. Gaddis termed the Cold War an "era of long peace," ignoring the record of large-scale proxy wars and state violence that destabilized whole regions and fueled the rise of Islamic terrorism.

Dower's book rightly restores emphasis on the violent underside of the American Century in which "mass murders would occur with appalling frequency." In Korea and Indochina alone, the U.S. military killed millions of civilians through systemic bombing and napalm attacks and also poisoned the landscape by dropping millions of gallons of Agent Orange.

After the Vietnam War, the American military focused on developing new precision weapons as part of the so called revolution in military affairs, whose aim was to reduce collateral damage and enable the waging of cleaner wars that would not devolve into quagmires.

Harvard Professor Steven Pinker, author of the much touted book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, buys into the military's logic and places the precision revolution at the heart of his declining violence thesis.

In reality, however, that the United States continues to facilitate new arms races with the Russians and Chinese, deploys ferocious firepower in wars like Afghanistan and Iraq [evident in the recent dropping of the MOAB] and kills many civilians directly or by

proxy in long drawn out conflicts that have generated more refugees than at any-time since World War II.

Seventy-five years ago, an alternative to Luce's vision of the American Century was offered by Vice President Henry A. Wallace [1940-44] who proposed a "Century of the Common Man," in which "no nation will have the god-given right to exploit other nations. Older nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization, but there must be neither military nor economic imperialism. The methods of the 19th Century will not work in the people's century which is now about to begin."

Unfortunately it was Luce's vision that prevailed over that of Wallace.

The "American Dreamer" was removed from the vice presidency by Democratic Party powerbrokers and fired by President Harry Truman as commerce secretary after giving a rousing speech at Madison Square Garden where he suggested that we "who look on this war-with-Russia talk as criminal foolishness must carry our message direct to the people – even though we may be called communists because we dare to speak out."

Given the destructiveness of the American century, those of us with the foresight must follow Wallace's lead. We, too, should bring a message of peace to the people even though we may face personal backlash because we dare speak out.

Jeremy Kuzmarov is J.P. Walker assistant professor of history, University of Tulsa and author of *Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation Building in the American Century (Massachusetts, 2012) among other works. His current book project is called Technological Rampage: American Military Intervention and Political Miscalculation from the Korean War to the War on Terror.*

New Ways Forward For Women In Combat Zones

BY NYLA ALI KHAN

Do women's multiple narratives reveal a capacity for alternative ways of negotiating the construction of conflictual identities? Does the assumption of agential roles by traditional women in a patriarchal culture cause an identity conflict crisis which can be resolved through a firm commitment to specific values and goals?

Women, as evidenced by the work of constructive and rehabilitative work undertaken by political and social women activists in the former princely state during both turbulent and peaceful times, have more or less power depending on their specific situation, and they can be relatively submissive in one situa-

tion and relatively assertive in another. Assessing women's agency requires identifying and mapping power relations, the room to maneuver within each pigeonhole and the intransigence of boundaries [Hayward 1998: 29].

The history of Kashmir, similar to histories of other conflict zones, has never been sanitized. Also, although a class/caste hierarchy does not enjoy religious legitimacy in predominantly Muslim Kashmir, socioeconomic class and caste divisions in Kashmir are as well-entrenched as they are in other South Asian societies. A rigidly entrenched gender hierarchy also exists in Kashmir, although some substan-

tive attempts have been made to deconstruct it. The role of women in a conflict zone; intersectionalities of class, education, ethnicity; religious identity in theorizing a woman's identity; women's agential roles or lack thereof are issues that can no longer be relegated to the background.

Inadequate attention has been paid to the gender dimension of the armed conflict in the Kashmir province of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir [J&K], which stymies even further the emergence of peace, political liberty, socioeconomic reconstruction, and egalitarian democratization. As Dyan Mazura, Angela Raven-Roberts, Jane Parpart, and Sue Lautze [2005] observe:

inattention to, and subsequent miscalculations about, women's and girl's roles and experiences during particular conflicts and in early postconflict periods systematically undermines the efforts of peacekeeping and peace-building operations, civil society, and women's organizations to establish conditions necessary for national and regional peace, justice, and security. [2]

Although women of Jammu and Kashmir have been greatly affected by the armed insurgency and counter insurgency in the region, they are largely absent in decision-making bodies at the local, regional, and national levels. As a Kashmir observer, I recognize the attention paid to gender-based violence in Kashmir by scholars, ethnographers, and NGOs, but not enough attention is given to the political, economic, and social fallout of the armed conflict for women.

I contend that not enough emphasis is laid on how Kashmiri women of different political, religious, ideological, and class orientations can become resource managers and advocates for other women in emergency and crisis situations. Kashmiri women continue to be near absent at the formal level.

Although the international community made a commitment to incorporate gender perspectives in peace efforts and underscored gender mainstreaming as a global strategy for the growth of gender equality in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action in 1995 [Mazurana et al. 2005: 12], I observe that not enough is being done toward increasing women's participation in peacekeeping and post-conflict peace building and nation-building in Kashmir.

Women's organizations in a conflict zone like Kashmir need clear nation-building programs, which would involve reviving civil society, resuscitating the shattered economy, providing sources of income, and building social and political structures.

As in other conflict and post-conflict situations, women are rarely in positions of political power in participatory democracy. Although women are active in grassroots self-organization, they are seldom recognized for their work. It is important for these organizations to pave the way for sustainable peace, human rights and security which would diminish the potency of militarized peacekeeping, following closely on the heels of militarized interventions.

And militarized masculinities, even among peacemakers, as Sandra Whitworth points out, create "cultures of violence that may be perpetrated against women during conflict" [*Feminism and International Studies: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Organizations*, 1994].

Cynthia Enloe [*The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993] succinctly sums up the bolstering of militarization by gendered decisions: "When a community's politicized sense of its own identity becomes so threaded through with pressures for its men to take up arms, for its women to loyally support brothers, husbands, sons, and lovers to become soldiers, it needs explaining. How were the pressures mounted? What does militarization mean for women's and men's relationships to each other? What happens when some women resist those pressures?" [250]

Dan Smith, director of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, makes a pertinent point about conservative gender politics [2001]. He observes that "people who make essentialist generalizations about women's roles are usually unable not just to explain but even to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and abilities." [38] The espousal of essentialist politics does not allow for change that would enable "peaceful conflict resolution, reconciliation between traditional enemies, justice between different races and gender equality." [46]

