

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

• AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF COMMENTARY •

NOVEMBER 2017 • VOLUME 49 NUMBER 11 • \$5.00

BLUE'S CLUES

*GOP Misfires Point Ways
To Oklahoma Democratic Revival*



"HOW ARE YOU NOT DEAD YET?!?"

*The Ingredients For A Democratic Renaissance
In 2018: Special Report Pages 12-17*

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

www.okobserver.org

VOLUME 49, NO. 11

PUBLISHER Beverly Hamilton

EDITOR Arnold Hamilton

DIGITAL EDITOR MaryAnn Martin

ADVISORY BOARD

Marvin Chiles, Andrew Hamilton,
Matthew Hamilton, Scott J. Hamilton,
Trevor James, Ryan Kiesel,
George Krumme, Gayla Machell,
Bruce Prescott, Robyn Lemon Sellers,
Kyle Williams

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

FOUNDING PUBLISHER

Helen B. Troy [1932-2007]

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy [1933-2017]

[ISSN 0030-1795]

The Oklahoma Observer [USPS 865-720] is published on the first Wednesday of each month by AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Periodicals postage paid at Edmond, OK and additional entry office. Phone: 405.478.8700.

POSTMASTER

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

1-Year [12 issues] \$50. Send check to The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. Online: Visit www.okobserver.net to use a credit card.

UPDATE ADDRESSES

Please notify us at least two weeks before your move to ensure uninterrupted service. E-mail address changes to subscriptions@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

E-mail to letters@okobserver.net or mail to P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.

Observations

Inman Out

Weeks later, House Democratic Leader Scott Inman's abrupt departure from both the Legislature and the 2018 governor's race is still a stunner.

Inman was indisputably the state's highest profile elected Democrat – the face of a once-dominant party showing signs of revival, thanks to victories in five of the last six special legislative elections.

It was too early to know, of course, whether Inman could have parlayed that into the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. But make no mistake: Democrats will miss his leadership at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

Inman managed to do what few thought possible: keep House Democrats united during recent head-knocking budget battles with the Legislature's GOP supermajorities.

Fully uniting either party's caucus is akin to herding cats. Just ask House Speaker Charles McCall who watched 17 fellow Republicans vote against his budget fix during the special session.

Inman skillfully bridged competing interests – urban-rural, conservative-liberal, corporate-worker – giving Democrats out-sized influence when considering their small numbers: only 28 of 101 House seats.

This is not to suggest Inman told fellow Democrats what to say or how to vote. But unlike any legislative leader of either party since the advent of term limits, he was able to rally his colleagues into a solid bloc, no matter what the Republicans or high-powered special interests threw at them.

A gifted debater, Inman had a unique ability to make his case in six-second sound bites that resonate in today's warp-speed information age.

In announcing he was abandoning the governor's race and leaving the House early, Inman was circumspect about the reasons, primarily citing the toll of public life on his family.

As you might suspect, the information vacuum was quickly filled with rumors, some salacious.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

Yes! Please send me a one-year subscription for only \$50. This special offer includes my certificate for a free book courtesy of Full Circle Bookstore [a \$20 value]. See page 41 for details.

Name: _____

Address: _____

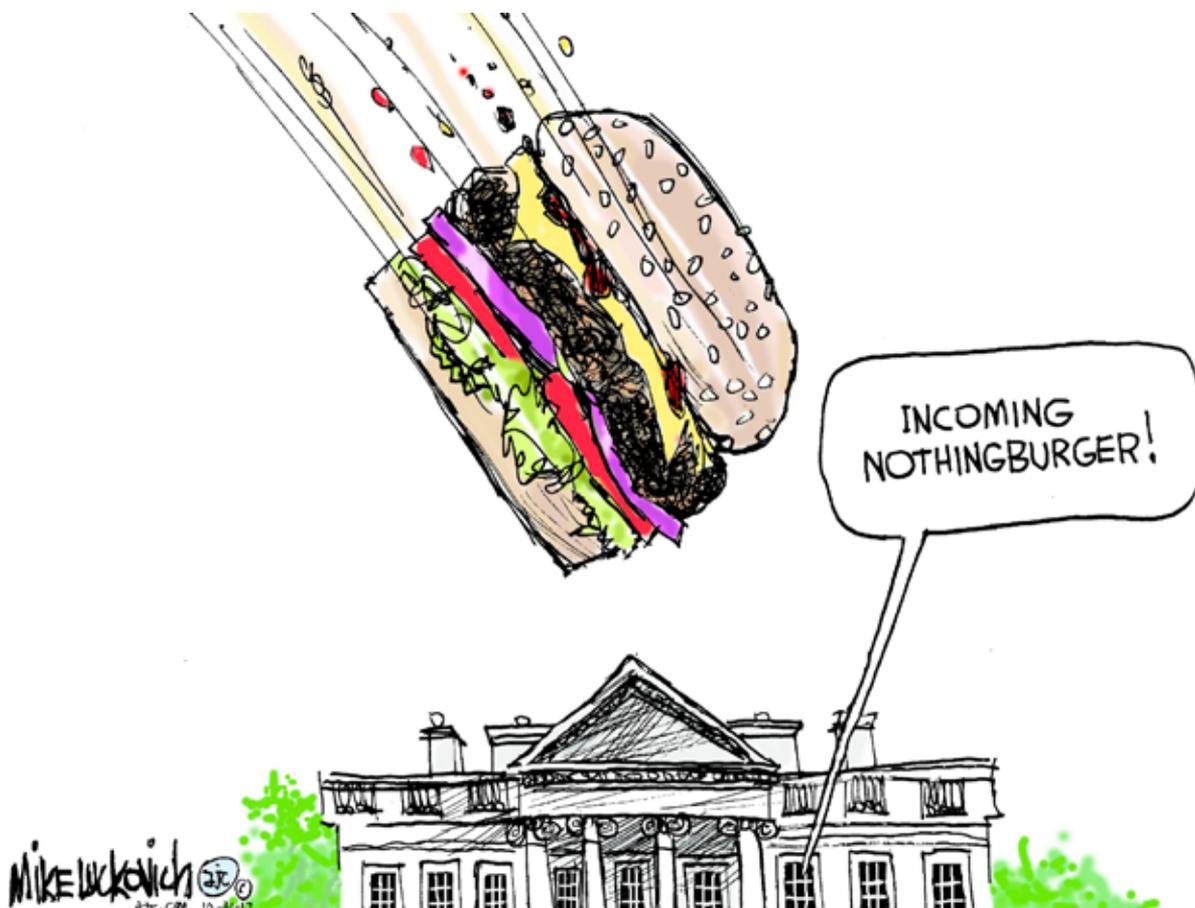
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please make checks payable to: "The Oklahoma Observer"

Clip and mail to: The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275. If you prefer to pay using a credit card, visit us online at www.okobserver.net.



Observerscope



Mark your calendars: Observer Newsmakers on Nov. 9 features state Democratic Chair Anna Langthorn and former Gov. David Walters discussing 2018 elections. See back cover for details.

Deadline is mid-November for Save OKC Schools petition drive, aimed at forcing a vote on half-percent temporary income tax for stipends for teachers and staff. You can sign petition at Vito's or Bacon restaurants. Visit saveokcschools.com for details.

Congratulations to Rep. Mickey Dollens, D-OKC, and wife Taylor, tying the knot on Oct. 14. We wish you a lifetime of happiness.

Laurel: To Rep. Roger Ford, R-Midwest City, standing tall amid the sellouts and demagogues who refused to fully restore gross production tax. The Lege sorely needs more of his kind.

We mourn the passing of former Sen. Ed Long, a statesman who displayed both uncommon common sense and a generous heart. He will be sorely missed.

Dart: To Oklahoma's turgid twins, Sens. Jim Inhofe and James Lankford, personifying mean-spiritedness with their votes against aid to Puerto Rico and to curtail consumer rights when challenging credit card piranhas.

Electric bills for a half-million-plus Oklahomans could jump an average \$14 a month if PSO's proposed rate hike is approved. – AARP

Oklahoma's "gift" to the world, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, is not only corrupt and stupid, but also paranoid. He's hired 12 more bodyguards [\$12 million annually] and built a soundproof communications booth [\$25,000].

Laurel: To Tulsans June Patton and David Hogan, named Volunteers of America Oklahoma's 2018 premier volunteers. Full disclosure: Patton was the Observer editor's fabulous music teacher in elementary school!

Crackpot Yukon minister and ex-Rep. Dan Fisher just can't help himself: He's running again – this time as the self-styled "abolitionist" candidate for governor. His goal: ban all abortions.

Dart: To Oklahoma's all-male congressional delegation, unanimously backing efforts to ban abortions after 20 weeks. When all else fails, try to jump-start the culture wars.

Wow! Time reports 6,663 Texas inmates donated \$53,863 from their commissary accounts to Hurricane Harvey relief.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

Letters



Rather than a traditional Letter to the Editor, reader Rick Ewing, from Lexington, sketched an editorial cartoon instead.

Editor, The Observer:

What folks believe is almost always more important than the actual facts. Most often we act on what we believe even when the facts turn out to counter our beliefs.

Take this four-question true/false test to check this premise:

1. The U.S. CIA, in concert with British MI6, orchestrated the overthrow of a democratically elected government in 1953 in order to place Shah Reza Pahlavi on the Iranian throne;

2. The Shah despotically ruled Iran for 26 years using SAVAK, a Gestapo-like secret police to keep control;

3. In 1979, the Shah was given sanctuary in the U.S. for two reasons: he was gravely ill and the Iranian people were in revolt against his rule;

4. In response to U.S. sanctuary given the Shah, the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was seized by Iranians in revolt against the Shah. Americans in the embassy were held

hostage for 444 days before being released unharmed;

5. Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces made war on the Iranians believing they were weak and vulnerable. The U.S. supplied weapons to Hussein including chemical-type. The war lasted eight years with no change in territory and millions of deaths on both sides;

6. On July 3, 1988 the U.S. Navy mistakenly shot down an Iranian airliner over the Persian Gulf killing all 290 aboard. The US paid \$61.8 million in reparation;

If you answered "true" to all six questions give yourself a perfect score! If not, to refresh your memory or to learn the facts for the first time, "Google" for full information on the answers you missed.

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

After nine months control by a manic

Our populous is now in a panic.
With the red button so near

Has created such fear
That we all feel we are on the Titanic.

Tom Birbilis
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

It irritates me to hear news people on TV editorialize by referring to the Trump tax fiasco as "tax reform." My dictionary defines "reform" as making something better. Have they no dictionary?

Clifton Richards
Purcell

Editor, The Observer:

Like Richard Nixon, Mary Fallin has a political enemies list.

I made it as a substitute and paraprofessional teacher in public schools.

I'm in distinguished company on our governor's list - other subs and paras, nursing home attendants, call center callers, grocery sackers and stockers, retail clerks, fast-food workers, tipped servers and bartenders, child care workers, floor cleaners, and dish washers.

Thanks to Fallin and her Republican gang, we all make less than a living wage of \$15 an hour.

Most of us are working women.

When Fallin was elected as our first woman governor, we hoped she would be on our side.

Instead, she keeps our state's minimum wage lowest in the nation at \$7.25 an hour and \$2.13 for tipped workers.

Twenty-nine states have raised their wage higher than the federal \$7.25 and \$2.13. The Arkansas minimum is \$8.50 and \$2.63 for tipped. But not Republican-controlled Oklahoma, where rednecks rule the roost.

Maybe Madeleine Albright was right when the former Secretary of State said, "There's a special place in Hell for women who don't help each other."

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner



Capitol's Revolving Door

One of the many unintended consequences of term limits is the Legislature has become a stepping-stone for professional development and personal enrichment.

That is why so many lawmakers are squealing over a state Ethics Commission proposal that would make them wait two years before they can lobby their former colleagues.

Think DC's Congress to K Street pipeline stinks? Well, the post-electoral career cash-grab is alive and flourishing in Oklahoma City, too.

It's just politics, you say? Perhaps, but it's corrosive, too. How can we know whether our elected officials are fairly, impartially weighing the issues or currying favor with potential future employers?

Interested in a post-elective career representing oil interests? You're probably not going to support an increase in the gross production tax. You may even work hard against it – behind closed doors, of course.

When it comes to a choice between your soon-to-be former constituents or your potential employer, who gets your vote?

This isn't cynicism on steroids. This is reality.

It's just this sort of ethical quandary enveloping Senate President Pro Tem Mike Schulz as he enters his 12th and final year in the Legislature.

Schulz, R-Altus, recently said he hopes to become executive director of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau – long the state's most formidable voice on behalf of agriculture interests – once he leaves office.

The Senate leader, of course, is a farmer and former Farm Bureau field representative, so this is hardly surprising. But it's not difficult to imagine the ways in which Farm Bureau priorities could create headaches for Schulz's and the state's non-ag constituencies during the 2018 session.

What's the good book say about serving two masters?

Oklahoma's populist founding fathers clearly embraced the notion of citizen-legislators, meaning this: Local leaders would sacrifice their time and livelihoods for public service – for the greater good.

Go to Oklahoma City for a brief period. Do the peo-

ple's business. Return home. Live under the laws they wrought.

It was the early 20th Century, of course, but they likely never envisioned these public servants would use their elected positions to, in effect, network with – even audition for – the state's deepest pockets.

This is not to suggest past legislators never became lobbyists or took higher paying private sector jobs, greased by their legislator-special interest forged friendship.

Or that past legislators didn't jump at higher-paying, pension-burnishing state posts when they got the chance. Just think of all the ex-statehouse officials who became college presidents – recent example: former Sen. Sean Burrage, now at Southeastern State University in Durant.

It is important to note that lawmakers are blocked for two years from taking state jobs, if the positions are funded through direct legislative appropriation. But not all dollars in the state budget are – creating a loophole that enables ex-lawmakers to slide seamlessly into higher-paying state jobs.

Remember when then-new state Insurance Commissioner John Doak hired two ex-lawmakers, former Sen. Randy Brogdon and former Rep. Mike Thompson? Or when Gov. Mary Fallin appointed ex-Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee as Secretary of State? All three had just left elective office.

What happens more often is that ex-lawmakers almost immediately become "hired guns" for special interests. It's unlikely the ex-lawmakers were hired spur-of-the-moment – but rather after a long series of discussions.

Which may well have played out when the legislators were being paid to be agents of all their district's constituents.

This political-personal-professional dancing offers opportunity for shenanigans. That's why the Ethics Commission's proposal is important.

Hopefully it will ignite a broader discussion about the revolving door that seems to be spinning faster now that lawmakers enter office knowing they face a 12-year limit.



The Capitol's Real 'Deciders' – *And You Didn't Even Elect Them!*

BY CAL HOBSON

Sad, but true. There is an ocean of blame to share for the current train wreck in The People's Building – also known as our Capitol, nestled at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

Children masquerading as lawmakers. Lobbyists greedily looking out only for their own industry's bottom line. Elephants, donkeys, snakes in the grass and many a head up their own ass. In other words, S.N.A.F.U. which means Situation Normal All Fouled Up.

House Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, who inherited a bank, thinks he knows how best to manage your money. Altus farmer Mike Schulz, leader of the moribund supermajority of Republican empty suits parading as senators, putters around the rotunda patting school kids on their heads while lining up his next gig after term limits end his forgettable time in

office.

And Gov. Mary Fallin, fallen former disciple of discredited California economic theorist Dr. Art Laffer, begs decision-makers, or anyone else, to listen to her advice about how to fix the fiscal crisis she has created. That's like asking a well known arsonist to become the local fire marshal.

As inept, unqualified and goofy as this troika is, they really are just a reflection of a much larger problem at the heart of what ails our wobbly, woebegone world we call Oklahoma. Voters – yes, you, me, he and she – allow, encourage and do nothing while a handful of rich, aging and almost exclusively Republican white men set us on a selfish, wrong-headed and destructive path to economic and social ruin, not just now but for generations to come.

Serious charges, you say? Indeed, so I better in-

clude some names of the manipulators and I'll throw in some satire for free!

At least three of many perps immediately come to mind and two of them you know well. The third, who craves publicity, wishes you did. They are former Gov. Frank Keating, former U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn and one-time Fallin Administration Commerce Secretary Larry Parman.

Although they all have a long record of denying the obvious – with the obvious being that core government programs such as education, health care, public safety and infrastructure do indeed cost some amount of money – their recent mischief in the form of a letter opposing any and all tax increases carries such weight with our know-nothing and do-nothing nincompoops at the Capitol that as of this writing, the so-called special session remains anything but special.

Their admonition to the spineless ones got me, the big spending liberal from Lexington, to thinking, which admittedly occurs about as often as Dr. No from Muskogee says the word “yes”: What seismic events could trigger Keating, Coburn and Parman to change their lifelong tunes and actively support revenue enhancements?

Remember, they oppose them now and have put their collective opposition in writing to intimidate, cower and otherwise scare the pants off lawmakers [which according to press reports is easily done anyway] and this at a time when our state is facing its worst budget crisis since at least the mid-1980s or perhaps even the Great Recession.

Therefore, I pondered, what external or internal pressures might have them whistling a different tune in the future about the dreaded “T” word? Clearly if they won't say yes for kids, old folks, the sick, mentally impaired, crumbling roads and bridges, four-day school weeks, unaffordable college tuition, etc., etc. ... what would it take? An earthquake? Nah. We've had hundreds of those.

After much private reflection, prayer with about a dozen local preachers and consultation from my several extended families, I think I know now what could do the trick. Defense. That's right. Defense. In Keating's case, it would be defense of marriage. For Coburn, defense of the military-industrial complex. For Parman, defense of a rigged tax code. For my evidence, cooked up or otherwise, read on!

1. If Arkie chicken behemoth Tyson Foods invaded eastern Oklahoma to steal millions of our feathered fowl, family friendly former Gov. Keating, who eats only Kobe beef in the vast restaurant atop Devon's edifice, wouldn't squeak a squawk.

But in the name of marriage sanctity, should our hot-to-trot Razorback cousins come seeking relatives from multiple matrimones, family man Frank would call out the National Guard, issue them sharp rifles, cannons stocked with big, round cannon balls left over from the Civil War battle of Honey Springs and order “Damn the cost – fire at will ... and all his

toothless wife-swapping uncles as well.”

Even northwest OKC Tea Partiers, who love liberty, hate taxes and like to play paintball in Hefner Park before a round of golf would support this exception to Grover Norquist's dictum Numero Uno. You don't remember that one? It's the one about drowning seniors in their slip-free bathtubs because they cost him too damn much to keep alive.

Faith. Family. Freedom. One for all and all for one. Moving on now ...

2. Dr./Sen. Saint Thomas Coburn is tight as a tick, pernicious with taxpayer pennies, beloved in Town Hall meetings for saying it's all the government's fault, even though he was in it at the highest level for 12 years. Our ailing former Pooh Bah is an ardent and unwavering opponent of ObamaCare for you, but accepts same when it pays for his personal health insurance.

The Saint is judgmental, arrogant, dismissive of others' opinions, a darling of the Oklahoman's editorial page and author of the annual “Pig Report” that cost millions to compile but almost nothing to store and ignore in the unused dustbin of history.

So just what would unlock Dr. Scrooge's piggy bank? Certainly not kids, their nutrition or education, health care or those other fanciful frills lurking in the minds of mush ball liberals who mostly live anonymously near OU in Norman. After all, Dr. C represents a rock-ribbed conservative state, also home to the most dangerous man in the left seat of a cockpit, James Mountain Inhofe, and is, not by accident, a massive net recipient of moola from DC. So just where is all that cash being spent?

Deborah Astley

Summersgaze
Cdstley@aol.com

surface designs for
fabric, wallpaper & gift wrap
over 2500 designs in my Spoonflower shop

Visit my shop on line at:
www.spoonflower.com/profiles/anniedeb

BadVoter.org

Check any Oklahoma voting record
Sign up for "Vote by Mail" reminder
See your current registration info or register

Any questions or need help?
info@badvoter.org - Call/Text: (405) 463-9731

Oklahoma is sprinkled with a number of hugely expensive, unique and coveted Department of Defense installations so for a quick tour of them hop into my old, tax-exempt tagged farm truck and let's take a gander.

We'll begin at faraway and very isolated Altus Air Force Base, perfect location for lots of flying in clear space mostly devoid of other aircraft. Next an unfettered drive on the four-laned and nearly empty U.S. Highway 62 takes us to America's biggest artillery shooting gallery, also known as Fort Sill. Located abutting Lawton, it's known for bombs and bullets as well as booze and boobs in the local strip joints ... or so I've been told.

After that refreshing stop, we'll motor northeasterly on two turnpikes that lead to Tinker Air Force Base, the largest air materiel and maintenance center in the world.

Following an enticing and inexpensive lunch at the Officer's Club, it's on to another federal strip of concrete known as I-35 which lead to Vance Air Force Base in Enid, one of only three pilot training encampments left in all 50 states.

Happy not to have time to take an orientation flight with a newly-minted 2nd lieutenant and fledgling flyer, we immediately speed east on one of the least used turnpikes anywhere – the Cimarron – then hook up near Tulsa onto the sometimes money-making Muskogee-not-free-road which lead us to Camp Gruber, a massive National Guard training hangout where we enjoy a great nighttime cookout hosted by Uncle Sam.

Finally, as our long day nears its end, we enter one more turnpike that deposits us at the entrance to McAlester's bomb-making arsenal. The night shift, earning lots of overtime pay, is hard to work due to the legal and illegal growing demand for their deadly products.

Wow! Don't you agree that was your best trip since Haight-Ashbury in 1967?

Seriously, I am not anti-military, having served 32 years in uniform, including a three-year stint on the air staff in the Pentagon, as well as assignments at Altus, Tinker and the Will Rogers Air National Guard base. But as Gov. Keating used to remind us, money is fungible and through the years I have learned that generals can be as wasteful as file clerks.

St. Thomas talks a good game about balancing the budget but while he was in office the national debt more than doubled.

3. The third signer of the "don't you dare raise my taxes ever, never, no how, no way" declaration is less well known than Frank or Tom, but cut from the same "I've got mine, screw you Jack or Jane" cloth. He is Larry Parman, an estate planning lawyer, chairman of the far, far right Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs and former commerce secretary for Gov. Fallin.

Well, it appears Larry got a little big for his own britches, enjoyed the limelight and TV cameras too much, personally took credit for some job announce-

ments while apparently not realizing or caring that political folk covet that role. Anyway it led to his firing by the woman scorned and a "quik trip" back to the private sector where, in the name of defense for the super rich, he, too, affixed his signature to the aforementioned missive about not raising revenue. KC&P then directed it to the scaredy cats hunkered down in their bunkers at the Capitol.

To summarize our dysfunctional, unfair and antiquated revenue code that dictates who pays and who doesn't finds one of its strongest defenders in Mr. Parman.

There you have it. Keating in defense of marriage, Coburn the military-industrial complex and, of course, OCPA flack Parman in defense of the indefensible – the mega-wealthy and an absurd tax scheme that feeds their insatiable appetites.

So who is defending the rest of us? Mostly nobody, unless baby-delivering Doc Coburn decides to get into the transplant business ... of spines into jellyfish politicians.

Now that truly would be a miracle worthy of sainthood.

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

Let's Really Fix This

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

Oklahoma schools, mental health agencies, hospitals and health care agencies are in financial crisis. That crisis translates to impending catastrophe for hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans of all ages. Oklahoma's state government has a revenue problem that has deepened to the point that services can no longer be provided.

This situation did not occur overnight. For the past 10 years taxes have been recklessly cut without considering the cost or the impact on services that citizens expect government to deliver. Income taxes on high income earners have been slashed to the end that hundreds of millions of dollars have been taken out of state revenues.

Gross Production Tax on the oil and gas that is extracted from Oklahoma has been reduced from 7% which is actually low compared to other states to 2% which has the effect of subsidizing companies who are drilling in other states where the GPT is actually two and a half to six times higher.

If the Oklahoma Legislature had the courage to stand up to the oil and gas industry and its lobbyists, we would have an opportunity to avoid being 48th, 49th or 50th in every category that impacts our quality of life.

I am not talking about punishing an industry that

is so vital to Oklahoma. I am talking about simply reminding it that its Oklahoma operations are destroying our roads and contributing to earthquakes that damage our property and there is simply no reason for its tax structure to be so low. The Legislature simply needs to tell the oil and gas industry to pay its fair share of taxes.

The Legislature clearly does not have the intestinal fortitude to confront the oil and gas industry. If you would like to understand the situation, I would ask that you read the seven points below:

First, the Oklahoma Energy Producers Alliance recently had a poll conducted that showed that 67% of Oklahomans favored an increase in the gross production tax [GPT] to 7%.

Second, the current Oklahoma GPT rate is 2% for the first three years ["tax holiday"] of each well's production and then it increases to 7% in the 37th month of the life of the well.

Third, Oklahoma's GPT tax rate is not only the lowest in the country, if it were raised to 4%, it would STILL be the lowest in the country.

Fourth, the length of the "tax holiday" is every bit as important as the percentage rate. For instance, horizontal wells in Oklahoma are more than half depleted after just 36 months of production. So, when Democrats said months ago that they would accept 4% at 12 months; 4.5% at 18 months or 5% at 36 months, the length of the "tax holidays" were not just numbers that were casually tossed around.

- A 12-month tax holiday means that 37% of the lifetime oil production of the well is depleted before the 7% rate kicks in.

- A 24-month tax holiday means that 53% of the lifetime oil production of the well is depleted before the 7% rate starts.

- A 36 month tax holiday means that 62% of the wells total oil production is depleted before 7% applies.

Fifth, even though the Democrats have been requesting an increase in gross production tax for months, it was mid-October before Republicans announced a budget deal *with each other* ... and that budget deal didn't include the gross production tax ... or Democrats.

Sixth, on Oct. 20, for the first time, Republicans claimed to offer a deal that included Gross Production Tax. The purported offer was: *the lowest gross production tax rate in the country* and a plan that would allow 62% of *each new well's lifetime production of oil to be depleted before* the tax went to 7%. The "deal" ended up deadlocked and dying in committee with a tie vote that the Republican chairman and co-chairman refused to break.

Seventh, I truly believe that most legislators [Republican and Democratic] want to fix this, but those who are beholden to their campaign contributors are having a tough time right now. They need courage.

If you really want this fixed, pick up the phone or sit down and write a note to your legislator, Demo-

cratic or Republican, and encourage them to *really fix* this by increasing the gross production tax and decreasing the length of the tax holiday.

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

Taking Action When Legislature Won't

The Legislature's failure in special session to tackle the pitifully low gross production tax and woeful teacher pay is hardly the last word on either subject.

All but lost in the Republican supermajority's laughable attempts to blame Democrats for the legislative gridlock was announcement that a well-organized, well-financed initiative petition drive is in the works that would allow voters to take matters into their own hands.

Restore Oklahoma Now Inc., a coalition of small independent oil producers, educators and concerned citizens is "drafting language for a state ballot initiative with the dual purpose of restoring the state gross production tax to a flat rate of 7% and addressing the state's teacher crisis," according to a news release.

The group hired former Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association President Mickey Thompson as its executive. It reports it already has raised \$700,000 a \$3 million goal to help get a state question on the November 2018 ballot.

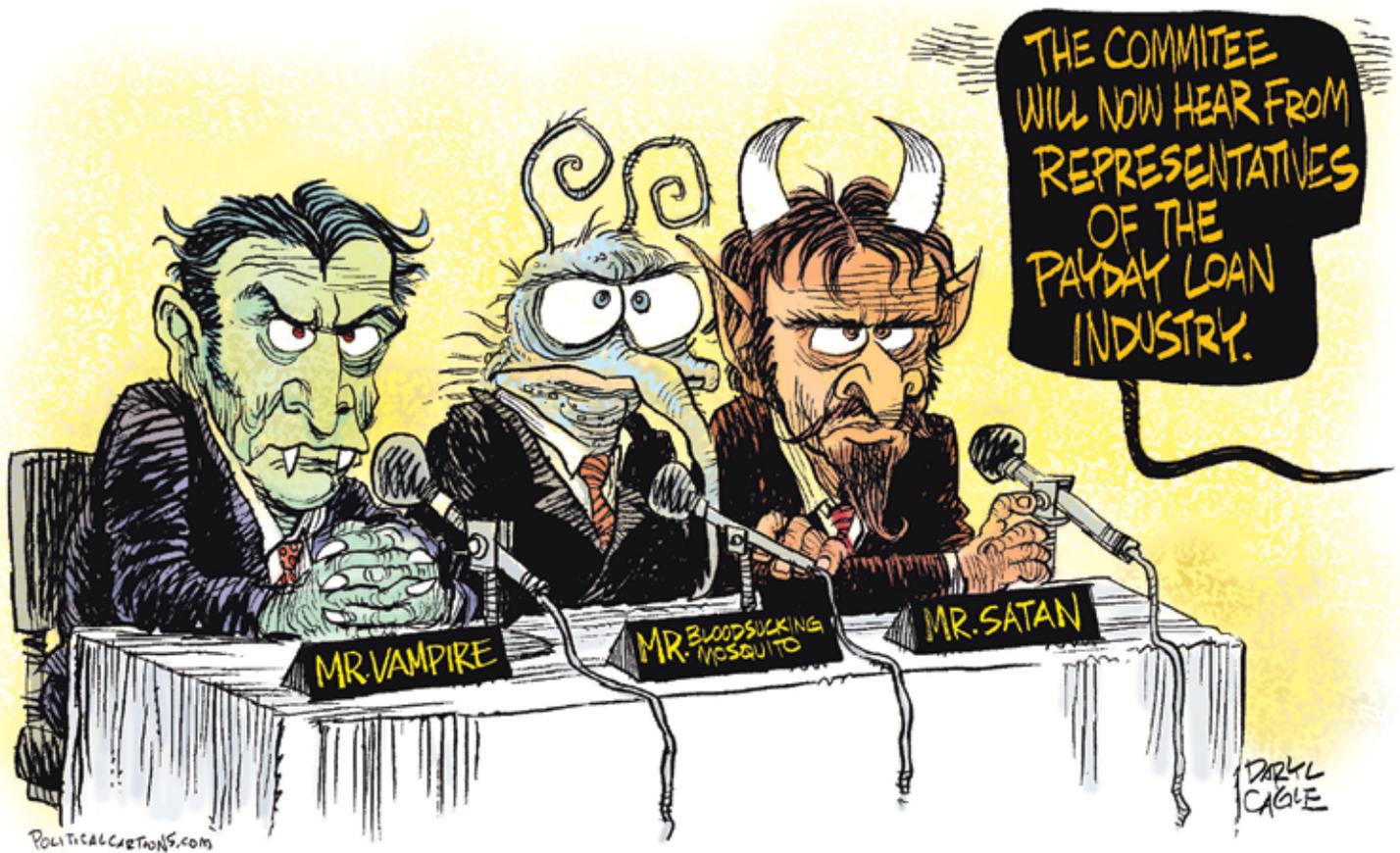
According to Restore Oklahoma Now's news release:

The focus of the initiative petition will be two-fold, said Mike Cantrell, chairman of the Oklahoma Energy Producers Alliance [OEPA], a group of small, independent oil producers who have advocated for a restoration of the gross production tax for more than a year and one of the organizational leaders of the new coalition.

"We think it's a matter of fairness to Oklahomans that all oil and natural gas production be taxed at a flat and competitive – with other states – rate that helps sustain essential state services, especially addressing our teacher crisis and teacher pay. Our petition will restore the historical 7% GPT immediately on all wells, in other words repealing all the current tiers of state oil and natural gas production tax," Cantrell, an Ada oilman, said.

"Further, we will lock-box the additional proceeds from this restoration for teacher pay and for rehiring thousands of teachers to address the ongoing shortage of qualified teachers."

The group cited Oklahoma Tax Commission estimates that a flat, 7% GPT last year would have generated about \$725 million for the state – \$440 million more than collected under the current four-tiered system.



New Protections Coming For Payday Borrowers But More Progress Needed

BY COURTNEY CULLISON

After years of research and public consultation, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau last month issued a final rule to create new protections for payday loan borrowers. These new protections are a necessary and positive first step in eliminating the debt trap that so often results from high-interest, predatory loans – and nowhere more than Oklahoma, where we have the highest payday loan usage rate in the nation.

The new protections won't close off all access to expensive loans, but they will curb the practices most likely to catch borrowers in debt traps, with mounting fees and interest charges on loans they simply cannot afford to pay back.