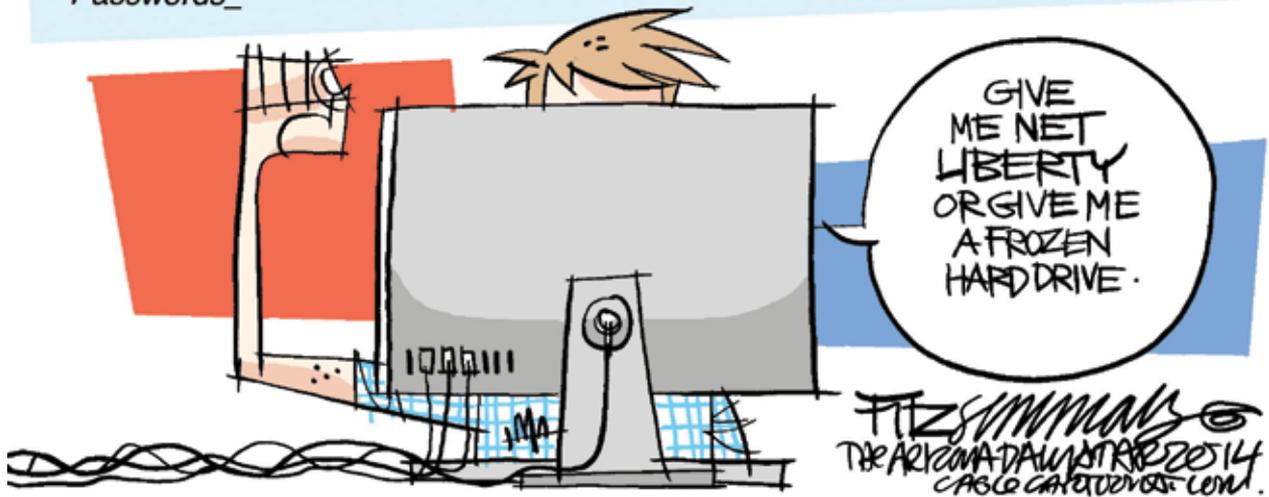
I observe that there is a serious lack of a feminist discourse in political/activist roles taken on by women in Kashmir, where the dominant perception still is that "politics and policy-making are linked to the powerful, strong, male realist rather than with the archetypal gentle, negotiating woman." [Ibid.: 132] As in other political scenarios in South Asia, women politicians feminine traits, like reticence and a demure demeanor, cause them to be relegated to the "soft area" of Social Welfare. Although political parties in Kashmir, either mainstream or separatists, have not relinquished paternalistic attitudes toward women, women's rights and gender issues are secondary to political power. Even within the domestic and feminized realm of home and family, women's issues are peripheralized. In order to provide a more nuanced analysis of human security, it is important to access the everyday politics of work, state security, human security, war, displacement, compromise, and the way they are practiced on people's bodies. In underlining the importance relational positionality to feminist politics, Daiva Stasiulis observes, "multiple relations of power interact in complex ways to position individuals and collectivities in shifting and often contradictory locations within geopolitical spaces, historical narratives, and movement politics."

The lack of consensus in India and Pakistan has

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We hold this Truth to be self evident, that the internet was created Neutral, endowed with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Liberty from Corporate Influence, freedom from authoritarian censorship, and the pursuit of Net Neutrality. We, therefore, do solemnly post and declare, that the Internet ought to be Free and Independent, with the full protection of the First Amendment and the Feds. With this Declaration of Independence from Mega Media Corporate Tyranny, with a firm reliance and an unwavering Faith in Net Neutrality we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our Sacred Passwords_



Why Republicans Shouldn't Mess With Net Neutrality

BY MIKE LUDWIG

The internet is quite popular these days, but companies such as AT&T and Comcast that provide internet service are not. That's one reason why Democrats are betting that voters will punish Republicans in the next election for scrapping rules designed to stop internet providers from harvesting personal information without permission and manipulating how easily users can access certain parts of the web.

The threat of voter disapproval was not enough to thwart the legislation repealing online privacy rules that the Republican majority recently rushed through Congress with party-line votes. Democrats hammered their Republican colleagues for selling out their constituents' personal information to big business, a charge that could come back to haunt the GOP now that a looming fight over net neutrality at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) promises to keep the broadband lobby in the media spotlight.

"I think there was a great political education that just took place after the privacy vote was cast," Sen.

Ed Markey, D-MA, told reporters late last month.

A few hours later, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai announced plans to dismantle his commission's authority to enforce net neutrality rules. The rules prevent internet service providers [ISPs] like AT&T from blocking or slowing access to web content, or providing priority speeds to web services like Netflix in exchange for special payments. It also bars sweetheart deals with wealthy media conglomerates, ensuring that the corporate media does not dominate the web.

To enforce these rules, the FCC voted in 2015 to classify ISPs as "common carriers" under Title II of the Communications Act, allowing the government to regulate the internet more like a public utility that everyone needs to use. ISPs have been trying to sue and lobby their way out from under the classification ever since.

ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

Pai, who was once a lawyer for Verizon, consistently promoted the industry's positions on net neutral-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47

Jim Hightower



How To Keep 'Public' And 'Service' In Public Postal Service

Journalism, which is supposed to help make sense of our turbulent world, can't seem to make sense of itself.

In addition to "news" [which involves reporting on stuff that's real] we're now getting "fake news" [stuff that's completely made up]. But wait – the barons of corporate news are adding to today's tumultuous state of journalism by putting out feeds of "BS news" [stuff they know is untrue but reported as fact, because it advances their political agenda].

For example, the mighty Washington Post keeps publishing a load of BS to denigrate our U.S. Post Office. The paper's latest pot shot was in an alarmist editorial declaring, "The U.S. Postal Service continues to hemorrhage red ink." Embracing their owner's anti-government ideology, the editors grumped that postal unions have made our mail service outmoded and insolvent, running up "a net loss of \$5.6 billion last year."

That is pure bovine excrement – and the editors know it. In fact, thanks to our amazing, innovative and efficient postal workers, the nation's public post offices racked up a \$610 million operating profit last year, and a \$1.2 billion profit the year before.

The \$5 billion in red ink that the paper's editorial propagandists touted is not real, but instead, is a deliberate bookkeeping hoax created by Congress to make the public think that our Post Office is a hopeless money loser that should be privatized.

In 2006, Congress piled an artificial "loss" on the Postal Service by decreeing that it must pre-fund the healthcare costs of future retirees 75 years in advance. That includes retirees who're not even born yet! No other agency and no other corporation – including Amazon – could survive if Congress added a \$5-billion-a-year fictitious loss to their books.

Yet, in a shameful piece of BS journalism, the Post intentionally ignored the true story.

What the Post should have covered was this: While a half-dollar hardly counts as money these days – it no longer buys even a small cup of coffee. But ... there is an amazing half-dollar bargain out there: a first-class postage stamp. For 50 cents, you get the

stamp, 3-cents in change, and so much more. Stick it on an envelope, drop your missive in a mailbox, and America's phenomenal network of post office workers and letter carriers will deliver it in short order to your addressee in any of the 43,000 zip codes of this vast country, from New York City's tallest building to a village on the floor of the Grand Canyon.

Our public Postal Service literally delivers, and many of our post offices serve as treasured community centers – two reasons that the U.S. mail service consistently ranks highest among all federal agencies in public support. So, naturally, it must be decimated and ultimately eliminated.

What the Post won't be covering is what passes for logic in the back rooms of our Koch-headed Congress and in the boardrooms of many predatory corporations. They keep demonizing anything public – especially any public service that works and is popular – because the corporate powers and the congress critters they buy in bulk are determined to privatize government. So, these profiteers and plutocratic ideologues constantly put out propaganda like the Post article, castigating the Postal Service as a massive, money-sucking, deteriorating, bureaucratic behemoth.

But here are a few facts they don't want you to realize: One, this public agency provides affordable mail service to all, in every community; two, it does this without a dime of taxpayer money, financing its entire operation with the sale of stamps and services like bulk mail; and three, it provides hundreds-of-thousands of solid middle-class jobs spread throughout every zip code.

To help keep this public jewel out of the hands of a few greed-headed, price-gouging, low-wage, tax-dodging corporations, support "A Grand Alliance To Save Our Public Post Offices."

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To Have A People's Government, We The People Must Build It

In high school, I had a girlfriend who was involved in student government and all sorts of good works. While she paid attention to all that was happening in those years of the early '60s, she essentially was a moderate – certainly not some movement rebel. Or so we thought ... until one lazy, Sunday afternoon.

As we aimlessly “cruised the drag” of our small town in a '54 Chevy, we were paused at a red light across from a root beer stand where some teens were hanging out. Suddenly, my “moderate” girlfriend lunged halfway out of the backseat window and shouted “Wake up and piss, kids, the world's on fire!”

I stared at her wide-eyed and whopperjawed, wondering where that came from.

I've thought of that moment recently as I've seen instance after instance of the innate rebelliousness of the American people erupting across the country in surprising ways, unexpected numbers, and with astonishing intensity. No need to wonder where this comes from, however. The outbursts are a spontaneous, rapidly expanding mass rejection of Trumpism.

Our Twitter-president plays to his most frenzied partisans with his daily rata-tat-tat of executive orders and public fulminations – firing at refugees, federal judges, Chuck Schumer, the media, Nordstrom, the EPA, Mexico's president, Elizabeth Warren, laws that protect consumers from Wall Street greed, Sweden, Arnold Schwarzenegger and ... no telling who's next.

But while some delightedly squeal at his wild moves, many more see Trump as not merely unpresidential, but bull goose bonkers! And dangerous – recklessly using the enormous power of the presidency as a personal cudgel to attack, stigmatize and seriously harm individuals, entire religions and races, the Bill of Rights and our nation's basic values of tolerance, fairness and opportunity for all.

In a twist of ironic justice, The Donald's deep darkness has sparked a prairie fire of mass opposition, raging political activism and movement organizing for the long haul.

Many of us are activists already, ranging from occasional campaigners to us warped gluttons for full-time, full-tilt punishment. No matter your past involvement, with our ship of state entering dire straits, each of us must do a bit extra. And we can help focus the anger roiling the countryside by sharing some how-to-make-a-difference tips to friends, co-workers, et al. “Traump-atized” by Washington's new extremist kakistocracy [government by the worst].

After all, millions of our neighbors have long been

disengaged, viewing the political scrum as somewhere between irrelevant and repugnant. But, suddenly they're back – alert not only to Trump, but to their Congress critters and to that menagerie of freaky, rightwing corporate mutants that Trump-Pence has put in charge of our government.

In January, one red-district Texan told a reporter: “I think of politics the way I think of my car. I just want it to run [without my spending] a lot of time.” Only a few weeks into the Trump-Does-Washington spectacle, he learned a fundamental lesson: “You get the politics you work for.”

So, it's time to get to work. This is not just a one-time, resist-and-dump Trump campaign we're undertaking, but the mobilization of a long-term grassroots movement to reject the systemic corporate takeover of our elections and government at every level, from our local school boards to our White House. Simply ousting Trump won't do that.

The job, then, is as simple as it is difficult: To have a People's government, we must build it.

Democracy requires us common folk to join together, with each of us doing as much as we can, as strategically as we can, for as long as we can. www.IndivisibleGuide.com, www.OurRevolution.com and www.MovementVote.org are just a few organizations you can check out to help you get active and start building a more democratic way of governing. – *Jim Hightower*



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PLENTY
OF
UNFILLED
POSITIONS
AT THE
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HOUSE.

TWO WILD AND CRAZY GUYS™

Five Ways O'Reilly Gave Us Trump, Cheapened America

BY JUAN COLE

Bill O'Reilly is off the airwaves, but it doesn't really matter. The despicable strategy of presslord Rupert Murdoch of orienting his Fox Cable "news" toward the nativist far right in the United States will continue. They'll just find another O'Reilly.

Worse, there is more or less an O'Reilly in the White House now, with the nuclear codes. Murdoch and O'Reilly in many ways gave us the Trump presidency, running the republic into a brick wall.

1. Trump's ridiculous and very expensive plan to build a wall between the United States and Mexico? That was an O'Reilly idea. I remember seeing O'Reilly trot it out in an interview with the late thriller writer Tom Clancy after 9/11:

O'Reilly: Now, I've been banging this drum for more than a year, and I did a "Talking Points" tonight on

it, is that the borders are so chaotic and they're not secured, and we're very vulnerable from both Canada and Mexico for people who want to bring stuff in and come in here, and the INS can't control it. Am I wrong there?

Clancy: No, it's one of the problems of, you know, one of the consequences of living in a free and open society. You know, the Statue of Liberty invites people in. She's not holding a machine gun to keep people away.

Clancy wasn't exactly left wing. But he tried to warn O'Reilly that crackpot plans like the wall were a long step toward the U.S. becoming a new Soviet Union. The latter, he said, had failed. Now we have a president with squirrels running around in his cranium, who saw O'Reilly push this nonsense and wants to charge us billions in taxes to build it.

It all comes out of a wounded white nationalism, buffeted by globalization, where African-Americans and immigrants are allegedly stealing jobs [they aren't].

2. O'Reilly beat the drum nightly for George W. Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq. He repeatedly alleged that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was behind al-Qaeda, with the implication that Iraq blew up New York and Washington, D.C. He repeatedly alleged that Saddam Hussein had "weapons of mass destruction" and that he was training al-Qaeda operatives in chemical weapons use at Salman Pak. There is no evidence that that was the case. Iraq had nothing to do with al-Qaeda and was clearly afraid of it. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

O'Reilly had said that if there turned out to be no WMD in Iraq, he would become more skeptical of the Bush white house. But despite the collapse of the case against Iraq, O'Reilly went on cheerleading for Bush/Cheney.

3. O'Reilly said on "The View" that "Muslims hit us" on 9/11. Joy Behar and Whoopi Goldberg walked off the set when O'Reilly doubled down on his hate speech and gross generalization. When Trump said last fall "Islam hates us," he was just echoing O'Reilly.

4. O'Reilly has repeatedly said racist things, and his current troubles began when he said of senior U.S.

Rep. Maxine Waters that he could not get past her "James Brown wig." In a famous incident on his now-defunct radio show, O'Reilly had professed himself shocked, on eating at a restaurant owned by African-Americans, that the patrons seemed perfectly respectable. He had recently said that Trump won't be able to help African-Americans because "ill-educated and have tattoos on their foreheads."

Then there was all the other bigotry, as when he compared gay marriage to Goat Marriage.

5. O'Reilly's denial that any practical measures need to be taken to limit CO2 emissions, because they would disadvantage American corporations. Climate denialism is the original fake news, and O'Reilly and Fox were one major source that Trump scans for news like this.