But we're not out of the woods quite yet. This new rule could face strong opposition from the predatory loan industry and from Congress, and we must continue speaking out to ensure that these protections go into effect.

Currently many payday loan companies seek out customers who cannot easily pay back their loans,

so they will be forced to refinance many times, paying new fees and interest each time. These companies use aggressive marketing to target vulnerable populations who are the least likely to be familiar with traditional banking services and who are often misinformed about the terms and conditions of payday loans.

The result of this strategy is that the majority of all payday loans in Oklahoma go to borrowers who take out 12 or more loans over the course of a year – an average of one loan each month. Fifty-three percent of all borrowers in 2011 took out seven or more loans over the course of the year – only 28% took out three loans or less.

This cycle of debt can feel nearly insurmountable for those caught in the trap. But these new protections will help individuals seeking high-interest loans. When lenders have to make sure that borrowers can afford to repay the loan, fewer people will be caught in the trap. And those who cannot get loans [because they won't be able to afford to pay them

back] will find other ways to cover their unexpected expenses.

Surveys by the Pew Charitable Trusts find that when predatory payday loans are no longer an option, would-be borrowers look to safer options like cutting back on expenses, using pawn shops, or borrowing from family and friends.

To ensure that consumers are not stuck with unmanageable debt, the rules will require that lenders first determine that the borrower can afford to repay the loan without falling behind on other necessary expenses. This means the lender will have to verify the borrower's income and any other financial obligations [like other debt payments] and factor in the cost of the borrower's basic living expenses. The lender can only make the loan if a borrower would still have enough income left to pay back the loan after their current expenses.

To ensure that borrowers are not stuck in a debt trap of endlessly repeated loans, the lender cannot make any new loans to that borrower for 30 days.

To ensure fair collection practices, lenders must get authorization from borrowers before withdrawing money from their bank account. Lenders will also be limited to two attempts to draw a loan payment from a borrower's bank account.

These new protections don't mean that states can't

do more to protect their citizens. They are meant to be a minimum standard. Individual states can enact their own laws to set higher standards, and many states already have much stricter rate caps and other protections than are allowed on the federal level or in Oklahoma.

So what happens now?

The rule is scheduled to take effect in the summer of 2019, but Congress could decide to reverse the rule. According to the Congressional Review Act of 1996, Congress has the right to disapprove of new regulatory rules, and predatory lenders are already lobbying to make sure that Congress does exactly that. We must fight back – contact your representative and senators in Washington and tell them not to block these important protections.

There is also work to be done here in Oklahoma. Last year, predatory lenders were almost successful in adding another high-cost product to the market – “installment loans” that would not be covered by the CFPB protections. Gov. Mary Fallin stepped in to veto the bill, but the lenders will almost certainly try again next year. These attempts must be thwarted. Oklahomans deserve fair lending practices, and we must be prepared to fight for them.

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

Oklahoma's Sprawling Criminal Code Could Make A Felon Of Almost Anyone

BY RYAN GENTZLER

In the wake of the failure of the criminal justice reform proposals put forth by the Justice Reform Task Force this year, Rep. Scott Biggs, the chairman of the House Judiciary-Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, blamed Gov. Mary Fallin and others for refusing to discuss the definition of “violent” and “nonviolent” crimes used by some of the bills.

After the session, in the lead-up to an interim study on that definition, Biggs distributed a survey asking respondents to classify every felony under Oklahoma law as violent, nonviolent, or a new, vaguely-defined category created by Biggs, “danger to the public.”

Gov. Fallin, for her part, declined to return the survey, instead sending a strongly-worded letter criticizing Biggs' actions during and since the regular legislative session. But the content and length of the survey are striking in themselves, revealing an increasingly sprawling criminal code that could make a felon out of just about any Oklahoman.

Biggs' survey identified 682 felony crimes and their citations in Oklahoma's state laws. Many are notable

for applying to relatively innocent or obscure offenses.

For instance, a person who takes up a stray dog but does not report it to the county sheriff within seven days may be guilty of a felony punishable by six months to three years in prison. Making a false statement in the application to hold a closing out sale is a felony. The second offense of selling or even giving an alcoholic beverage to, in the words of the law, “an insane, mentally deficient or intoxicated person” is a felony punishable by a fine of at least \$2,500 and up to five years in prison.

Even adultery is a felony under Oklahoma law, punishable since 1910 by up to five years in prison. Many more laws criminalize violations of regulatory and licensing codes, touching everything from private security guard applications to horse racing.

The unabated growth of the criminal code means that it is much easier to run afoul of the law inadvertently, even when the language of that law is unclear. Last year, for instance, a bar owner in Norman was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

Ingredients For '18 Democratic Revival

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

If Oklahoma voters needed more evidence the Legislature is broken and needs fixing, they got it in the not-so-special session.

Just a year away from the next general election, the Republican-dominated statehouse failed to deliver what Sooners say they most want: a permanent solution to properly fund vital state services.

The legislative chaos provides Democrats a clear opportunity to reverse a two-plus-decade slide into political purgatory – not a single statewide official or congressional seat.

In Oklahoma, the GOP has dominated most regular election cycles this millennium, especially mid-terms where lower turnout and a general Democratic dispiritedness yielded disastrous electoral results.

There is increasing evidence, however, that voters are beginning to understand that Republicans turned out to be a far more effective opposition than governing party.

They've driven the state into a fiscal morass so thick it would be stunning even to Kansans who've endured Gov. Sam Brownback's reign of error. Moreover, four members of the self-styled Family Values party resigned their legislative seats this year because of alleged sexual misconduct or embezzlement.

In response, Oklahoma voters have elected Democrats in five of the last six special legislative elections – all seats previously held by the GOP.

Three more GOP seats – two in the Senate and one in the House – are up for grabs in special elections Nov. 14. If Democrats could flip even one, it could help continue the momentum into next year.

If Democrats were assembling a wish list for 2018,

two things would top it: winning the governorship and creating a veto-proof minority in both houses.

Governor is always important because it gives the winning party the state's leading spokesperson and agenda-setter. It is even more important this time because the next governor will have considerable sway over the decennial redistricting after the 2020 Census.

Republicans parlayed control of the governorship and both houses after the 2010 Census to draw legislative district boundaries that guaranteed a decade of GOP supermajorities – especially in the Senate.

A Democratic governor could wield considerable influence on the process if ... if ... if Democrats could find a way to control at least one-third of legislative seats in either house.

Thirty-four House or 16 Senate seats would give a Democratic governor a key negotiating stick – the ability to veto an unfavorable redistricting plan, without fear of being overridden.

Nothing could restore the balance of power at the Oklahoma Capitol more quickly than less partisan, more fairly drawn districts that reflect Oklahoma as it is: increasingly urban.

That, of course, would benefit Democrats, based on recent trends in which once reliably red metro districts are purpling up – and actually trending Democratic blue [see recent special elections].

The question is, how can Democrats pull it off?

The party unquestionably suffered a setback when one of its leading 2018 gubernatorial candidates, House Minority Leader Scott Inman, abruptly withdrew from the race last month and announced he would be resigning his legislative seat.

But it still has two announced candidates with a history of electoral success: former Attorney General Drew Edmondson and former state Sen. Connie Johnson, the party's 2014 U.S. Senate nominee.

Moreover, Republicans are badly splintered – corporatists, theocrats, Tea Partiers, nationalists, Trumpsters, Never Trumpers, Reagan conservatives ... the list goes on.

The GOP primary already shows signs of being nasty – see wealthy Tulsa attorney Gary Richardson's attacks on Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb, aka "Mary's Little Lamb."

Democrats must exploit the fallout from the Republicans' internecine warfare. The only way to do so is to be united, no matter what happens in the primary. For liberals and progressives, Edmondson and Johnson are both superior to any of the candidates in the clown car careening down the political far right.

What happens when primary wounds fester? Can



you spell T-r-u-m-p?

Democrats also must exploit Republican leadership that leaves Oklahoma scraping the bottom in nearly every socioeconomic category – incarceration rate, teacher pay, roads and bridges, health outcomes, just to name a few.

The verdict is in on Gov. Mary Fallin: According to the latest Morning Consult Poll, released Oct. 31, she is the nation's fourth least popular governor, 58% of Oklahomans giving her thumbs down. Only 30% approve of the job she's doing.

Fallin's name won't be on the ballot. But her two disastrous terms will be. As will the pitiful record of the GOP's legislative supermajority. There's no Obama or Stipe to blame for this mess. Republicans own it.

The electorate is increasingly angry the Legislature hasn't solved very real problems facing the state.

Former Sen. Mike Mazzei, R-Tulsa, wrote the script for 2018 Democrats when he vented in a recent Facebook post:

Republicans have total control of state government and the super majority in both chambers of the state legislature. But from a financial perspective, super majorities are responsible for super failure. The fiasco of special session is aggravating, frustrating and uniquely bizarre to those of us who have served in state government.

The governor is blaming the Legislature. The Senate is blaming the House, and House Republicans are blaming House Democrats. Nobody seems capable of the leadership necessary to step forward and fix the current financial mess. The sacred cows of the special interest groups have protection in hand while the people are left to wonder about four-day school weeks, teachers leaving the state, hospitals closing down and nursing homes closing their doors.

Democrats also must exploit the political gifts that keep on giving – another legislative session next spring grappling with a minimum \$400 million budget hole and the likelihood that general election voters will decide whether to legalize medical marijuana.

It would be a Hail Mary of Biblical proportions for lawmakers to devise a comprehensive budget plan – including necessary tax increases – during an election year. Ain't gonna happen, the governor herself said on Nov. 1.

That means a lot of unhappy voters heading to the polls in November 2018. It's up to Democrats to give them a reason to vote Democratic. It's not enough to just be the Resistance against GOP leadership that is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Carbon Kings.

From the gubernatorial nominee to state-

house candidates, Democrats not only must say what they're against, but also what they're for and how they would fix things.

There must be a unified Democratic message.

Medical marijuana could be a boon for Democrats. Think cockfighting the last time a Democrat, Brad Henry, was elected governor.

The ballot initiative is likely to pass – and to generate a larger-than-normal turnout. Democrats must win the lion's share of those casual voters.

The ingredients are present for Democrats to turn a Red State purple.

Win the governor's race. Pick up a handful of legislative seats. And the revival begins.



CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
COMMUNITY
ACUPUNCTURE
An Affordable Good Health Practice

Karen Wilson, M.Ac.

2525 Northwest Expressway
Suite 201
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405.255-3193



Ofi House Family Lodging and Rental

The Ofi House is nestled on 12 idyllic acres on the shores of beautiful Lake Tenkiller, offering family friendly, spacious and comfortable lodging. The ideal place for your next family reunion, vacation, corporate event, church group retreat or weekend getaway.

FEATURES

- Sleeps 22 people
- 2 living areas: 70-inch and 60-inch plasma TVs, Direct TV, DVD players
- 2 fully equipped kitchens, large patio with grill for outdoor cooking and dining
- Game room with pool table, 65 game video arcade, ping-pong table
- 10 Person Hot Tub
- 2 laundry rooms
- Yoga Studio and Massage Room
- Fire Pit

FOR RATES & AVAILABILITY

www.theofihouse.com
918.457.5886
kalyn@theofihouse.com

Find us on



A Big Hole In Center Of The Democratic Party



BY RICHARD ESKOW

That's one of the slogans that was recently proposed by Democratic Party strategists, presumably in a lighthearted way. But the joke, if that's what it was, reflects an underlying belief among party leaders that Democrats' best bet is to stand in contrast to Republican extremism, rather than take strong, affirmative positions or moral stands on the issues that affect people's lives.

This belief is also reflected in other, presumably more serious suggestions, which were equally free of content or principle:

"Resist and Persist." *"She Resisted, We Persisted."* *"Make Congress Blue Again."*

Where are the calls to restore economic justice, rebuild the middle class, raise wages, end pointless wars, or to protect the women and people of color who live under daily threats of oppression and assault?

They fell down the big hole in the center of the Democratic Party.

Dems call this posture "centrism," although the resulting milquetoast policies usually fall to the right of popular opinion. But the indefatigable Democratic Party's well-funded "centrists" remain undeterred by either the unpopularity of their ideas or the failure of their candidates.

The poster child for this evidence-resistant posture is Mark Penn, the high-priced consultant whose bad advice almost certainly cost Hillary Clinton the Democratic nomination in 2008.

In what was presumably an unintended irony, Penn's recent New York Times op-ed, a screed against among other things Democratic deficit spending, was co-authored by former Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein.

Stein personally contributed to government debt by declining to pay his own taxes, an act which eventually led to his conviction on tax-dodging charges. Stein was initially charged for allegedly profiting from a \$30 million Ponzi scheme run by financial advisor

Kenneth I. Starr, but, as the New York Times reported in 2011, "federal prosecutors dropped those charges in exchange for his pleading guilty in December to the single count of tax evasion."

Penn has offered expensive but unsuccessful advice to Democrats for many years. He served simultaneously as Clinton's campaign manager and as CEO for Burson Marseller, a public relations firm whose clients have included the mercenary security force Blackwater, and Big Pharma firm Amgen, which was accused of running a website that misled cancer patients [the site's toll-free number was managed by Burson Marseller], and BP, the gas and oil giant whose negligence led to the Gulf oil spill that bears its name.

Penn's corporate work led to the awkward spectacle of a PR firm becoming a public relations disaster for its most famous client.

Stein tried to run for mayor on the Republican and Conservative tickets in 1993 and endorsed Donald Trump in 2016, insisting rather unconvincingly that "Donald Trump is no racist."

These two are hardly the people whose advice Democrats should be seeking, and their work brings to mind a comment Mary McCarthy once made about a fellow writer: "Every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'"

THE IDEALOGUES

This kind of truth-telling isn't popular in the "bipartisan" circles frequented by Penn and Stein, where comity between wealthy and powerful members of both parties is encouraged. But it is hard to describe their writing any other way when it plays so fast and loose with the facts.

"In the early 1990s," Penn and Stein begin in their pitch, "the Democrats relied on identity politics, promoted equality of outcomes instead of equality of opportunity and looked to find a government solution for every problem."

Everyone who remembers that Democratic Party, raise your hands. For the rest of us, here's a refresher: Bill Clinton campaigned against identity politics in 1992, choosing a Jesse Jackson event to rail against a little-known rapper named Sistah Souljah in order to demonstrate to white voters that he could be "tough" on black people.

In his inauguration speech that year, Clinton called for "an expanding entrepreneurial economy" and specifically repudiated the idea of "a government solution for every problem." He was not subtle or indirect about it. "There is not a program in government for every problem," Clinton said.

Did Penn and Stein miss this, or did they deliberately set out to mislead their readers? Either way, the Democratic Party was already in the grip of their ideology by 1992.

It lost Congress in 1994.

Make no mistake: Penn has an ideology. Like many highly-paid consultants, he likes to adopt the neutral posture of a technocrat. But Penn and his group are fierce defenders of an ideology that seeks to reconcile the aspirations of Democratic base voters with the financial interests and modified free-market economic beliefs of Wall Street and other corporate interests. That ideology is sometimes called "neoliberalism." It has failed economically, just as surely as their political approach has failed at the ballot box.

TIME IS A FLAT CIRCLE

Penn and Stein have a loose relationship with truth – and the calendar. They falsely claim that "the last few years of the Obama Administration and the 2016 primary season ... created a rush to the left." But, they add, "the results at the voting booth have been anything but positive," citing the loss of both houses of Congress and over 1,000 legislative seats.

This is utter fiction. Those losses began in 2009, after Obama spent his first year governing as a centrist. After another year in which Obama ostentatiously attempted to "reach across the aisle," Dems lost Congress in 2010. Obama pivoted to the left rhetorically in 2012, partly in response to the Occupy movement, and it probably saved his re-election campaign. [His numbers rose shortly afterward.] But he continued to govern as a Penn-style "centrist," leading his party to another stunning set of midterm losses in 2014.

It's true that Hillary Clinton shifted slightly to the left rhetorically in 2016. But her campaign ads shied away from progressive policy issues, focusing primarily on Trump's character. She chose "centrist" Tim Kaine as her running mate. She mocked Bernie Sanders' progressive ideas in the primary. And she said this in 2015:

"You know, I get accused of being kind of moderate and center. I plead guilty."

That's the party Penn and Stein claim was in a "rush to the left."