He's a mean, mean man. And a bad historian, which yours truly holds against him, hard. He managed to cheapen my America and then he made millions writing "fake history."

The O'Reilly Factor is dead. But Fox will just go on polluting the airwaves.

Juan Ricardo Cole, a public intellectual and essayist, is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. His blog, Informed Comment, can be found at www.juancole.com.

What It Means To Be Truly Liberal On Abortion

BY FROMA HARROP

Donald Trump has mastered the authoritarian act, and that's how he attracted his brigade of humble followers. Some on the left seem to envy this ability to force obedience through threats and attacks. But that approach doesn't work on issue-oriented voters, doubly so on matters requiring nuance. Abortion is one such issue.

Thus, one cannot fathom the ongoing crusade by abortion rights activists to crush Heath Mello, a moderate Democrat running for mayor of Omaha. NARAL Pro-Choice America, it seems, would rather punish a Democrat straying from its dictates than defeat a more resolutely anti-choice Republican.

Democrats have this self-defeating habit of sabotaging otherwise progressive candidates who dissent from some base group's orthodoxy. Bernie Sanders and friends relentlessly beat up Hillary Clinton over minor differences in economic policy. It may be ironic that Sanders is now supporting Mello despite the Nebraskan's mixed feelings on abortion, but he is right this time.

What makes NARAL's assault on Mello truly bizarre

is that it is beyond unfair. Mello is not anti-choice. [Lazy headline writers, take note.]

Mello says he doesn't approve of abortion on religious grounds but as mayor "would never do anything to restrict access to reproductive health care." This position is identical to that of the late New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, an exemplary progressive who never curbed abortion rights while in office.

One rap against Mello is that as a state senator, he sponsored a bill setting a 20-week limit for women seeking an abortion with no questions asked. That is not a ban on abortion. In this country, nearly 99% of abortions are done before 21 weeks.

Here's another reality check: In Germany, Belgium, Denmark and France, abortion without restrictions is limited to the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy. In Sweden, it's 18 weeks. No one accuses these countries of being anti-choice. Their governments also pay for abortions, something ours should do, as well.

Of more concern, Mello backed a bill requiring that women be told that they could see a fetal ultrasound before having an abortion. That would seem a govern-

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Trump's Sexism Provokes New Effort To Pass ERA

BY ELEANOR J. BADER

When Donald Trump boasted to Access Hollywood reporter Billy Bush in 2005 about sexually assaulting women, he likely never imagined that his words would galvanize the world's feminists and set a renewed movement for gender equity into motion. To wit: Not only did millions take to the streets to demand equality within 24 hours of Trump's inauguration, but a revitalized campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment [ERA] is now underway in the U.S.

The amendment, which states, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," was written 94 years ago by suffragists Crystal Eastman and Alice Paul, activists who understood that the right to vote was an insufficient guarantee of women's equality. Although their 1923 effort failed to win congressional approval, a half-century later, in 1972, so-called Second Wave feminists successfully pushed 364 Congress members to support the mea-

sure. The ERA next went to the states for ratification. By March 1979 – the deadline for 38 state legislatures to approve or reject it – 35 states had opted for authorization. Feminists subsequently lobbied hard to extend the ratification period for another three years, to June 30, 1982. Still, the amendment stalled.

Then, decades later, Nevada became the 36th state to pass the ERA on March 1, 2017.

STRATEGIES FOR PASSAGE

Proponents say that there are two distinct ways to get the amendment enacted.

Jessica Neuwirth, president of the ERA Coalition and author of *Equal Means Equal: Why the Time for an Equal Rights Amendment Is Now* [The New Press, 2016], told Truthout that Congress can either start over – passing the ERA by a two-third majority in the House and the Senate before sending it back to the states for ratification – or can waive the 1982 approval deadline and allow additional states to pass it, finally providing the 38 votes needed. Bills champi-

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oning both approaches are pending in the Judiciary Committees of the House and Senate.

“Our view is that whatever works, works,” Neuwirth begins. “We will support either approach. The idea of deadlines for ratification came in with Prohibition, when the 18th Amendment was introduced in 1919. Since then, there has been a seven-year limit for ratification placed on every proposed amendment.” Prior to this, she continues, passage was not bound by time constraints. In fact, it took 203 years – from its introduction in 1789 to its passage in 1992 – for the 27th Amendment, which governs congressional salaries, to be approved.

PUSH FOR STATE RATIFICATION

The ERA Coalition – which includes dozens of organizations, including the African American Policy Forum, American Association of University Women, Equal Rights Advocates, Feminist Majority Foundation, Legal Momentum, the National Organization for Women [NOW], the National Women’s Political Caucus and the YWCA – is organizing in the 14 states that have yet to ratify the Amendment: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia.

Widespread support is already evident. A poll conducted by the Coalition and the Fund for Women’s Equality in the summer of 2016 – while Trump was campaigning – found that 96% of women and 90% of men supported ERA passage; this was true among Democrats and Republicans, as well as among progressives and people who described themselves as “apolitical.”

What’s more, 80% were flabbergasted to learn that these rights were not already assured.

Perhaps, says Ellie Smeal, cofounder and president of the Feminist Majority Foundation [feminist.org], this is because people know that the Equal Pay Act, Title IX, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Violence Against Women Act have been enacted. What they may not know, she continues, is that they’re insufficient.

“All these bills have loopholes,” Smeal explains. “Title IX, for example, only bars gender-based discrimination in school sports if the educational program receives federal assistance and employment protections don’t apply in every workplace. In addition, statutes can be flipped. We want a blanket protection, a statement in the Constitution that women have full and equal protection and that discrimination based on gender is banned across the board.”

WOMEN’S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL PROGRESS CONTINUE TO LAG

NOW President Terry O’Neill agrees. “Women have not yet achieved equality. We’re not even close,” she told me. “We’re just 20% of Congress and we’re overrepresented in low-paid occupations. Furthermore, we’re underrepresented in positions of authority. Throughout the country, women are blocked from accessing basic health care.”

Family planning, she continues, is a case in point. Between 2011 – when Texas defunded every clinic that performed or referred women to abortion clinics – and 2016, when a court victory reopened these facilities, maternal mortality rates doubled and newborns died at increased rates.

“If we’d had an ERA, these necessary health centers would not have been closed because shutting clinics that primarily serve women would have been seen as sex discrimination,” O’Neill concludes.

NOW’s ERA organizers are zeroing in on the four states they believe are most likely to pass the Amendment: Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Virginia. Along with on-the-ground educational outreach, a new website geared toward millennials, Visions-forEquality.com, will roll out shortly.

“We believe that the ERA will help us assess what it means to be a real democracy,” O’Neill said. “Real equality has to ensure that all people have the right to vote and have a voice. An ERA will be an additional tool to strike down voter suppression laws and force states to make it easier for people to go to the polls. We need to brainstorm, and we need to listen to one another, so that today’s ERA campaign moves past the concerns of middle-class white women.”

ANTICIPATING THE BACKLASH

Pro-ERA forces understand that numerous obstacles to ERA passage continue to exist and know that conservative forces will ramp up their efforts if the ERA campaign gains momentum. In the 1970s, they remind us, the Mormon Church, Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA, and right-wing Christian groups including the Eagle Forum and Concerned Women for America joined forces with the Chamber of Commerce and the insurance industry to put the kibosh on the amendment.