LEFT OUT

Clinton's fellow "centrists," Penn and Stein, go on to say that the Democratic Party has embraced

"sharply leftist ideas," but they are the ones outside the mainstream. The Huffington Post's Daniel Marans cites poll data showing that their policy ideas are out of sync with Democratic Party voters.

While Penn and Stein rail that Democrats must "reject socialist ideas," another recent poll found that a plurality of Democrats would prefer a "socialist" over a "capitalist" for party leadership. That's consistent with a poll from 2016 that found a majority of Democrats believe socialism has had "a positive impact on society."

The demonizations of the past don't work quite as well in the politics of the present. In a shifting political landscape, the center is well to the left of Penn and Stein.

Penn and Stein argue that "bigger government handouts" – a right-wing euphemism for government social programs – "won't win working-class voters back." They're wrong.

A poll conducted by the National Academy of Social Insurance found that most voters, including most Republicans, want to protect and expand Social Security. That finding was upheld by Lake Research Partners, who found that voters "overwhelmingly" favor expanding the program. And most Americans favor some form of Medicare For All.

Absurdly, Penn and Stein suggest that Democrats "reach across the aisle" to Trump on infrastructure "to show they understand that voters like bipartisanship." But voters don't like bipartisanship that leads to failed programs, as any Trump infrastructure plan will inevitably do. His "infrastructure" plan is actually a major giveaway of public resources to private corporations.

It is a measure of their dishonesty that Penn and Stein try to hide their own shifting positions even when they are forced to give way to reality. Democrats "need to support fair trade and oppose manufacturing plants' moving jobs overseas," they write. But they fail to note that, in saying this, they have adopted the "left" position on this issue.

"Centrist" support for NAFTA and other destructive trade deals has contributed to massive political losses for Democrats. Instead of openly conceding their error, Penn and Stein adopt this "leftist" idea as their own.

That's victory, of a sort, if only because it shows how much the landscape has changed since Penn and Stein's heyday.

NOT FADE AWAY

It's striking that Penn, who crafted his own reputation around his facility with voter data, studiously avoids citing any polling data on policy issues in this op-ed. The only finding he and Stein cite is one showing that only "a little more than a quarter of Americans consider themselves liberals" – they fail to mention that this number has risen – "while almost three in four are self-identified moderates or conservatives."

Penn and Stein, who don't cite their source data,

fail to mention the fact that the number of self-described “liberals” is growing while the number of self-described “moderates” is falling.

Conservatives are likely to remain out of Democratic reach and, when polled, many of those self-identified moderates embrace “left” ideas on a number of economic issues. [Aren’t everybody’s opinions “moderate” in their own eyes?]

Face it: this pair couldn’t find their own center with both hands. It’s tempting to simply ignore them, given their increasing irrelevance, but it would be unwise. Sure, their ideas have fallen out of favor. But there are a lot of deep-pocket funders who want to make sure that their ideology and their interest continue to control the Democratic Party. Don’t count them out yet.

Voters are embracing new ideas and new goals, and smart politicians like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Keith Ellison are helping advance the process. These are the people the party must look to if it is to become a meaningful political force once again.

Besides, we’ve already seen the other guys.

© NationOfChange

Surprise, Surprise: There’s Big Religious Voting Bloc Inside Democratic Party

BY PATRICIA MILLER

It’s more or less an article of faith that religious Americans, especially white Americans, have abandoned the Democratic Party. And indeed, a recent Public Religion Research Institute survey confirms that the Republican and Democratic Parties are drifting further apart in terms of religious affiliation.

In 2006, more than eight in 10 Republicans identified as white Christian, as did 50% of Democrats. Overall, some 96% of Republicans professed a faith, as did about 90% of Democrats.

But today, while 75% of the GOP is still white Christian, the percentage of white Christians affiliated with the Democratic Party has slid to under one-third [29%]. And while just under 90% of Republicans still profess a religious affiliation, only about 75% of Democrats do.

But a deeper dive into the survey suggests a more nuanced picture than a complete abandonment of the

Democratic Party by people of faith, especially Catholics.

To be sure, the Democratic Party has lost historic numbers of white evangelicals. Just a decade ago, white evangelicals were still the largest faith group in the party, at 17% of the total. Today, white evangelicals account for just 8% of the Democratic Party, while remaining the bedrock of the GOP. The percentage of white evangelicals in the Republican Party declined only two percent over the same decade – from 37% to 35%.

At the same time, black Protestants remain the bedrock of the Democratic Party, their share of the total party declining only one point from 18% to 17% over the same period.

But both parties have lost white Catholic voters, although the Democrats’ losses have been larger. The share of white Catholics in the GOP dropped from 20% to 16%, down about 20%, while the share of white Catholics in the Democratic Party went from 16% to 10%, a decline of about 37%.

At the same time, some 35% of white Catholics now identify as Independents, which is greater than the 34% who call themselves Republicans and the 26% who call themselves Democrats.

But the story of the Catholic vote and the Democratic Party doesn’t end there. The share of Hispanic Catholics in the GOP held steady over the decade, at a miniscule 3%. But the share of Hispanic Catholic voters in the Democratic Party, which was larger to begin with, increased from 8% to 10%, somewhat offsetting the decline in white Catholics. As a result, both the Republicans and Democrats lost 17% of Catholic voters over the period.

This means the percentage of Catholics in both parties in 2016 was about the same: 19% for the GOP and 20% for the Democrats. [The poll didn’t break out African American Catholics, but according to PRRI about 6% of African Americans are Catholic and historically they have been affiliated with the Democratic Party.]

This means that the narrative that Catholics have abandoned the Democratic Party – and therefore that the party needs to take drastic action like reversing its position on abortion – is largely unsupported by the data. Only white Catholics, an aging and shrinking part of the population, have abandoned the party.

It’s also worth noting that the survey found that the white evangelicals associated with the Republican Party are overwhelmingly – and unsurprisingly – politically conservative. Six in 10 identify as conservatives and only 12% identify as liberals. And White Catholics were twice as likely to say there were conservative than liberal – 42% vs. 22%.

Critically, this means that there’s very little low-hanging fruit for the Democrats to attract with limited tweaks to their party platform – like abandoning support of abortion or LGBT rights. Most white Christians are fundamentally conservative in their political ideology.

And according to the most recent General Social

Survey, funded primarily by the National Science Foundation, Democratic-leaning Independents, a group that presumably includes many former Catholic Democrats, are the single most liberal group on abortion, with 62% supporting a woman's right to an abortion for any reason. Similarly, Republican-leaning Independents are more liberal on abortion than Republicans in general, with 39% supporting the right to abortion under any circumstances.

Clearly, as the PRRI survey notes, there has been a tectonic shift in the religious landscape of the United States. But it would be a mistake to think that shifts in religious affiliation are all favorable to the Republican Party.

Just as the "nones" are remaking the religious landscape, so too are Hispanic Catholics remaking the Democratic Party.

Patricia Miller is the author of Good Catholics: The Battle Over Abortion in the Catholic Church.

Anti-Trump Fervor Helps Transform Local Politics

BY ALEX ROARTY

The liberal resistance to President Donald Trump hasn't managed to capture any new Congressional seats for Democrats – but it's having a major effect on politics at a more local level.

In Jackson, MS, progressives elected a candidate in June who promised to make his Deep South town "the most radical city on the planet." In Cincinnati, a liberal favorite earned more support than the incumbent mayor in the first round of voting this spring.

And in Philadelphia, a Black Lives Matter advocate won the Democratic primary in May to be the next district attorney – in a city where even Democratic law enforcement officials have traditionally taken a hard line.

"We have a president who any sentient person recognizes is a wannabe dictator," said Larry Krasner, who won the Democratic Party's primary for district attorney in Philadelphia. "That's the kind of thing that can wake you up in the morning, make you lace up your shoes, and go vote. So, yes, I think that had impact."

Indeed, while Trump's election has whipped progressives into a frenzy and driven new activists and big dollars into high-profile federal races for the House and Senate, it's in cities and towns that the vociferous response against the president is trans-

forming politics.

The effect has major implications for the Democratic Party, both in the agenda it pushes and its electoral bench of future candidates for higher office.

Krasner is the crown jewel of liberal success in local elections this year, winning a competitive multi-candidate primary in a city where the winners of Democratic primaries almost always win the general election. The civil-rights attorney – an open critic of the city's police who is closely aligned with the Black Lives Matter movement – is on track to take office just eight years after the retirement of former District Attorney Lynne Abraham, who over the course of nearly two decades in office earned the moniker "Queen of Death" for the frequency with which she sought the death penalty.

Liberals also have had success elsewhere: In Cincinnati, for instance, City Councilwoman Yvette Simpson won 45% of the mayoral-race vote in May's election, earning more support than even the incumbent mayor. Democracy for America, a nationwide liberal group based in Vermont, endorsed Simpson.

They also scored a major victory in Jackson, MS, where Chokwe Antar Lumumba became mayor-elect just three years after narrowly losing the mayor's race. Lumumba already has a national presence, after thrilling an audience of several thousand liberals gathered last month at a conference in Chicago, where he vowed to govern not as a calculating centrist but as a progressive champion.

Trump hasn't explicitly been at the forefront of any

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47

Dems Hope To Flip More GOP Seats

In recent Oklahoma special elections, Democrats have captured five of six open seats previously held by Republicans. Three more former GOP seats will be filled in special elections Nov. 14:

In the Tulsa area, Democrat Allison Ikley-Freeman and Republican Brian O'Hara square off in the SD 37 battle to replace GOP Sen. Dan Newberry, who's leaving office early. And Democrat Chris VanLandingham and Republican Ross Ford vie to succeed the late David Brumbaugh in the HD 76.

In the OKC area, Democrat Steven Vincent and Republican Paul Rosino are seeking to replace GOP Sen. Kyle Loveless, who resigned after embezzling campaign funds.

A fourth special election – to replace former Woodward Republican Sen. Bryce Marlatt – isn't until Feb. 13, after the Legislature returns to regular session.

'Stay On Our Legislators' Backs Until They Raise This Tax'

BY MARION HILL

Raise taxes: two words that horrify, and strike fear into the hearts of many politicians. "We can't do that," they respond in a knee-jerk reaction. It has been pounded into them by Grover Norquist and others – who seem to have no sense of fairness or any compassion for others – that raising taxes is something we must never do.

But let's examine that assumption. What are taxes? They're the way everybody – each person contributing his or her fair share – pays for the entities that we've all agreed every civilized society needs: police and fire protection, safe roads and bridges, and education to prepare youngsters to lead smart, responsible adult lives. Taxes also pay to care for the elderly, sick, mentally ill, abused children – in other words, the vulnerable.

Can we truly call ourselves an enlightened people if we refuse to care for such individuals?

There was a time – I'm old enough to remember it – when we all recognized the need to pay our share of taxes, and were proud to be able to do so. Sure, we might grouse or grumble while paying, but we at least saw the justice in taxing ourselves according to our ability to pay.

During Dwight D. Eisenhower's time as president, the rate for the wealthiest taxpayers was up to 91% ["Economists Say We Should Tax the Rich at 90%," *Huffington Post*, 10.22.14]. While it's true that millionaires didn't typically pay that much – loopholes abounded [not unlike today] – my point is that we all assumed then that high earners should pay at a higher rate than those barely getting by.

Taxes aren't all equal, of course. The sales tax is highly regressive; it falls hardest on the poor, since – in Oklahoma, at least – everyone pays it on even basic necessities like food. Unfortunately, many municipalities, and even our state, find raising sales tax rates easier than raising rates on some fairer tax [income tax, property tax, the gross production tax on oil and gas extractions]. So, of course, Gov. Mary Fallin and



other Republican lawmakers have focused their attention lately on raising sales taxes.

The Oklahoma Legislature has been negotiating – can we really call what they've been doing negotiating, stating positions and then refusing to budge an inch from those? – about how to plug a huge shortfall in our state's budget. It's obvious to anyone not bought and paid for by the energy industry that the gross production tax should be raised from the ridiculously low 2% to at least 5%, or more reasonably to the 7% it once was.

Even some energy executives agree. A little-noticed April 4, 2017 article by Dallas Franklin and the Associated Press ["Oil, gas producers ask Oklahoma Legislature to increase tax"] reported that "A group of small oil and natural gas producers in Oklahoma have formed an alliance [the Oklahoma Energy Producers Alliance, or OEPA] and are asking the Legislature to increase the gross production tax back to 7%, saying the industry is committed to helping solve the state's budget crisis."

Dewey Bartlett Jr., former mayor of Tulsa and the owner of Keener Oil and Gas, is quoted in the article as saying that restoring the 7% rate would "generate an additional \$200-\$250 million/year," which he notes would be enough to cover a teacher pay raise in all Oklahoma schools.

"We don't take it lightly," Bartlett goes on to say,

“that our industry, once the bulwark of the state economy and the state tax base, has been out here cutting special deals ... [But] our group will support what is best for all Oklahomans.

“We can be profitable with restoring a 7% gross production tax, even with relatively depressed oil prices.”

Other taxes in Oklahoma probably also need to be looked at in terms of fairness. But if even the head of an oil company is for restoring the 7% rate on oil production, shouldn't our legislators be racing to do that?

Oh, wait. Many legislators aren't as interested in doing what's best for Oklahoma as they are with keeping their fat-cat contributors in the energy industry happy.

We need to all stay on our legislators' backs until they raise this tax. This is about our survival as a livable, fair, and compassionate state, my fellow Oklahomans.

Marion Hill lives in Durant.

Who Is The Stranger?

BY ANN DAPICE

Words flow around us day and night. Words such as: bias, egocentrism, bigotry, individual racism, fear, injustice, institutional racism, KKK, classism, foreigner, globalism, white supremacy, ethnocentrism, white privilege, Nazism. Race as culture, race as biology. Overpopulation and religion. Discussions, arguments, blame, denial.

Here is a brief response, both historical and present, from two sources that have come my way recently – the academic and the popular. Who is the stranger?

When people live in small groups, speak the same language, share the same norms and values, even engage by choice in selective trade with other groups, problems aren't likely to arise. But when unknown people are brought face to face, forced to share resources and ancestral homelands, things change. Decades ago I lived for a time in a country where the literal definition of foreigner was “foreign devil.” The message was clear.

Peoples have long come in contact with the “other” and while some groups remain isolated, there are really no indigenous peoples untouched by modern life directly or indirectly. According to Abigail Meisel in *The Past, Present, and Future of Human Migration* [www.omnia.sas.upenn.edu], at present some 200,000 million are migrants within and across continents. Most are from Latin America, South Asia and Africa.

In the same article, Tukufu Zuberi, a demographer

and “public intellectual” at the University of Pennsylvania, notes that it was first thought that greater diversity would decrease segregation but instead, with increased diversity, whites are less tolerant of other races.

The influx of non-white groups into the U.S. and Europe has demonstrated that whites have considered themselves to be “first-class” compared to other races. The displacement in the U.S. of indigenous peoples by white Europeans is now in reverse as whites are now being displaced and will no longer be the majority race. Zuberi writes that “race is the problem in the U.S. and the Western world now.”

A response comes in video clips from television comedian Trevor Noah, host of *The Daily Show*. Noah was born in South Africa to a black mother and white father – a relationship that was illegal at the time. His personal history encouraged him to learn and use multiple languages so as to be seen more positively by groups treating him as “other.”

Noah responds to questions about the president [Newsnight, www.bbc.com]: “I don't know if Donald Trump is a white supremacist, I do know he prefers white people over black people.”

He then recounts a series of Trump's behaviors such as not wanting black people to count his money or in his business, supporting and retweeting white supremacists on his Twitter account, not aiding black people as quickly as white people, going out of his way to oppress black people in business.

Noah then moves to more general statements about the U.S., commenting that people “try and trap you into being afraid of saying what the person is doing” and that America is the kind of place where “someone can get more offended at you calling them a racist than at the fact that they are a racist.” His response to people who say “How dare you call me a racist” is “how dare you be racist.” He says that people are afraid to acknowledge the world they live in.

In summary, there are people we should be afraid of regardless of race and other factors. Statistics from family and domestic violence show clearly that being part of a group does not make one safe.

Curiously, oxytocin, the recently popularized “bonding” hormone, is also the “protect and defend” chemical that causes people to be “incredibly aggressive to outsiders” [www.telegraph.co.uk]. An important factor that protects the child through chemical bonding, can thus be dangerous to innocent others.