“The insurance industry has money and they gender rate everything,” O’Neill explains. “An ERA would derail this.”

And while the Affordable Care Act ostensibly makes setting rates based on gender and health status illegal, the law permits discrimination based on age. This gives the industry the wiggle room to charge men and women different fees for coverage – arguing that rates are determined by a person’s life stage, and not whether they are male or female, healthy or sick.

Predictably, gender-based insurance disparities did not faze Schlafly. Instead, she argued that the ERA promoted unnecessary meddling with business interests.

In addition, she saw the amendment as a violation of family values, and mobilized thousands of grassroots conservatives to oppose it.

“The ERA would actually take away some of women’s rights,” Schlafly told the Los Angeles Times in 2008, because it would “abolish the presumption that the husband should support his wife.”

Not only that, she railed that it would allow men and women to be incarcerated in the same jails; allow the government to reinterpret alimony and child sup-

port laws; and end Social Security widow's pensions – claims that she revved up to maximum effect.

She also famously said that “women like the pay gap” [an average of 78 cents for every male dollar] because without it, they might earn more than their husbands, a sure-fire deterrent to successful matrimony.

Conservatives in Nevada repeated many of these bugaboos during the state's recent debate on the issue, something feminists credit with turning the tide.

“Their arguments were ridiculous or offensive or both,” the ERA Coalition's Jessica Neuwirth said. “Their argument that a woman's place is in the home was certainly not compelling.”

THE INTERSECTION OF RACE, GENDER

While women's role in society has gotten the lion's share of ERA-related attention, the issue of race has gotten little play, with neither Schlafly nor the broader right wing explicitly bringing it to the fore. Nonetheless, according to Jessica Wilkerson, a professor of history and social studies at the University of Mississippi, it was an ever-present subtext, at least in the South of 40-plus years ago.

“Many white, Christian, southerners saw the ERA as a threat, one more assault on women's traditional roles,” Wilkerson reports. “The same people who were part of a massive resistance to civil rights resisted the ERA, couching it in language about state's rights and federal overreach.”

In Mississippi, the anti-ERA movement was largely white; the wife of a well-known Klan leader was actually an anti-ERA leader. Their political arguments were founded on the idea of white, male patriarchy. They believed that the ERA threatened white men's status in society and would, by extension, lead white women to lose their privileges as wives and mothers. In Mississippi, the coalition against the ERA was called “Mississippians for God, Country and Family.”

Needless to say, should similar arguments resurface in present-day organizing, they will need to be addressed head-on by pro-ERA activists.

What's more, today's pro-ERA activists also need to be prepared to confront outright sexism and repression.

Junior Bridge was the Virginia state ERA campaign coordinator in the mid-1970s and says that she and other activists also had to contend with rampant male chauvinism. “The ERA had been bottlenecked in committee and the state group wanted to get it to the floor for a vote so we could at least see which legislators stood where,” she says. “We organized a 100-mile march, from Alexandria to the Richmond statehouse, in time for the opening day of the legislative session. It was January, nine degrees, and we were carrying 20,000 signed petitions,” she recalls. “When we arrived we were met by armed police – I had a gun pointed right at me – who told us that we could not enter the building.” Although the group eventually prevailed, the ERA failed to muster enough votes for passage.

It still stings, Bridge says, but more than four decades later, she is surprisingly upbeat; optimistic that the amendment will finally become law. “Virginia voters have become much more willing to elect progressives,” she says. “The mayor of Alexandria even cancelled public school on March 8 to honor the women's strike. People understand that Trump and his Congress want to push us back and they know that having an ERA will make it harder to turn back the clock.”

Some feminists, however, question whether the ERA, as written, is enough. “The women's movement has had a lot of success but it has mostly benefited white women with some class privilege,” Jessica Wilkerson points out. “We have to look at the complexity of issues and ask what we mean by equality. In Appalachia, wages are close to gender parity but that's because men's wages have declined. It's formal equality, but equality on a sinking ship many not be what we want.”

Nonetheless, Wilkerson acknowledges that the current bid to enact the ERA may be a necessary foundation on which to build. “Just remember that it's not the south versus everyone else,” she said. “Even in the 1970s, the most heated debates about gender and equity happened in the south. This region is not only made up of conservatives. Progressive political organizing is happening. Momentum is building for social justice. Moral Mondays activists are leading the charge in this part of the country and they're putting gender issues on an agenda that includes Fight for \$15 and Black Lives Matter.”

She considers this great progress. That said, she concedes that the loss of the ERA in the 1970s was heartbreaking for many feminists, but notes that January's women's marches in places like Oxford, MS; Nashville and Memphis, TN; and Baton Rouge, LA, have kick-started a movement against sexism and other forms of bigotry. Whether this means that the legislatures of these states will pass the ERA, however, remains an open question.

Eleanor J. Bader teaches English at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York. She is a 2015 winner of a Project Censored award for “outstanding investigative journalism” and a 2006 Independent Press Association award. The coauthor of Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism, she presently contributes to Lilith, Rewire, Theasy.com and other progressive feminist blogs and print publications.

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Life In 'Enemy Territory'

BLUE IN A RED STATE

The Survival Guide To Life In The Real America

By Justin Krebs

The New Press

184 pages, \$24.95

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

Four years ago, several hundred liberals, progressives, Yellow Dogs and friends of The Oklahoma Observer gathered in Oklahoma City to celebrate Founding Editor Frosty Troy's 80th birthday.

We hadn't even wrapped up the festivities with cake-cutting and *Happy Birthday*-singing when attendees intercepted me, most positively giddy.

"That was the most fun we've had in a long time," gushed one longtime subscriber, uttering what would become a refrain for the evening. "We didn't know there were so many others who think like we do."

This sense of political isolation can be intense, even suffocating at times, but – significantly – it is not unique to Oklahoma nor is it irredeemable.

In *Blue In A Red State: The Survival Guide To Life In The Real America*, Justin Krebs introduces readers to 22 liberals in 14 fire-engine-red states who share strategies for successfully navigating everyday life in a world dominated by the uber right.

Krebs, founding director of Living Liberally and a MoveOn.org campaign director, recounts the anxieties, disillusionments and, yes, rewards for liberals that persevere in some of America's thorniest nests of radical, wingnut, Tea Party, bigoted conservatism.

"They ... are constantly reminded they aren't quite like everyone else: from the churches they do or don't attend, to their purchases and media preferences, to their loyalties at the ballot box," writes Krebs.

"On a daily basis, liberals who have made homes, formed friendships, and participated in the civic life of conservative towns and cities are confronted with unsettling reminders that they're different, and they've found myriad ways to take that truth in stride."

The easy-to-read vignettes are entertaining and illuminating – as if a liberal Okie were peering into a mirror. Change the names and places and – *voila!* – the scenarios could be you, here.

Take Byron Stuart, who owns the only watering hole in his hometown of Pomeroy, IA, population 650. Stuart went to college at Iowa State where he was introduced to a new world, everything from FM radio and pot to anti-Vietnam War protests.