The challenge we have is to distinguish legitimate fear related to people who are in fact dangerous from illegitimate fear of people because they are the other, the stranger.

Tulsan Ann Dapice [Lenape/Cherokee] received her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and has taught and/or served as administrator at a number of universities. She is executive director of the Institute of Values Inquiry, a 501(c)(3) research organization and director of Education and Research for T.K. Wolf, Inc., a 501(c)(3) American Indian organization.



Not Your Grandfather's GOP

BY PAUL CARTLEDGE

Do you wonder how a fragmented and fractured Republican Party can stay in lock-step on a single issue, all the way from the U. S. Congress through 50 state legislatures?

The issue, of course, is global warming, which every Republican denies is happening. The answer is they all are coerced by a band of petroleum producing billionaires, led by a fascist, Charles Koch.

But don't take my word for it. Read *Democracy in Chains* by Nancy MacLean, "The deep history of the radical right's stealth plan for America."

This is a well-researched, beautifully written chronicle of six decades of strident effort to undermine majority rule, i.e. democracy, in America. The current effort was launched in the 1950's by a prominent libertarian, noted economist James M. Buchanan.

Buchanan's economic theory centered on the premise that personal wealth was a freedom not to be abridged by a government intent on addressing the

needs of the many.

The book traces the ups and downs of the anti-government, anti-taxation, movement from its beginning to its coopting by Charles Koch early in the new century. Koch and his most ardent followers are hell bent on an America that levies a very modest flat tax that generates sufficient funds to support a military force and policing.

The America they envision would enable the wealthy to amass as much wealth as they are able. The American work force would be the drones to keep the money flowing.

There would be no Social Security, no Medicare. Health care would be a strictly pay-as-you-go proposition. Those unable to afford it would do without.

They envision Texas and some other southern states as the place where elderly poor and non-achievers could huddle up in shanty towns, with no public amenities, such as sanitary sewer or clean water.

Sounds too dastardly to be real? Read the book.

On the home front, those who are holding out hope that the current special session of the Oklahoma Legislature will come up with some fixes for our battered state economy are in for a disappointment. The Republicans didn't break the state by accident, and they have no intention of fixing it.

In Washington, Trump and the Republican leadership in the House and Senate are hoping to ram through a massive tax cut for the wealthy. Their program, which they have cleverly labeled as "tax reform," would also cut taxes on American wage earners. This is a common tactic Republicans use to make tax cuts for the wealthy more palatable.

In this case, the tax cut for all serves the greater purpose of reducing revenue available to the federal government. If Republicans succeed with passage of this monstrosity, it will be a significant win in their push to solidify oligarchy in America.

Another leg to this scheme is that when and if the

Republicans can come up with a passable health care plan, a key feature will be cost-shifting to the states. The majority of states are already strapped for cash, particularly the 32 states ruled by tax-cutting Republicans.

If you think this plan for America is too incredulous to even consider, wake up and realize that Republicans are all in on defunding government, and are making headway on several fronts.

In addition, the tax plan they are pushing includes massive cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Pell Grants for low-income college students, and the Head Start program, among other cuts to social safety net programs.

This is not your grandfather's Republican Party. These folks have an agenda for changing America. If you are a person who favors democracy over fascism, you won't like the change they are seeking.

Paul Cartledge lives in Durant and is chairman of the Bryan County Democratic Party.

The Wages Of Society

BY VERN TURNER

You may have noticed that the Republicans in Congress are hard at work trying to make their friends, patrons and sponsors – aka corporate/banking America – happy with tax cuts and modest loophole adjustments. Meanwhile, the itemized deduction for state taxes and home mortgage interest are being either axed or reduced. This means that the vast majority of our middle class and poor citizens will not have their taxes reduced as promised by President Trump or other Republicans.

Why do Republicans talk about tax "reform" when they really mean shifting the burden of paying those wages for our society from those who can most afford it to those who can least afford it?

You also might recall the distortion of facts presented by the GOP: "40% of the people pay no taxes at all, while the top 10% pay almost 60% of those taxes." What they don't tell you is that the majority of those 40% don't earn enough income to even hit the bottom of the tax tables. The 10%? Well, that tax rate is around 38% these days, but the majority of those earners have enough deductions such that almost none of them pay that 38%.

Meanwhile, corporate America has been allowed to stash its earned income from sales and services in off-shore banks around the world. This shelters them from paying U.S. taxes on that earned income, yet the money keeps earning interest for the stockholders and executives of those corporations.

Isn't it funny that corporations are taxed at a lesser rate than the top wage earners? After all, the Citizens United vs. FEC decision held that corporations are people, so why don't they pay 38% instead of just

35%? Oh, never mind.

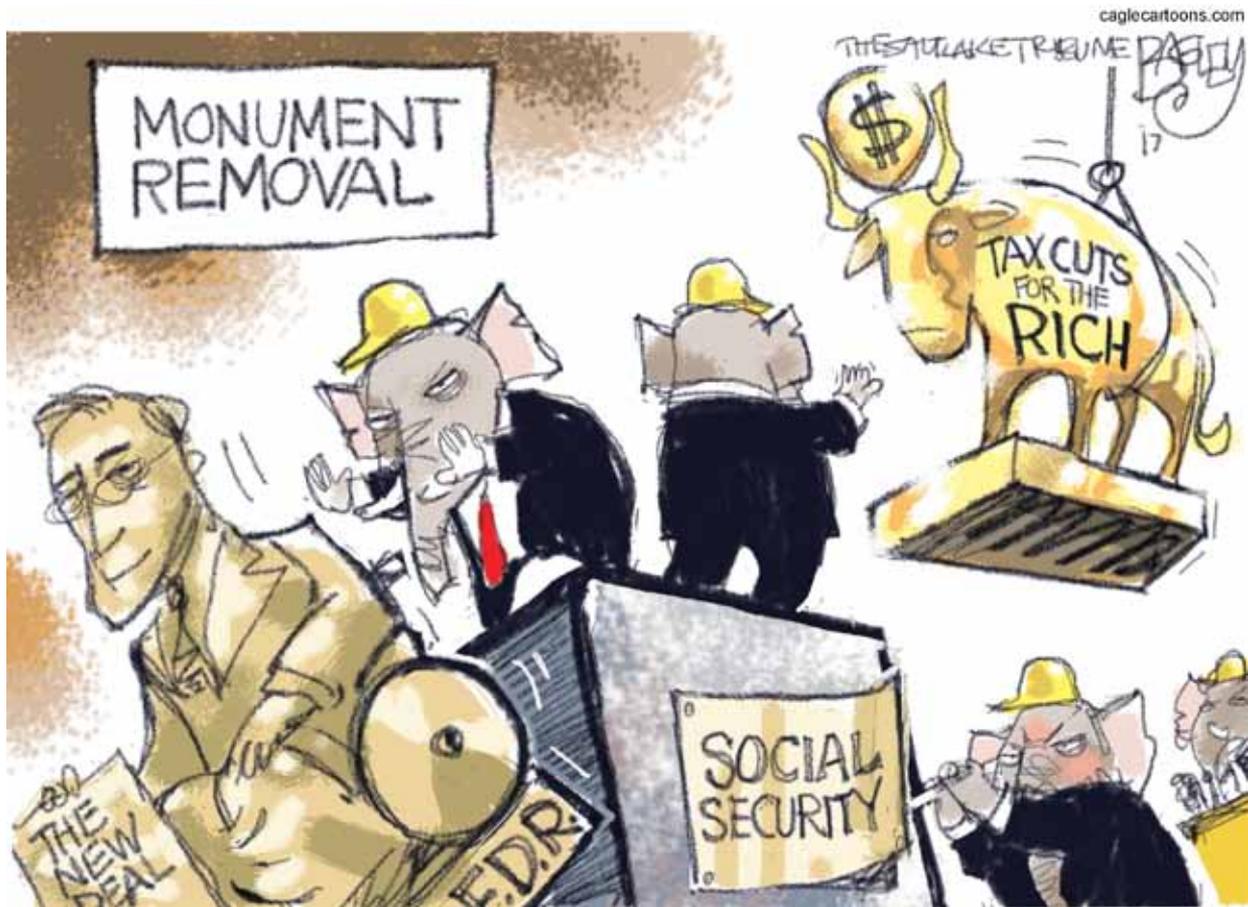
Corporations get so many breaks in the tax code that very few of them pay anywhere near the 35% they moan about, and even fewer pay no taxes at all. That's probably why there are many trillions of American dollars sitting in off-shore banks doing nothing but protecting stockholders and businesses from paying their fair share of the wages of society. But hey! It cost corporate/banking America a fortune in bribes to get the tax code written for them that way.

Those wonderful roads and highways we all drive on are built and maintained by tax dollars. Our massive military is built and maintained by tax dollars. Our public servants who manage all the government infrastructure that keeps our food disease-free, our children's toys safe, our air clean enough to breath and our water clean enough to drink are paid for by tax dollars.

Companies that make things don't have to pay for the roads and rails that get their goods to market, taxes do. Without those means of transport, the companies wouldn't be profitable, with building and maintaining those transport mechanisms.

No, We The People pay for them through our taxes. When a corporation is "clever" enough or has hired enough tax attorneys to secure their loopholes and a tax-free operation, they are shifting their burden to the lesser among us who *do* have to pay our taxes.

What is even more craven than dodging taxes are the lies that accompany that selfish aspect of capitalism. Why did Donald Trump say he was smart by avoiding taxes? We are also *not* the most highly taxed nation on Earth. We are well into the second 10 of per



capita tax burden as it is, and even lower in actual corporate taxes paid. The nations with the highest per capita tax burden are those nations that invest in their people and have a much more even distribution of wealth than the United States. Our Republicans turn up their noses at these countries and call them socialists.

It turns out that *we* are a socialist nation, too. As I said, our tax dollars pay for our infrastructure, our military and a host of other “social” services. Our military, for example is the most socialistic organization in the entire world. By the way, those “socialist” countries also have better, cheaper and more efficient health care systems for their citizens at no extra cost.

Moreover, most of them educate their citizens through college *for free*. Is it any wonder that those nations produce far more competitive workers in all areas than we do?

There is an illustrative anecdote that speaks to this gaping inequality in income in the United States as well as to the pathetic selfishness of our richest citizens to do whatever it takes to avoid paying taxes.

A CEO of a major German corporation was interviewed by an American business news reporter. The reporter asked the CEO why he tolerated the 55% income tax he had to pay to the government. The CEO said that he made plenty of money and was able to provide handsomely for himself and his family and wanted for nothing as it is. The reporter persisted with the 55% topic.

The CEO retorted that he was happy to be rich, but didn’t want to live in a poor country. Poor countries were those who refused to invest in their people and let their infrastructure rot while the rich avoided their fair share of the wages of their society.

The Republican agenda has been one of making our nation poor, letting our infrastructure rot and making sure that the well-off became even more well-off at the expense of the middle and poor classes. This operating philosophy goes all the way back to post-Civil War times. They haven’t changed that basic economic tune.

With the advent of the craven Reaganomics era, the tax cuts, social services cuts and the privatization [for profit] of those services, the United States, as well, has fallen into the category of a poor country.

The other big lie is that we’re the richest country in the world. Well, not exactly. In terms of pure cash, yes, we are. But 90%-plus of that cash is owned by less than 1% of the population.

We rank in the 20s as the healthiest nation. We have over 50 million American citizens living in chronic poverty. We pay our school teachers less than any other industrialized nation in the world and the ranking of our high school graduates reflects that situation. Oh, and private/voucher school students do about the same as the public school students, no matter what Betsy DeVos tells you.

Our politics have become paralyzed by partisanship and the fight over money, mostly. Why won’t people come to realize that we are in the same boat and ev-

everyone must pull an oar to make the boat move and tend to the bailing bucket to keep it afloat?

Taxes are the wages of civilization and if we insist on being a civilized nation, maybe the tax burden should be more equitable with few loopholes for the rich to avoid their fair share. If the richest 1% can own 90% of the wealth, maybe they should be paying 90% of the taxes too, you know, like they did during World War II and for 10 years after that. The rich were still rich, but the infrastructure and the quality of life in America soared to unimaginable heights.

Now, our political rot has been caused by the hijacking of our national vigor by the super rich oligarchs whose names you know: Koch, Olin, Scaife, Mercer, Mellon, Coors. They don't care if we the people are poor. They don't want to invest in our health and education. They care only for profit and power.

They love buying politicians as if they were some kind of perverse brick-a-brack on their mantles. This is what the cravenness of capitalism creates. Karl Marx knew this way back in the 1850s, and even warned the world about these people.

Well, here they are: the gang of oligarchs doing what they do best to subvert our democracy for the sake of their own greed and power-madness. They are *not* our

friends. They want to own everyone, and squeeze every bit of profit from everyone of us who isn't "them."

Yes, it is an *us vs. them* time, and we let it happen. The current spate of deregulations from the year 2000 to present is exactly what these gluttons want. It is also what Karl Marx said would destroy capitalism.

Our only recourse, as the vast majority of the population, is to turn the tide of greed against the oligarchs and make them pay their fair share for our infrastructure, our quality of life and for the benefit of our children.

Our only recourse, in this still-democracy, is the vote. We must vote out those on the take from the oligarchs.

Sadly, some of them are Democrats who must be weeded out as well. But the majority of the graft-takers are Republicans.

Vote as if your nation depends on it. It does. Do you want to live in a poor country, while the 1% rub your noses in the mess they've created?

Vern Turner lives in Denver and is a regular contributor to The Oklahoma Observer. His latest book, Racing to the Brink: The End Game for Race and Capitalism, is available through Amazon.com.

Take The Anti-Grover Pledge

BY SHARON MARTIN

If the GOP doesn't pass this tax bill, Vice President Pence said, it will be bad for them in the next election.

If they do pass the GOP tax bill, it will be bad for almost everyone.

Back in Oklahoma, people impacted by our state's tax cuts line up to meet with their lawmakers. The lines stretch out the door and into the street.

When that many people show up to demand action and lawmakers just come up with one more fee, one more tax on the poor and middle class, you have to ask yourself, "Does he [or she] understand what representative means?"

There is a lot of anger seething right now.

Americans have a right to be angry, but for too many citizens, that anger is misplaced. It isn't immigrants causing the trouble. It isn't poor people needing help. It isn't antifa or brown people or uppity woman or those godless socialists. It certainly isn't football players or journalists who ask tough questions.

Corruption is the problem. A regressive tax system ... that lets billionaires keep more and gives citizens less ... is the problem.

Ignoring investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education in favor of tax breaks is not just dumb, it's downright unpatriotic.

Ninety percent of us have a right to be angry. Brown people have a right to be angry. Laws target them. Trigger-happy officers shoot first and ask questions

later.

Educators have a right to be angry. Schools are overcrowded and understaffed. The curriculum doesn't serve the students, but it makes a whole lot of money for a couple of testing companies. Even library books are tested.

Middle class families have a right to be angry. Everything has gone up except their income. The safety net has had holes cut in it. Most families require at least two incomes, but the brilliant thinkers in Congress want to take away the Child Care Credit.

The only people getting assistance are corporations and billionaires. Corporations have more rights than we do ... and more representation.

In Oklahoma last month, the people who stood in line to see their representatives are our front line. It's time we stood with them.

It's also time to join the Anti-Grover Crusade. Let's take the pledge:

- If you cut taxes for the wealthy and services for the poor and middle class, you won't get our vote.

- If you stiff state workers in favor in donors, we will actively campaign against you.

- If you cut services for the vulnerable and call it fiscal responsibility, we will call it what it is, hypocrisy.

Taking care of the people's business is patriotic. Hurting citizens in exchange for campaign donations is a form of treason.

Sharon Martin lives in Oilton.

DACA REDUX

American Colonies More Generous In 1765

BY JAN NEW

In 1765 Robert Forsman debarked in Philadelphia with his wife and 10 children. He was a hearty, Scotch-Irish yeoman who had grown flax and other grains in Ireland. His wife, Jane All, was expecting their 11th child who was born aboard ship.

Arriving in 1766, the family traveled up the Delaware River and settled in eastern Pennsylvania. Robert acquired land, raised grains and milled them. Was he a citizen?

He may have been considered a British subject insofar as Ireland was recognized as part of the British dominion. Robert's 1793 Last Will and Testament left property, both real and personal, to his descendants.

Determining citizenship and the right to vote and own property was a source of jurisdictional tension in the colonies. Robert's arrival predated the Declaration of Independence [1776], the Articles of Confederation [1777; ratified 1781], and the Constitution [1787]. Citizenship was mostly defined by colonial charter.

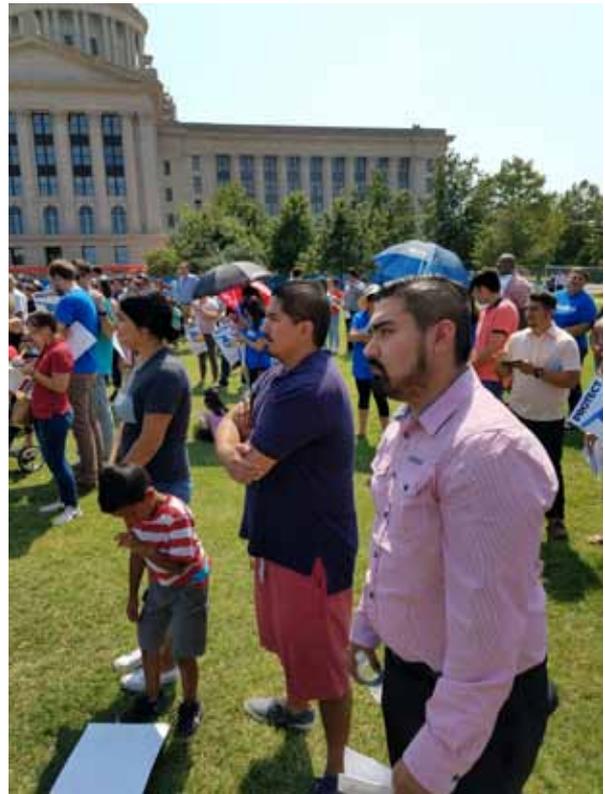
Under pressure from the colonies to open immigration to meet a growing need for labor, England had passed the Parliamentary Act in 1740 to facilitate immigration; however, the colonies were said to comply inconsistently, preferring to issue their own naturalization policies for those not subjects of the King.

In 1742 Pennsylvania adopted its own naturalization law – giving full rights to aliens who lived there less than the seven years required by England's 1740 Act. It was reported that “by 1773 at least 6,911 aliens had been naturalized under the 1740 Act, mostly through Pennsylvania.”

Some of the principles that governed immigration from its inception in British Common Law still operate within the provisions of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act: 1. re-unifying families; 2. admitting persons with special skills valuable to the economy; 3. protecting refugees; and 4. promoting diversity.

The initial Dream Act bill, written to provide a pathway to permanent residency for unauthorized immigrants was considered by Congress in 2007 and again in 2011. [These bills did not pass nor did subsequent legislation in 2013.]

In 2012 President Obama announced a policy allowing certain immigrants to obtain renewable work permits for a period of two years. This policy became known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA]; it was considered a policy of agency discretion within existing law to meet national needs. Agency discretion is a concept purportedly upheld by



the U.S. Supreme Court.

Based upon DACA eligibility criteria, the Pew Research Center estimated 1.7 million eligible applicants. Four years later, the actual number of applicants was approximately 845,000.

The DACA program is funded through its application fees and reportedly does not receive Congressional appropriations.

The DACA policy was heralded by supporters and castigated by opponents. Supporters variously see DACA as a benefit to the economy – moving unauthorized immigrants into employment; increasing GDP; filling a demand for semi-skilled and skilled labor; and through taxes paid, helping to support both Social Security and Medicare.

Opponents believe the president's action was an abuse of power – regardless of whether it was a policy directive or an executive order – seeing it variously as a “waiver of existing law” or a “general amnesty” for those who came here illegally as children.

On Sept. 5, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the DACA program would be repealed, pursuant to a presidential directive. In the intervening weeks, the ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce condemned the repeal along with the United Methodist Church, the Evan-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47



Celebrate Peace & Justice
at the



FALL PEACE FESTIVAL

Saturday, November 11
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Civic Center Hall of Mirrors, 201 N. Walker, OKC

Free Admission ☪ *Kid-Friendly*

HOLIDAY SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES

Fair Trade goods, books, calendars, crafts, pottery,
homemade candles & soaps, African carving,
Central American fabrics & goods, organic coffee,
jewelry, T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons

Booths and Tables of Social Justice Organizations

Live Music and Entertainment All Day

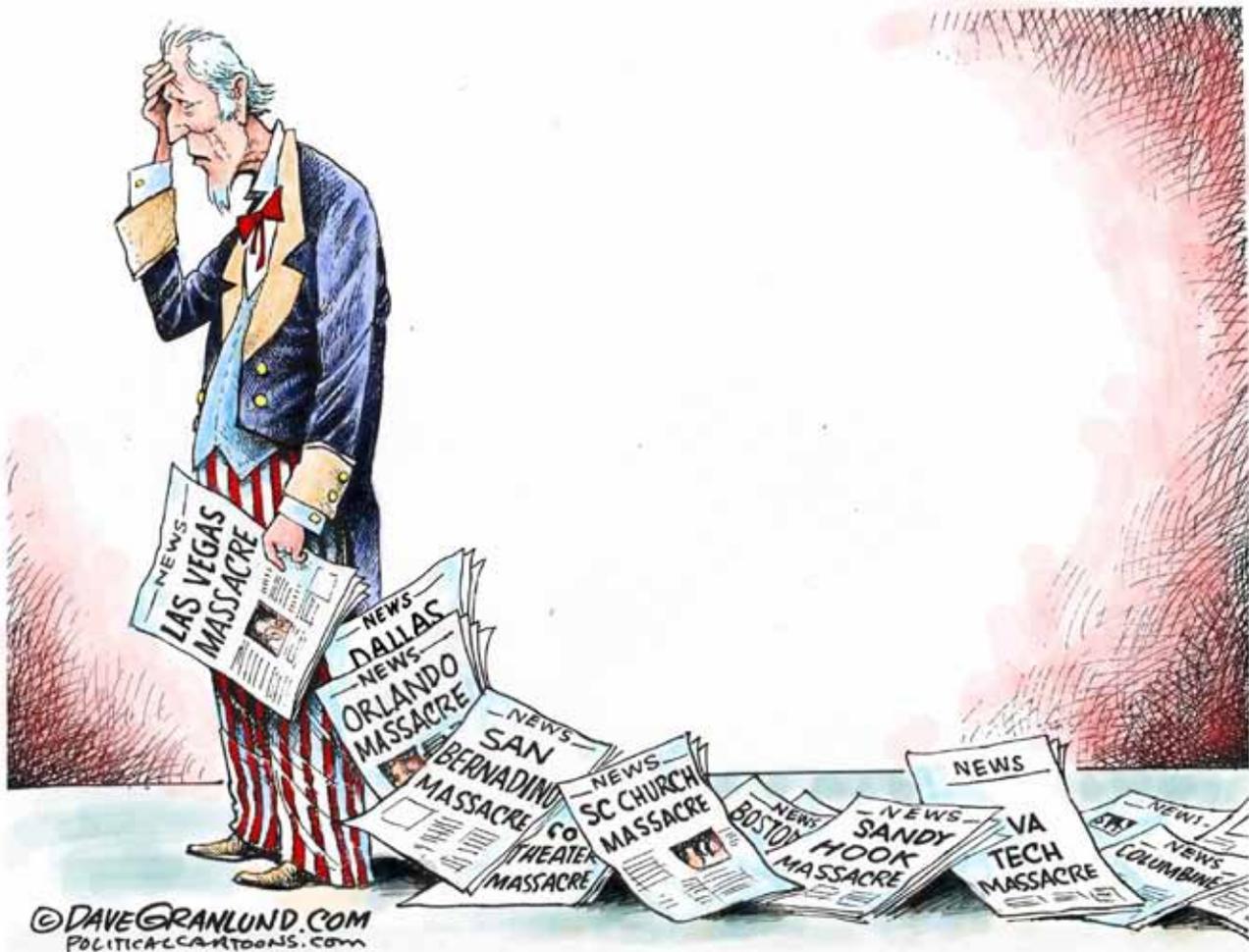
Supervised Children's Area



SPONSORS: Peace House ☪ Home Creations ☪ Oklahoma Observer ☪ In Memory of Bob Lemon ☪ Kay Adair
Social Justice Committee First Unitarian Church ☪ Social Justice Committee Church of the Open Arms.

MORE INFO: PEACEHOUSEOK.ORG

2017



True History Of 2nd Amendment Will Blow Right-Wing Minds

BY ROBERT PARRY

Many politicians, especially those on the Right, pretend they are strictly adhering to the U.S. Constitution when they often are just making the founding document mean whatever they want – but perhaps nowhere is that as dangerous as with their make-believe Second Amendment.

In the wake of last month's mass shooting in Las Vegas – where one individual firing from a high-rise hotel murdered 58 people and wounded more than 500 at a country music festival – we are told that the reason the United States can't do anything to stop this sort of carnage is the Second Amendment's "right to bear arms."

"Gun rights" advocates insist that pretty much any gun control violates the design of the Constitution's Framers and thus can't be enacted no matter how

many innocent people die.

Some on the Right, as well as some on the Left, even claim that the Founders, as revolutionaries themselves, wanted an armed population so the people could rebel against the Republic, which the U.S. Constitution created. But the Constitution's Framers in 1787 and the authors of the Bill of Rights in the First Congress in 1789 had no such intent.

Arguably other individuals disconnected from the drafting of those documents may have harbored such radical attitudes [at least rhetorically], but the authors didn't. In fact, their intent was the opposite.

The goal of the Second Amendment was to promote state militias for the maintenance of order at a time of political unrest, potential slave revolts and simmering hostilities with both European powers and Native Americans on the frontiers. Indeed, the

amendment's defined purpose was to achieve state "security" against disruptions to the country's new republican form of government.

The Second Amendment reads: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

In other words, if read in context, it's clear that the Second Amendment was enacted so each state would have the specific right to form "a well-regulated militia" to maintain "security," i.e., to put down armed disorder and protect its citizens.

In the late 18th Century, the meaning of "bearing" arms also referred to a citizen being part of a militia or army. It didn't mean that an individual had the right to possess whatever number of high-capacity killing machines that he or she might want. Indeed, the most lethal weapon that early Americans owned was a slow-loading, single-fired musket or rifle.

NO ANARCHISTS

Further to the point, both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were the work of the Federalists, who – at the time – counted James Madison among their ranks.

And whatever one thinks about the Federalists, who often are criticized as elitists, they were the principal constitutional Framers and the leaders of the First Congress. They constituted the early national establishment, people such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris and Madison.

The Federalists feared that their new creation, a constitutional republic in an age of monarchies, was threatened by the potential for violent chaos, which is what European aristocrats predicted for the new United States. Democracy was a largely untested concept that was believed likely to fall victim to demagoguery and factionalism.

So, the Framers sought a political system that reflected the will of the citizens [the House of Representatives] but within a framework that constrained public passions [the Senate and other checks and balances]. In other words, the Constitution sought to channel political disputes into non-violent competition among various interests, not into armed rebellions against the government.

The Framers also recognized how fragile the nation's independence was and how domestic rebellions could be exploited by European powers. Indeed, one of the crises that led to the Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1787 was the inability of the old system under the Articles of Confederation to put down Shays's Rebellion in western Massachusetts in 1786-87. Washington saw the possible hand of British agents.

So, the Federalists were seeking a structure that would ensure "domestic Tranquility," as they explained in the Constitution's Preamble. They did not want endless civil strife.

The whole idea of the Constitution – with its mix of voting [at least by some white male citizens], elected

and appointed representatives, and checks and balances – was to create a political structure that made violence unnecessary.

So, it should be obvious even without knowing all the history that the Framers weren't encouraging violent uprisings against the Republic that they were founding. To the contrary, they characterized violence against the constitutional system as "treason" in Article III, Section 3. They also committed the federal government to protect each state from "domestic Violence," in Article IV, Section 4.

PUTTING DOWN REBELLION

One of the first uses of the new state militias formed under the Second Amendment and the Militia Acts, which required able-bodied men to report for duty with their own muskets, was for President Washington to lead a federalized force of militiamen against the Whiskey Rebellion, a tax revolt in western Pennsylvania in 1794.

In the South, one of the principal reasons for a militia was to rally armed whites to put down slave uprisings. On the frontier, militias fought against Native Americans over land. Militias also were called up to fight the British in the War of 1812.

But you don't have to like or dislike how the Second Amendment and the Militia Acts were used to recognize how the Framers intended these legislative provisions to be used.

The Second Amendment was meant to maintain public order, even an unjust order, rather than to empower the oppressed to take up arms against the government. That latter idea was a modern reinterpretation, a distortion of the history.

The revisionists who have transformed the meaning of the Second Amendment love to cite provocative comments by Thomas Jefferson, such as a quote from a 1787 letter criticizing the Constitution for its commander-in-chief provisions.

Jefferson argued that violence, like Shays's Rebellion, should be welcomed. He wrote, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its [sic] natural manure."

Jefferson, of course, was a world-class hypocrite who rarely believed what he was saying or writing. He crafted noble words, like "all men are created equal, ... endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," but he was a major slaveholder who raped at least one and likely more slave girls and had slave boys whipped.

He also was never willing to risk his own blood as that "natural manure" of liberty. During the Revolutionary War when Benedict Arnold led a force of Loyalists against Richmond, Jefferson, who was then Virginia's governor, fled the capital. Later, when British cavalry approached Charlottesville and his home of Monticello, Gov. Jefferson again took flight.

But more to the point, Jefferson was not a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, nor was he in the

First Congress, which produced the Second Amendment. In other words, it's a historical error to cite Jefferson in any way as speaking authoritatively about what the Framers intended with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. He was not directly involved in either.

A COLLECTIVE RIGHT

The real history of the Second Amendment was well understood both by citizens and courts in the generations after the Constitution and Bill of Rights were enacted. For most of the years of the Republic, the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the Second Amendment as a collective right, allowing Americans to participate in a "well-regulated Militia," not an individual right to buy the latest weaponry at a gun show or stockpile a military-style arsenal in the basement.

It's true that many Americans owned a musket or rifle in those early years especially on the frontier, but regulations on munitions were still common in cities where storing of gunpowder, for instance, represented a threat to the public safety.

As the nation spread westward, so did common-sense restrictions on gun violence. Sheriffs in some of the wildest of Wild West towns enforced gun bans that today would prompt a recall election financed by the National Rifle Association.

However, in recent decades – understanding the power of narrative on the human imagination – a resurgent American Right [and some on the Left] rewrote the history of the Founding era, dispatching "researchers" to cherry-pick or fabricate quotes from Revolutionary War leaders to create politically convenient illusions.

[See, for instance, Steven Krulik's compilation of apocryphal or out-of-context gun quotes at <http://kryo.com/2ndAmen/Quotes.htm>.]

That bogus history gave rise to the image of the Framers as wild-eyed radicals – Leon Trotskys of the 18th Century – encouraging armed rebellion against their own Republic. Rather than people who believed in the rule of law and social order, the Framers were contorted into crazies who wanted citizens to be empowered to shoot American police, soldiers, elected representatives and government officials as agents of "tyranny."

This false history was advanced particularly by the American Right in the last half of the 20th Century as a kind of neo-Confederate call to arms, with the goal of rallying whites into a near-insurrectionary fury particularly in the South but also in rural areas of the North and West.

In the 1950s and 1960s, some white Southerners fancied themselves an armed resistance against the tyrannical federal government as it enforced laws on racial integration and other supposed infringements on "states' rights." In the 1990s, armed "citizens militias" began to pop up in reaction to the election of Democrat Bill Clinton, culminating in the Oklahoma City bombing of 1994.

While designed primarily for the weak-minded, the

Right's faux Founding history also had an impact on right-wing "intellectuals" including Republican lawyers who worked their way up through the federal judiciary under Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and now Donald Trump.

By 2008, these right-wing jurists held a majority on the U.S. Supreme Court and could thus overturn generations of legal precedents and declare that the Second Amendment established an individual right for Americans to own guns. Though even these five right-wing justices accepted society's right to protect the general welfare of the population through some gun control, the Supreme Court's ruling effectively "validated" the Right's made-up history.