"The main thing was hearing different points of view," he says. "Someone was a chemical engineer. What the hell is chemical engineering? Never heard of such a thing. I'd never been around even the word. That was really great to see so many different people."

Three-plus decades ago, after college, Stuart returned to his tiny hometown, even though it couldn't have been easy to be gay, agnostic, and liberal in a religious, straight-laced, Fox News-dominated burg. He loves his hometown, but is fully aware he doesn't fit the demographic mold, so he carefully picks his spots when engaging redneck conservatives.

"We were watching the news the other night and something came up about ObamaCare," he recalls. "Someone said, 'Niggercare.' That takes you back to reality." He chose not to say anything.

Another time, he says, "a guy came in, we were watching a golf game. He said, 'Is the nigger winning?' I turned to him and said, 'Excuse me?!' He stopped and said, 'Is the black guy winning?' I just stared at him. Finally, he said, 'Is Tiger Woods winning?' 'No,' I said, 'he isn't winning.'"

The stories remind me of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign when Democratic staffers in Oklahoma contacted party chairs in rural counties to begin

coordinating. Sadly, many local party leaders refused to help. Even worse, they often invoked the racial epithet Stuart heard in his Iowa tavern. Obama lost all 77 counties in 2008 and 2012.

“... They don’t give up their politics or give up their homes,” writes Krebs. “Like all of nature’s creatures, they can adapt: they learn when to push their politics and when to put politics aside in order to form meaningful connections with neighbors despite differences. They learn to tap into values that run deeper than party affiliation.

“They find ways to share community happiness, which is key to daily survival, through a mix of coping, cajoling, and conquering, a balancing act of fight and flight, and knowing when it’s worth engaging, or when happiness relies on disengagement.”

Some red-state liberals enjoy the challenge, Krebs notes – telling the story of the Chulicks – retirees Al and Diane and their adult daughter Cass – who moved to Spartanburg, SC after living previously in northwest Arkansas and northern California.

“If you’re going to be a liberal in California or New York City, you have an easy life,” says Al. “You’ve got friends who agree with you, most things political are on the liberal slant. Move to Arkansas. Move to South Carolina. You want a challenge, you’ve got it.”

Adds Cass: “I thought I’d come to South Carolina for a couple of years, then move on. Been here 15 years. I’m not bored. I’m having a fantastic, fun life; I’ve found all types of people. I don’t want to go anywhere else.

“I’m in love with the people of Vermont, their thought processes, their election results. But I don’t want to do winter in the north.” Besides, “I feel like I might be bored in Vermont. What are you going to fight for, man?”

To the south, in Brandon, FL, Joe and Shirley Litton, transplanted from the Pacific Northwest, host a liberal social club. Several times they invited conservative neigh-

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bors – with whom they’ve become dear friends – to attend.

“A couple of other folks in the group didn’t like that,” Joe says. “They felt like we live in a bastion of conservatism. This is our sanctuary. Our moment of sanity. Our chance to chill.

“Several of us like the opportunity to engage in civil discourse with folks who don’t share the same opinion. Others just don’t want the argument.”

Rebecca Lehman and Chris Flowers live that tension every day in conservative Cincinnati. Much

of their work – she is a social justice educator, he a museum IT manager – takes them across the Ohio River into even more conservative Kentucky.

In addition, Flowers is a member of an ice hockey team, comprised entirely of Republicans, that adheres to a strict “no-politics rule.”

“It’s the Midwestern culture of politeness,” he says. “Once we identify differences, it’s not polite to discuss them. Even among friends, it becomes not a point of discussion.

“We’re good at compartmentalizing things around here. There is no time we don’t hang out with conservative friends. We just don’t talk topics we don’t agree on.”

Those whose stories Krebs tells are certainly realists – they have figured out ways to live comfortably, if not happily, despite not being members of their towns’ dominant political tribe. But it would be wrong to assume they are uniformly pessimistic – grimly accepting political enlightenment will not reach their

Radical

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

verse runaway inequality cannot.

Rather than embrace these proposals mainstream Democrats are likely to reject our survey because it doesn’t jive with the milquetoast questions posed by their high-priced pollsters, and because it challenges their cozy relationships with Wall Street and corporate elites.

But we can’t afford to sit around and moan this sorry state of affairs. Millions are in motion and eager to get more involved. We need to break through the false narratives and continue to prove that Americans want a much fairer society.

For starters, we could turn this agenda into a cir-

Abortion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

ment intrusion on a private decision, but there’s no forcing any woman to look at anything.

The liberal website Daily Kos meekly withdrew its endorsement of Mello over the ultrasound issue. So exactly whom are its writers endorsing? Put another way, do they see a difference between Mello and his far more anti-choice opponent?

National polls show widespread support for a basic right to abortion but also interest in adding restrictions. The prominent Nebraska Democrat Jane Kleeb, a strong Mello supporter, tries to explain that many Democrats she knows are troubled by abortion. In this part of the country, you elect either a Democrat like Mello or a Republican.

Sen. Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania are Democrats opposed to abortion. Do liberals want them replaced by Republicans who can’t even get straight on the matter of covering con-

current addresses.

Consider John Turner-McClelland, a self-described “recovering Republican,” who arrived in north Texas in 2001 by way of New Jersey, where he was born and raised, and North Carolina. He now lives in Little Elm, whose population of 25,000 includes many out-of-staters who chose the north Dallas exurb because of its affordable housing.

Turner-McClelland says he believes the Tea Party’s domination of Little Elm and environs eventually will wane because of the influx of newcomers. His story gives even more reason for optimism: Gay, atheist, and Yankee-born – three big strikes in traditional Texas – Turner-McClelland also is the elected chair of the local taxation board.

“The young families are typically more liberal,” he says. “We’re kind of on the cusp – if anywhere were to change to the blue side, it would be an area like this. But now it’s still pretty conservative in how we vote” – adding, “We’re not that far from Oklahoma.”

culating petition, get 20 million or so to sign it, and then shove it in the face of every politician. Then maybe, just maybe, we’ll see growing support for real policies to reverse runaway inequality.

If you’re interested in helping out, check out runawayinequality.org. We need you. We need each other. *Les Leopold, director of the Labor Institute, is currently working with unions and community organizations to build the educational infrastructure for a new anti-Wall Street movement. His new book Runaway Inequality: An Activist’s Guide to Economic Justice serves as a text for this campaign.*

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traceptives?

Let me make my view clear: Access to an early abortion should be part of a well-developed set of reproductive health services. And any restrictions must make room for those rare situations when something goes dreadfully wrong later in a pregnancy.

Clinton was careful never to frame abortion as a casual thing. NARAL itself took the word “abortion” out of its official name, preferring the emphasis to be on choice.

It’s therefore curious to see Democrats tormenting good candidates over small deviations in doctrine. On the complex issue of abortion, real liberals give wide latitude to other opinions.

The ultimate question for single-minded activists is, Do you want to run the country or just the Democratic Party?

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Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

So what could spark the revolution? How about the demise of extracurricular activities?