The ruling created a political dynamic to which even liberals in national politics – the likes of Barack Obama and Joe Biden – had to genuflect, the supposed Second Amendment right of Americans to parade around in public with guns on their hips and high-powered semi-automatic rifles slung over their shoulders.

WHAT THE FRAMERS WANTED?

As guns-right activists struck down gun regulations in Congress and in statehouses across the nation, their dominant argument was that the Second Amendment offered no leeway for restrictions on gun ownership; it's what the Framers wanted.

So, pretty much any unstable person could load up with a vast killing capacity and slouch off to a bar, to a work place, to a church, to a school or to a high-rise Las Vegas hotel and treat fellow Americans as targets in a real-life violent video game. Somehow, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was overtaken by the "right" to own an AR-15 with a 30-or-100-bullet magazine.

When right-wing politicians talk about the Second Amendment now, they don't even bother to include the preamble that explains the point of the amendment. The entire amendment is only 26 words. But the likes of Sen. Ted Cruz, R-TX, find the preamble inconvenient because it would undercut their false storyline. So they just lop off the first 12 words.

Nor do they explain what the Framers meant by "bear arms." The phrase reflected the reasoning in the Second Amendment's preamble that the whole point was to create "well-regulated" state militias to maintain "security," not to free up anybody with a beef to kill government officials or citizens of a disapproved race or creed or just random folks.

So, even after the massacre of 20 first-graders and six educators in Newtown, CT, in December 2012, Fox News personality Andrew Napolitano declared: "The historical reality of the Second Amendment's protection of the right to keep and bear arms is not that it protects the right to shoot deer. It protects the right to shoot tyrants, and it protects the right to shoot at them effectively, with the same instruments they would use upon us."

At the time, the clear message from the Right was that armed Americans must confront the "tyranni-



cal” Barack Obama, the twice-elected president of the United States [and the first African-American to hold that office] especially if he pressed ahead seeking common-sense gun restrictions. But Napolitano was simply wrong on the history.

Another dubious argument from the gun-rights lobby was that armed citizens could take down a gunman and thus stop a mass shooting before it became a full-fledged massacre.

But a gunfight among largely untrained civilians would likely add to the slaughter, not stop it. For instance, a 2012 mass shooting occurred in a darkened theater in Aurora, CO.

Does anyone logically think that a bunch of terrified gun carriers exchanging fire in such a situation – not knowing who the original shooter was – would solve the problem?

And how about the massacre in Las Vegas where the shooter positioned himself on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel and fired down on a packed concert venue, a substantial distance away?

Assuming that the concertgoers were armed and tried to defend themselves, they would likely have ended up shooting other innocent concertgoers because of the initial confusion as to where the shooter was positioned. That would have further complicated the challenge to police who could have mistakenly

opened fire on armed people in the crowd rather than locate and stop the original killer as he kept firing from his sniper’s perch. In other words, the horrific death toll could have been even higher.

To pretend that such carnage was the intent of the Constitution’s Framers, who wrote about achieving “domestic Tranquility,” or the goal of the First Congress, which drafted the Second Amendment to promote “the security of a free State,” is intellectually dishonest and a true threat to the lives of American citizens.

Investigative journalist Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He is the author of a trilogy on the Bush family and its connections to various right-wing operatives. His latest book is America’s Stolen Narrative.

The American
Dream Starts
@ your library



Trump's Budget Guts EPA, Likely Worsening Climate Crisis

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

Make no mistake about it. America First, President Trump's budget blueprint for 2018 starting this month, features deep cuts across the board for climate protection. More important, it also significantly cuts funding for science-related research, programs and agencies.

It's no exaggeration to state that Trump's budget plans to take a sledgehammer to EPA plans to protect the planet from severe climate change. The White House slashes EPA budget by 31% – nearly one-third – from the current level of \$8.1 billion to \$5.7 billion. It would also cut more than 20% of staff, i.e. 3,200 positions.

Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget [OMB], told reporters, "You can't drain the swamp and leave all the people in it. So, I guess the first place that comes to mind will be Environmental Protection Agency. The President wants a

smaller EPA. He thinks they overreach and his budget reflects that."

Remember that this represents a budget reduction of 31% and staffing reduction of 15,000, hence a definite curtailment of environmental protection.

Several years ago the EPA working with PSO, the state of Oklahoma, and Sierra Club devised the plan for the PSO Northeast generation site in Oologah to replace the two coal-burning generators with natural gas-burning units. This collaboration was possible because of the EPA Clean Power Plan that aims to reduce CO2 emissions, the primary greenhouse gas causing severe climate change.

Trump's 2018 budget totally defunds the Clean Power Plan. Recent manifestations of climate change are events like the devastating floods in New York and Houston, the hundreds of wildfires ravaging California, the hurricane trio Harvey, Irma and Maria, and the 7.1 Mexico earthquake and its 6.1 aftershock.

The presidential budget also sharply reduces appropriations for the Superfund and cuts in half those for the EPA Office of Research and Development.

“Money talks, and Trump’s budget proposal screams that the only thing that matters in his America is corporate polluters’ profits and Wall Street billionaires,” according to Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune. “If Trump refuses to be serious about protecting our health and climate, or our publicly owned lands, then Congress must act, do its job, and reject this rigged budget.”

Many people having experienced the Harvey hurricane evacuation ordeal now recognize the effect on the economy with their expenditure of time and money on their prized autos and dwellings. What will corporate America do when fires and waters destroy our workplaces? All of us are in this together. Let’s begin saving our environment.

Drastic climate change is going to affect every single one of us: rich, middle class, and poor. None will be left unscathed; it will destroy our economy and significantly impact our lives, leaving few unaffected.

The time to act is now. What can we citizens do to stop or at least reduce the drastic cuts proposed?

A real crisis already looms in the near future for our planet. Measurements from the Mauna Loa Baseline Atmospheric Observatory in Hawaii were confirmed by NOAA’s Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, CO. The rate of CO2 in our atmosphere is at 405.1ppm, the highest it has been in more than 10,000 years.

Pieter Tans, lead scientist at NOAA’s Global Green-

house Gas Reference Network, comments that this finding is both accurate and disturbing. Then he points out that CO2 growth rate over the last decade is now 100 to 200 times faster than that experienced in the last Ice Age. “This is a real shock to the atmosphere.”

You might wonder why it’s such a shock. An atmosphere of 400ppm is labeled the Carbon Threshold, the point of no return from the ultimate outcome of climate change. In other words, a level this high can throw the whole balance of the climate cycle into chaos and will make it difficult to predict changes like sea level rise, severe tropical storms, drought and flooding.

Since 2011, emissions from our fossil-fuel consumption have remained at historically high levels. According to Tans, these extraordinary levels cause the dramatic elevation in CO2 levels, which only averaged about 280ppm until the onset of the industrial revolution.

Even if we humans stop burning fossil fuels today, carbon already in the atmosphere will be trapped there for the next few decades.

Much work lies ahead of us, hard and intelligent work. Without it there is scant reason for hope.

Having said that, I retain hope for our continued existence. Humankind has come a long way and developed a method of learning and coping called science, a favorable option for our future.

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

Felonies

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

arrested for selling drinks with bacon-infused vodka. Although the Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement [ABLE] Commission later ruled that such drinks are allowed, the episode had real costs: the bar manager spent several days in jail and had to hire an attorney to resolve the case.

Even as lawmakers have acknowledged the overreach of Oklahoma’s justice system and sought to reduce the prison population in recent years, they continued to create new criminal penalties for licensing and regulatory violations. A study by the Manhattan Institute found that the Legislature created an average of 26 new crimes per year between 2010 and 2015.

There’s no doubt that Oklahoma’s overgrown criminal code could use some serious pruning, and lawmakers would be wise to start the process sooner rather than later. Justice reform is at the center of the political moment, but it won’t always be so. The Legislature should strike while the iron is hot.

As a first step to roll back Oklahoma’s overcriminalization, a commission to reduce unnecessary regulations and laws should be popular with conservatives,

progressives, and anyone who wants our criminal code to reflect common sense.

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

Rib Ticklers

The difference between a beer and your opinion is that I asked for a beer.

There are three kinds of people in this world: those who are good at math and those who are not.

The fact that there is a “Highway to Hell” and only a “Staircase to Heaven” says a lot about anticipated traffic numbers.

I’m a secondhand vegetarian. Cows eat grass, I eat cows.

I told myself I should stop drinking but I’m not about to listen to a drunk that talks to himself.

Don’t believe everything you read on the internet just because there’s a picture with a quote next to it.

Every year thousands of innocent plants are killed by vegetarians. Help end the violence, eat bacon.

– *Thanks to A.J. Henshaw for sharing*

Jim Hightower



Why Does Amazon Get Corporate Welfare?

Jeffrey Preston Bezos is the man of unbounded ambition who founded Amazon, the online retailing colossus that trumpets itself as “Earth’s most customer-centric company.” He’s considered a model of tech wizardry for having totally reinvented retail marketing for our smart-phone, globally-linked age. Amazon peddles a cornucopia of goods through a convenient “1-click” ordering system, rapidly delivering the goods right to your doorstep.

No one has imagined corporate domination more expansively nor pushed it harder or further than Bezos, and his Amazon stands today as the most advanced and the most ambitious model of a future under oligarchic control, including control of markets, work, information, consumerism, media and beyond.

He doesn’t merely see himself remaking commerce with his vast electronic networks, algorithms and metrics – but rebooting America itself, including changing our society’s concept of a job, the definition of community, and even our basic values of fairness and justice.

It amounts to a breathtaking aspiration to transform our culture’s democratic paradigm into a corporate imperium, led by Amazon.

Amazon’s most recent announcement is that it wants to get inside your home – and, ironically, it’s using “security” as its rationale. Rather than Amazon leaving products you order on your doorstep, the corporation wants a key to unlock your door so its delivery crews can do you the favor of placing the products you order inside your abode.

Would you give your house key to a complete stranger, letting that person – whose name you don’t even know – walk right into your home when you’re not there? What could possibly go wrong with that? Other than your being robbed, of course, either by rogue Amazon employees or by hackers who will certainly gain access to the corporation’s computerized key codes. Or maybe “Crusher,” your Pitbull, mauls the Amazon intruder and you get sued.

Need I mention that Bezos expects you to pay for

the privilege of having his employees enter your home? First, his dicey, open-sesame program, which he calls “Amazon Key,” is available only to customers who shell out \$99 a year to be “Amazon Prime” members.

Second, you must buy a special internet-unlocking gizmo and a particular camera to join his corporate key club. And guess where you must go to buy this entry technology? Yes, Amazon – where prices for the system start at \$250.

What a deal! For Amazon, that is. Bezos’ real goal [indeed, his only goal, always] is not to get inside your home, but inside your wallet.

Not satisfied with just taking your money, Bezos is coming after your tax dollars as well.

Many politicians across the country piously rant against giving a few bucks worth of jobless benefits to the needy, then turn around and shove billions of our tax dollars into corporate welfare for the greedy!

And with Amazon, here we go again. We’re presently witnessing the most disgusting spectacle yet of the politico-corporate cabal extracting money from the People’s wallets to enrich themselves. The \$136-billion-a-year internet colossus has haughtily generated a shameful public bidding war over the location of its new corporate headquarters. The “winner” essentially will be the city and state that offers the most bribe money from their treasury.

Uber-rich Amazon doesn’t need and certainly doesn’t deserve this giveaway, but officials in 238 cities have prostrated themselves in front of the welfare queen in an embarrassing bid to win her nod. In fact, their offers have been based on Amazon’s very specific demands, including a “business-friendly environment and tax structure,” plus free land, payment of its capital and operational costs, tax breaks, relocation grants for executives and workforce, reduced utility bills and construction fees and ... oh yeah, also give us first-rate schools and an educated labor pool.

As one analyst of Amazon’s one-sided scams noted, “these incentives aren’t free. There’s no fairy godmother paying for them.”

The usual result of corporate giveaways is that the public cost exceeds any benefits we get back. Ironically, by demanding such corporate spoils, Amazon brands itself a common thief, stealing public trust in the fairness of the system and widening inequality in our society.

Creators.com

Trump's Wars

So, President Trump makes what was to be a condolence phone call to the young widow of Sgt. La David Johnson, one of the four American soldiers killed on a military patrol in Niger – and all of a sudden, the White House explodes in yet another political conflagration and a new burst of presidential lies.

Was Trump disrespectful to the widow by not referring to her dead husband by name, but as “your guy,” then declaring that Sgt. Johnson “knew what he was signing up for”? She and two witnesses to the call say “yes”; Trump and his White House PR flacks issued a furious string of “no.”

But rather than simply let it go at “no,” Trump couldn’t resist patting himself on the back and politicizing the whole exchange. He bragged that he has called the family of every soldier killed since he’s been commander-in-chief. Turns out the chief lied about that – many grieving families say they got no call from him. Then he took a cheap shot at Obama and other former presidents, declaring that most of them didn’t call any families of dead soldiers. Another lie, for Obama and others did, in fact, make calls.

But, wait a minute – Niger? While most media outlets have played this brouhaha as a she-said/he-said story, shouldn’t we be asking Trump the BIG question: What the hell are our military forces doing in Niger? To the public’s complete surprise, we suddenly learn that four of our soldiers have died there. Why? What was their mission, and what is our national interest in that West African country that warrants spending American lives and money?

Trump and his GOP Congress are throwing money – yours and mine – at the Pentagon, demanding a massive \$700 billion military budget. For what? Here’s another shocker for you: The Pentagon has some 200,000 U.S. troops deployed in 177 countries ... Who knew? And, again, why?

Trump is the delegator-in-chief, having passed to subordinates a president’s most solemn duty of guiding our nation’s wars policies – including what wars to be in. For example, he has turned the mess in Afghanistan over to the military brass apparently hoping he can wash his hands of responsibility and have the generals to blame if things go wrong.

While battlefield tactics are largely the domain of armed service professionals, the burden of deciding to go to war, to extend a war or to send more troops

into the hell of war belongs on the shoulders of top civilian officials – as does the burden of fully explaining to the public why more war is warranted.

Just as he evaded military service during the Vietnam War, “Commander Trump” is shirking this basic presidential duty today. He’s letting his glittering array of non-elected generals hurl another 4,000 of our men and women into the now-16-year Afghan War they admit they’re losing, having already spent the lives of 2,304 American troops and more than a trillion dollars. What’s especially maddening is that Trump and his generals have no new strategy for “winning,” have no new idea how many more years and lives they intend for us to spend on Afghanistan and, most damningly, can’t even explain why we’re in this war.

Ironically, by weakly dodging this core presidential responsibility, the killing will drift on, turning the Afghan debacle into Trump’s War.

At last, though, a bipartisan group of House members led by Republican Rep. Walter Jones of North Carolina and Democrat Rep. John Garamendi of California are saying “enough” – no more money to finance the Afghan political and military mess unless Trump or whoever is in charge can tell us why it’s worth more of America’s blood and treasure to be there. – *Jim Hightower*

Are You Ready For Corporate America's Robot Economy?

With corporations socking away massive profits, and with the labor market fairly tight, why are worker’s wages still stuck at miserly and even poverty levels?

One big reason is that corporate boards and CEOs have their heads stuck in a dreamy future. Nearly every economic sector is actually spending vast sums of money on workers – just not human workers. While few Americans are aware of it, bosses are quietly investing in hordes of sophisticated autonomous robots powered by a cognitive technology called artificial intelligence. Instead of paying a decent wage to you, corporations are buying millions of these cheap, human-esque thinking machines in order to take a shocking number of jobs from ... well, from you.

Accountants, bank loan officers, financial analysts, insurance claims adjusters – all of these “numbers jobs” are already falling to bots that can calculate much faster and more accurately than people.

Journalism? Associated Press now uses artificial intelligence machines to write thousands of financial articles and sports reports and Forbes magazine uses an AI system named Quill to pen articles.

Skilled labor? Meet SAM, a robotic bricklayer that lays three times as many bricks in a day as humans can, displacing the jobs of three people. Crane and bulldozer operators are expected to be ousted by robots in the next 10 years.

Farmers? The first robot farm is opening in Japan, with automatons transplanting, watering and harvesting the crop. There's also a shepherd robot that can run an entire livestock farm.