We've contended that Oklahomans won't get truly riled until the high school football team can't afford to travel to a game three counties away or the band to participate in state competition.

Athletics, music, FFA and other activities are sources of community – not just individual family – pride. All it takes is a trip to the high school basketball championships at the State Fair's "Big House" to realize how important schools are to their hometowns.

What's particularly dispiriting is that rural voters are responsible for electing many members of the GOP supermajority whose financial mismanagement shoves smaller districts to the brink of extinction.

With no new investment in public schools on the horizon, and a teacher pay raise still in serious doubt, voters are afforded a rare opportunity between general elections to demolish the current legislative status quo.

There are five – soon to be six – vacancies in the House and Senate. Special elections this spring and summer will fill the seats. If voters embrace more progressive candidates – who view public education as an investment, not a cost center – it could radically transform public policymaking.

Isn't it way past time for a shakeup under the dome?

Hubris

Slowly, but surely one-party rule at the state Capitol has triggered an outbreak of hubris. Like the flu, cases initially appeared to be isolated. But this spring, it spread – testy lawmakers penning snarky replies to constituents, stiff-arming journalists and working to reverse voters' decisions on referenda, among other symptoms.

Maybe it's the pressure of four consecutive years in fiscal hell. Maybe it's because they prefer wining-and-dining with lobbyists who whisper sweet-nothings. Maybe it's just old-fashioned human nature.

It's probably a combination of the three, coalescing into a bulletproof swagger that often results when one party controls all levers of government.

Example: Last month, the House made it tougher for Oklahomans to email their state representatives en masse, effectively blocking access to representatives@okhouse.gov to anyone but lawmakers and staff.

House insiders insist the address was created for internal use only, yet outsiders [think: constituents] were able to use it until a flurry of recent emails on hot legislative topics ranging from taxes to bear hunt-

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Now, to voice concerns to all the lawmakers whose salaries they pay, Oklahomans must type in each representative's email address or build a recipient list of all 101 email addresses. How many have or will take the time to do that?

Like it or not, the House message to rank-and-file Sooners is this: "We're not really interested in hearing from you. We know what's best."

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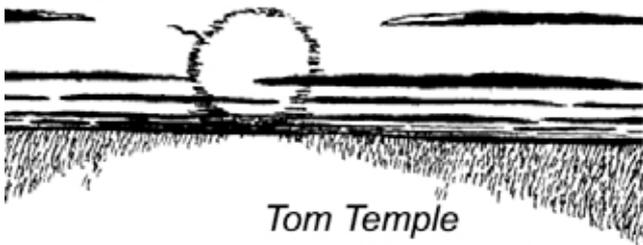
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Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

A special committee to help pay state Superintendent Joy Hofmeister's legal fees raised \$75,500 through March 31. She is accused of colluding with a dark money group during her 2014 campaign. A preliminary hearing is set to begin Aug. 16.

Laurel: To our dear friend and union printer Linda James Farley, to be honored May 20 as American Business Women's Association's Tu'Ya Chapter Woman of the Year. Bravo!

A consequence of the GOP supermajority's self-inflicted budget calamity: Starving higher ed results in annual tuition increases ... which makes college less affordable ... which yields fewer degree-holding Oklahomans – just 32%, the region's second lowest [thank God for Arkansas].

Fox News Value: Being a sexist pig is the pathway to riches. Bill O'Reilly gets \$25 million and Roger Ailes \$40 million to go away after being outed as sexual harassers.

Dart: To GOP-dominated Legislature, proving yet again it's a wholly owned subsidiary of Devon, Continental, et al. Cancel wind tax credit but ignore immoral 2% gross production tax? Shameful.

West Virginia recently became the 29th state to legalize medial marijuana. A successful initiative petition drive ensures Oklahomans will get to vote on a similar proposal – most likely in November 2018 general election.

Food for thought: In Oklahoma, the state House rejected a 50% hike in vending machine decal fees. In Chicago, Rush University Medical Center developed vending machines that alert customers of a 25-second delay in dispensing unhealthy choices. Result: Sales of healthy snacks jumped 2%-5%.

The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs credits the nation's lowest business taxes [see Anderson Economic Group study] for fueling robust economic growth and investment in Oklahoma. Really? The Koch-headed monster previously claimed Oklahoma taxes are nothing short of stifling. Hypocrisy on display.

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

in Oklahoma. They've won four special elections in a row, and I can't wait to see what happens next.

Red Goldfarb
Yukon

Editor's Note: Since Mr. Goldfarb's letter another senator, OKC's Kyle Loveless, resigned, setting up another special election.

Editor, The Observer:

President Trump plans to drop corporate tax rates from 35% to 15%. There won't be any budget deficits though, Republicans say, because economic growth will pay for it all.

How did that work out for us here in Oklahoma when the state Legislature consistently dropped tax rates?

We were all going to benefit from Trickle Down Economics just like in the Reagan years. So where are those good jobs with benefits?

Instead, Oklahoma turned into a Third World state and dropped to the bottom of every national index for healthcare, jobs creation, education, mental health, public safety, infrastructure repairs, family violence – even business development because who wants to move somewhere like that? And the 1% just got richer at our expense.

Wake up, America!

Phyllis Bryant
Bethany

Editor, The Observer:

Should America reinstate the draft?

With the old man in the White House and fuddy-duddies like Jim Inhofe in the Senate acting like little Napoleons, I'm calling for Universal National Service.

This mother of a Peace Corps volunteer and wife of a Korean War draftee wants all U.S. residents, ages 18 to 25, to have a two-year service requirement in the Armed Forces or civilian pursuits like the Peace Corps and Americorps.

A draft of 1.5 million a year would force us to share the sacrifice which is now borne by an all-volunteer Army from economically depressed urban and rural areas.

We have developed, in effect, a mercenary army of economic refugees whose parents don't have the power to stop wars.

Only when the sons of the rich and powerful are



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drafted, as they were for Vietnam, will Congress listen to calls for peace.

"We make decisions about war without worry over who fights them," said Charles Rangel, former New York City Congressman.

"Requiring two years of service from everyone would compel us to rethink how and why we send young Americans into harm's way for multiple combat tours and deter future military entanglements. It will ensure that future leaders will never commit our troops to the battlefield unless they are willing to send their own children."

If mandatory national service makes us less selfish, protects the mental health of our troops and ends wars, it will be Uncle Sam's best investment.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner

already exists and will continue to grow. Statistics show that by 2020 – three short years from now – 67% of job vacancies in our state will require the minimum of an associate’s degree or additional postsecondary education and training. Thirty-seven percent of jobs will require an associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree or higher.

If we don’t have a workforce with required qualifications, how will Oklahoma survive – much less thrive?

Higher education is worth its weight in gold, and it should be the gold standard for Oklahoma. We must protect the integrity of higher education by funding it at the highest levels. We must put our money where our mouths are not only by talking about an educated workforce, but also by creating one.

As those of us who are presidents of these fine institutional landmarks step up to showcase an investment that will continue paying dividends year after year, please combine your voices with ours. Please stand with your local community colleges and universities as we raise our voices to fight for the education and educated workforce this great state deserves.

Call your legislators and tell them that higher education is vital in Oklahoma. Remind them that even pay raises for K-12 teachers will not be enough to see Oklahoma through the coming years.

From personal experience, I realize there is no greater equalizer than higher education. For me this is a lesson learned over many years, but it is as true today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow.

Full funding for community colleges and universities is a necessity for which we all must continue to fight. And fight we will because Oklahoma’s students deserve top-quality higher education at an affordable cost. We should not expect them – or ourselves – to settle for less.

Joy McDaniel, a native of Ardmore, is president of Murray State College in Tishomingo and has worked in Oklahoma higher education for more than 30 years. She serves as chair of Oklahoma’s Two-Year Council of Presidents and is a member of the Oklahoma Governor’s Council on Education.

been damaging to Kashmir. It is imperative that civil society actors and political actors work in collaboration with one another to focus on the rebuilding of a greatly polarized and fragmented social fabric to ensure the redress of inadequate political participation, insistence on accountability for human rights violations through transitional justice mechanisms, and resumption of access to basic social services. Otherwise the fate of women in Kashmir, as in some other conflict zones, is determined by humanitarian agencies and the international media that highlight their situations.

New efforts and new forums are required not just in Jammu and Kashmir but in other parts of the world as well for the germination of new ideas, broad based coalition politics that transcends organizational divides, and gives women the space and leeway to make important political decisions. In order to mitigate the conflict in Kashmir, “women have to re-establish their historic links with peace and the peace movement, asserting themselves as the harbingers of a genuine alternative. It is with this perspective in mind that women have to speak to those in public power and when they themselves are in public authority. This is very different from adopting, in the name of the search for equality, the existing masculinist and militaristic mentality” [Chenoy and Vanaik: 2001, 137].

In Northern Ireland, for example, prior to the peace moves between the paramilitary forces and the political institutions, women worked to forge connections across community, denominational, and ideological lines. The most effective way to make a gender perspective viable in Kashmiri society would be for women, state as well as non-state actors, to pursue the task of not just incorporating and improving the positions of their organizations within civil society, but also by forging connections between their agendas and strategies for conflict resolution and reconstruction of society with the strategies and agendas of other sections of the populace impacted by the conflict. Women who urge their governments to initiate genuine peacekeeping, as Cynthia Cojburn reminds us, believe that they can facilitate the process of rebuilding and peace “because they have escaped masculine socialization,” and are, therefore, “freer to formulate a transformative, nonviolent vision” [“A Gender Perspective on War and Peace”].

Nyla Ali Khan is the author of Fiction of Nationality in an Era of Transnationalism; Islam, Women, and Violence in Kashmir; The Life of a Kashmiri Woman, and the editor of The Parchment of Kashmir. She also has served as a guest editor working on articles from the Jammu and Kashmir region for Oxford University Press [New York], helping to identify, commission, and review articles. She can be reached at nylakhan@aol.com.

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Net Neutrality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

ity and other reforms during the Obama Administration. After taking office, Donald Trump rewarded Pai with the top seat on the commission under the FCC's new Republican majority. Like other Republicans in Washington, Pai has quickly moved to slash regulations established under President Obama.

"Two years ago, I warned that we were making a serious mistake," Pai said. "Most importantly, I said that Title II regulation would reduce investment in broadband infrastructure."

As expected, ISPs such as AT&T and Verizon issued statements supporting Pai's proposal, while digital rights and consumer groups are launching a coordinated campaign to oppose him at every turn. Advocates say it's clear whose side the public is on.

Voters tend to support net neutrality, as do a large number of tech startups and web services that don't want to pay extra fees in order to compete. Moreover, people don't like their internet providers. ISPs consistently rank at the bottom of 43 industries surveyed by the American Customer Satisfaction Index. House Republicans who voted to repeal privacy rules received an average \$138,000 in campaign contributions from ISPs and are probably more eager to defend them against regulation than the average voter.

"When the internet is under attack, we fight back," said Craig Aaron, CEO of the digital rights group Free Press, in a statement. "Pai's move threatens to erase one of the most important victories for the public in the FCC's history, to defang a needed watchdog, and to leave people everywhere at the mercy of the country's most-hated phone and cable companies."

Back in 2014, a massive pushback from the media, Silicon Valley and internet users, organized in large part by groups like Free Press, generated an unprecedented 3.7 million comments on net neutrality. The outcry pushed the FCC to adopt strong net neutrality protections under orders from President Obama. The activists who built that movement are preparing for a repeat performance now that net neutrality is on the chopping block under President Trump.

THE COMING BACKLASH

On April 26, a coalition of digital rights groups announced a campaign to relaunch BattleForTheNet.com, a website that went viral and helped large numbers of people file comments with the FCC in 2014. The groups pledged to send more than one million comments to the FCC in the coming weeks. Consumers Union, the policy arm of the group that publishes Consumer Reports, has launched its own online petition.

"Hell hath no fury like the internet scorned," said Evan Greer, campaign director for Fight for the Future, one of the groups behind BattleForTheNet.com. "We'll fight tooth and nail to defend net neutrality

and keep the web free from censorship."

Democrats in Congress smell blood and are jumping on the bandwagon. Aaron and Greer joined Sen. Markey and two other Democrats, Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Sen. Ron Wyden, in a press conference announcing the campaign and warning Republicans that gutting protections for consumers online would backfire.

Greer said the message is already getting across, as evidenced by 15 Republicans who broke rank and voted against repealing the privacy rules in the House. The rules, which were established under Title II and had yet to go into effect, would have required ISPs to ask permission before gathering sensitive personal information such as web browsing records from their customers and sharing the data with third parties.

Greer said the ISPs have "poisoned" the debate over online privacy and net neutrality, turning consumer protection into a "partisan issue." "I think Republicans are misjudging their base on this," Greer said.

Pai wants to exempt ISPs from Title II and send the job of enforcing net neutrality back to the Federal Trade Commission, an agency that does not have the ability to protect consumers like the FCC can, according to net neutrality supporters. This cannot happen overnight. Unlike the privacy rules, which the Republican majority was able to repeal quickly under the Congressional Review Act, an obscure legislative tool used to roll back a number of Obama-era regulations, the FCC's rulemaking process could take months.

Pai said the FCC would begin taking public comments when it releases a proposal on May 18, giving Democrats and advocacy groups plenty of time to gather momentum and articulate that the effort is a giveaway to the same powerful broadband companies that send consumers a bill every month. Blumenthal said that even the ISPs themselves should reconsider their support for Pai's plan. "The bad guys are potentially targets, and they are going to have to think twice about whether they want to fight this fight, because it will be a fight," Blumenthal said.

Net neutrality has long been surrounded by obtuse technical jargon, but the political lines drawn around it are now clear. Republicans and the ISPs argue that "light touch" regulation will foster innovation and investment in infrastructure. Advocates say the ISPs have proven that they can't be trusted to respect net neutrality and the rights of their customers on their own, and a strong government watchdog is needed to protect consumers and the internet itself.

Democrats and digital activists are betting that a large chunk of the public will agree with the latter, and they are ready to pounce now that the Trump administration is headed in the opposite direction.

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