Also, the jobs of librarians, pharmacists, lawyers, air traffic controllers, doctors, teachers, hospital administrators, bartenders – and so many more – are targeted for massive displacement. In just the next five years, 6% of all U.S. jobs are expected to be robotized!

Whether you're ready or not there's a robot in your future, and clearly I don't mean one of those cute little labor-saving automatons – like a "Roomba" vacuum cleaner that scoots around.

Far from saving you from doing extra labor, this new wave of robots is being brought into your workplace to rescue corporate bosses and investors from paying you to work for them. You might think, not my workplace, for I'm not a factory worker – I've got a college degree and I work with my brain, so no contraption doing rote mechanical tasks can take my job.

These are "thinking machines," implanted with complex neural networks and superfast algorithmic computers that operate in sync, functioning much like the cluster of specialized cells in the human brain. These brainy bots have a fast-evolving ability to watch, listen and learn on their own, they can develop new abilities and are even able to produce and teach other robots. Not only are they displacing flesh-and-blood workers on factory assembly lines, but millions of them are now being moved into professional, managerial, creative and other occupations previously assumed to be the secure domains of higher-educated, higher-paid people, and as you can see from the list above ... maybe even yours.

To be clear, it's not robots that are taking our jobs, but corporate profiteers. They're creating a robot economy in order to displace you and me with inexpensive machines that don't demand higher wages or health care, don't take sick days or vacations and don't organize unions, file lawsuits or vote for pro-worker politicians. It's to be a plutocratic utopia designed by and for the corporate elite – and they're pushing it hard and fast, hoping We the People don't wake up until it's too late.

Robots are not our enemy – the corporate bosses, bankers and BSers who own robots are the ones doing this to us, and now is the time for all of us whom they're about to discard to rebel against their socially destructive greed. – *Jim Hightower*

College Football Haves, Have-Nots And Dropouts

BY FROMA HARROP

The University of Alabama's football coach ruffled surprisingly few feathers up north when he dismissively contrasted the game played by the University of Rhode Island with his school's.

"When they play games – you know, I think up there when Rhode Island plays whoever they play – they have a picnic after the game," Nick Saban, coach for the legendary Crimson Tide, said. "That doesn't happen around here. We got 100,000 people. We got an SEC championship game. We're trying to get into the playoffs. But we all have the same rules."

Some might quibble with the "same rules" part, but few would argue that Bama and URI football belong in the same breath.

Saban was answering a question about the haves and have-nots in college football. Rhode Islanders know they are have-nots. The URI Rams have put in some pretty dismal performances, even against the modest teams in their league.

The bigger question at places like URI is: Why are we even doing this? Northeastern, Boston University and Hofstra have all dropped football, putting their money in sports that cost less and in which they do better.

Other schools with maniacal football cultures, such as Michigan and Nebraska, are unlikely to do away with their programs, whatever the scores. But even some people there wonder whether football is interfering with the academic missions of the universities whose names they bear.

Only a few schools actually make money off football. New TV deals are showering money on the super teams but squeezing the also-runs. Some glamorous teams also profit from selling media rights and making apparel deals with the likes of Nike. The others do not.

Alabama is in a class by itself, dwarfing the competition by almost every measure. Its football program costs a massive \$51 million a year but brings in an equally impressive \$97 million in revenues. And most agree that its football greatness serves as a significant draw for students and donors.

But even there, some eyebrows rise at the em-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Testament

BY HARRY T. COOK



Circumstances dictate that this essay is to be the last in a series that began in April 2005 and now ends with this post. The magic of the internet has garnered for these essays an international readership and response that has both surprised and pleased me.

Readers whom I did not know before the series began and have never yet met in person have become friends. They live in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, South Africa, France, across Canada and in most of the United States. Their company I shall miss very much.

I have entitled this essay “Testament” because that is precisely how I mean it to be taken. The disease with which I was diagnosed within a week of my 75th birthday has come to call with the message that I am now on a path that will slow me down sufficiently that I could not do my work with the effort I insist on putting into it. As one who has always thought he wanted to quit while he was ahead, I am doing just that. Also, I have promises to keep with not quite as many miles as I hoped in which to keep them.

Meanwhile, I leave you with these somewhat random thoughts:

- Love the English language and use it with respect and care. None of us is Shakespeare *redivivus*. Winston Churchill, H.L. Mencken and Graham Greene still stand alone with their Firsts in English composition. They should be our standard.

- A question – and, indeed, its formulation – is likely to be more rewarding than straining to produce a quick answer. Inquiry, research and hypotheses tend to invite more thorough thoughtfulness – a supreme value in human relationships at any level. If you have never read the work of the late philosopher Richard Rorty and his take on what he termed “contingency,” now would be as good a time as any to do so.

- Beware the politician who runs for office with an index finger pointed at those of an identifiable nationality or ethnic group whilst blaming the woes of the nation on them. Jews were long victims of such an evil, African Americans and Native Americans, as well. Mexicans and Muslims in recent times became targets of such calumny. Who needs a reprise of Nazism?

- Resist the claims of absolute truth made by those who march under various religious banners. No one can possibly know what any possible deity wants or wills. Likewise, no one can encompass the whole truth about anything.

- Conserve Earth, her atmosphere, her waterways and seas, her land, her creatures as good stewards would estates entrusted to their care and protection. One can lick away on an ice cream cone only so long before it disappears.

- Help society understand that punitive incarceration in and of itself is cruel and unusual punishment. Justice is not served by putting people behind bars in violent environments. In the same spirit, help society understand that capital punishment is legalized murder, collective vengeance under the guise of doing justice.

- Give all you can to encourage compassion for women who struggle to retain control of their own bodies where unwanted or dangerous pregnancies are concerned. Tell the anti-abortion zealots that, if they oppose the practice, they should take care not to submit to it.

- At least once a year, listen to all six of J.S. Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerti* [BWV 1046-1051] and overture to Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* [K. 492] as well as his Symphony No. 41, [K. 551], the *Jupiter*. Each one of them is guaranteed to bestow upon the listener both joy and profundity, mercifully tuning out the mindless cacophony that presses in on every side.

- Above all, follow the wisdom offered by Hillel the Great more than two millennia ago: “What you hate, do not do to another.” The great sage must have known that such behavior as a habit runs contrary to nature. Also he must have believed that humankind could outdo nature.

William Faulkner in his speech accepting the 1949 Nobel Prize in literature appeared to have shared Hillel’s optimism: *I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.*

As a dear bishop friend was wont to say, “May it be so.”

Now an important credit: Susan Marie Chevalier, my loyal and loving wife of almost 38 years, made these essays not only possible but readable by crowding into her busy work schedule their editing and design.

Finally, this last flourish of defiance, taking the closing lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Ulysses* as my own valedictory:

*We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we
are, –*

*One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

Harry T. Cook, the Michigan-based Episcopal priest, journalist and author whose essays graced the pages of The Oklahoma Observer for nearly a decade, died Oct. 9 following a three-year battle with prostate cancer. He was 78.



Democrats Betray Supporters With Russiagate Distraction

BY JEREMY KUZMAROV

In a front-page article on Oct. 23 by Nicholas Fandos “Hopes Dwindle for 3 Inquiries on Russia Ties,” the New York Times – a leading fomenter of anti-Russia hysteria – all but conceded that the Russiagate inquiries would amount to nothing.

Fandos wrote that “nine months into the Trump administration, any notion that Capitol Hill would provide a comprehensive, authoritative and bipartisan account of the extraordinary efforts of a hostile power to disrupt American democracy appears to be dwindling.”

Fandos suggested that the Congressional investigative committees would likely produce two reports, “one by the GOP saying there was no proof anyone

around Mr. Trump worked for Russia to tip the election,” and a Democratic Party report which “will probably raise unanswered questions and say the committee was never fully committed to answering them.”

Given the huge investment of energy and resources into the Russiagate investigation, Democratic Party supporters and much of the country should be irate.

The United States is facing severe problems. It is dealing with high unemployment and underemployment, wildfires and storms caused by global warming, decaying infrastructure, state budget cuts, waning public education and others.

The United States also at this time has 240,000 ac-

tive duty and reserve troops in 172 nations or territories worldwide on top of 37,813 troops on secret assignments.

Instead of debating the U.S. purpose in the world and conveying to the American public an alternative vision that will address our domestic problems and help win over the kinds of blue-collar voters who supported Trump, the Democrats have been fixated with Russia and trying to discredit Trump by playing up the allegations against it.

They think that we are still in the throes of the McCarthy Era and that the public will pick up on their crusade and rally together behind a New Cold War and that Trump will be impeached.

However, the days of the Cold War are over. Young people are skeptical about everything, and most people want the government to work for social progress and not to promote new arms races and wars.

And Trump, however odious, does not appear to be some kind of Manchurian candidate.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, furthermore, does not fully fit central casting as an evil villain like Saddam, Castro or Qaddafi, no matter how hard the media may try. He has a strong base of popular support in Russia because he has revived Russian self-respect and power from the Yeltsin era and has many accomplishments, including his preventing Russia's disintegration and presiding over economic improvements since the 1990s.

Despite its cynical predictions about Russiagate, the Times also on Oct. 23 ran back-to-back stories by Andrew Kramer casting Putin's Russia yet again in a negative light. "A Bribery Case in Russia Lifts the Veil on Kremlin's Intrigue" discussed the arrest of Economic Minister Aleksei V. Ulyukaev, a protégé of the late-Yegor Gaidar, the architect of post-Soviet privatization, after he allegedly accepted a bribe from the director of the Russian National Oil Company Rosneft. Kramer quoted an unnamed analyst who said that the case "could signal a return to Soviet era traditions under which service in the Ministries was a tightrope walk over to the Gulag."

Whatever the merits of the case against Ulyukaev, the latter assessment is pure hyperbole designed to insinuate comparisons between Putin and Stalin, which have no basis in fact, and to rechristen a Cold War contest between freedom and totalitarianism, thus giving moral purpose behind U.S. foreign policy.

Kramer's second article on the same page was titled "Conspiracy Claims Devour Magnitsky Murder Inquiry" and discussed Russia's charging William Browder, a billionaire hedge fund manager previously convicted on tax evasion charges in Russia, with murder in the death of Sergei Magnitsky.

Magnitsky was an accountant at Browder's company, Hermitage Capital, who died in prison after being charged with allegedly abetting tax evasion. Browder says that Magnitsky was a whistleblower who was killed by prison authorities because he threatened to uncover the Russian government's role in a \$230 mil-

lion tax scam against Hermitage.

After his death, Browder lobbied the U.S. Congress and European and Canadian parliaments to pass sanctions measures against Russia known as the Magnitsky Act.

The evidence being promoted by Russia to back up the murder charge is an intercepted communication from Western intelligence agencies which allegedly exposes an operation called "Quake" designed to "start a scandal or significant news trigger to discredit the Russian federation in the eyes of the international community." Operating under the code name "Agent Solomon," Mr. Browder, with Britain's MI-6 and Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny [aka "Agent Freedom"], is said to have arranged for "proxies in the Russian federal penitentiary service to arrange the termination of any medical services for Magnitsky."

Similar accusations were previously aired on Russian state television but dismissed by independent analysts because the communication was found to have had spelling errors that derived from flawed Russian translation.

Though it is possible the errors were made by a British spy who was Russian, Kramer is justified in questioning the authenticity of the evidence being used to accuse Browder of murder.

His article is biased nevertheless in that he depicts Browder as some kind of populist hero and victim of a Russian disinformation campaign, based on Browder's own words, while ignoring some of the evidence that has come to light that pokes holes in certain aspects of his story.

For example, Robert Parry of Consortium News and other researchers uncovered that Magnitsky was not a lawyer as Browder claimed but a tax accountant – something confirmed by Magnitsky's family. Kramer still, though, refers to Magnitsky as Browder's lawyer. Kramer also fails to address evidence presented in Andrey Nekrasov's blacklisted film, *The Magnitsky Act: Behind the Scenes*, that question the official story about the tax scam and how Magnitsky was killed.

Kramer's articles and others of its kind leave readers with the impression of Russia as a dark and corrupt land led by a treacherous neo-Stalinist, hence justifying U.S. policy in the New Cold War. The Russiagate witch-hunt, however, by the Times own admission is going nowhere, and the public may be growing skeptical. The Democratic Party has betrayed its supporters by following the media in scapegoating Russia and using it as a distraction while Rome literally begins to burn. Bernie Sanders has left the party to run in 2018 as an independent and other progressives should do the same. Better yet, they should join with the Greens or form a new party.

Jeremy Kuzmarov teaches at the University of Tulsa and is author of the forthcoming book with John Marciano, The Russians Are Coming Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce [Monthly Review Press, 2018].

Obama: Too Cool For Trump's Crises

BY RALPH NADER

Back in the 1970s, there was a best-seller, widely read in the business community, called *Winning Through Intimidation*. Barack Obama should pick up a copy, because that is what Donald Trump may be doing to him.

Obama stays mostly silent as the belligerent Trump rolls back or destroys the legacies of Obama's eight years in office. The mere thought of tangling with the Trumpster's foul, prevaricatory, sneering tweets offends Obama's own sense of civil discourse between politicians.

Given the present crises, this revulsion is just another form of self-indulgence by the former, self-described community organizer, senator and president. There is no other political leader, in our celebrity culture, as well known or so high in the polls. Consequently Obama owes a different attitude and level of engagement to the American people.

In a previous column, I described some of these engagements, none of which involve a twitter fight with Trump. They provide focal points for Americans to rally around agendas and opposition to the politics of anxiety, dread and fear generated by the unstable occupant of the White House. That is, a way to respond to Trump's raging tantrums, fact-impairment, loss of self-control and egocentric vanities.

Obama could, for example, work to strengthen civic groups and help substantially to create new organizations to address urgent needs [such as averting wars]; he could back opposition to Trump's destructive policies that are running America into the ground while shielding Wall Street and the dictatorial corporate supremacists whose toadies Trump has put into high government positions.

Obama is a big draw and can raise hundreds of millions of dollars faster than most. Furthermore, he has the unique ability to fill the void the mass media is desperately looking to fill by serving as a counterweight to Trump. Hillary, hawking her latest book, doesn't fit the bill here.

Instead, Obama, besides raising funds for his presidential library [about \$1 billion], is getting press primarily for being paid \$400,000 or more per speech before Wall Street and other big business audiences. Most recently, the *New York Times* located him in Sao Paulo, Brazil, speaking generalities to businesspeople who were charged from \$1,500 to \$2,400 to hear him say essentially nothing of note. The speech title was grandly cheerleading: "Change the World? Yes, You Can" – a nod to his unofficial 2008 campaign slogan, "Yes We Can."

Obama's spokesman would not say how much Obama gets to keep of the approximate \$2 million

generated by this event, which was sponsored by the Spanish bank Santander and Brazilian media conglomerates. The paying attendees were attracted to his celebrity status and didn't care about the sizable tab probably picked up by their companies. One attendee was quoted by the *Times* as saying, "It was a bit disappointing. I don't feel like he said anything new."

There is plenty to be said in the U.S. that is both new and significant by Obama. However, apart from a few words here and there on bigotry and immigration, Obama has preferred to bounce between high-priced lecture gigs and wealthy watering holes where he is a guest of the super-rich, and to work on his book, for which he is receiving over \$30 million. Michelle Obama is receiving many millions of dollars for her book and has also been attending celebrity-filled gatherings. When asked at one such event, whom she would most like to be if she had another career, she answered, Beyoncé.

Meanwhile, down at the grassroots level, where people live, work and raise their families, tens of millions are without living wages or health insurance. Underemployment and people dropping out of the labor market in frustration over their rejected skills, mask what is in reality a deceptively low unemployment rate, and yet poverty indicators are everywhere.

Under Trump, families will be exposed to more hazards in the workplace, the environment and the marketplace, and they will face rip-offs by companies that have been liberated from regulatory law and order.

The list of protective programs and responsible business laws destroyed by Trump's wrecking crew of a cabinet grows longer every week.

It isn't as if Barack Obama doesn't realize what he is doing and what is happening to him in this self-enriching bubble he has shaped, post presidency. He can't seem to help himself, and going to nearly 500 fat-cat political fund-raisers outside Washington, DC as president didn't help to change or expand his chosen circle.

In his best-selling 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, then Sen. Obama admitted: "I found myself spending time with people of means – law firm partners and investment bankers, hedge fund managers and venture capitalists. As a rule, they were smart, interesting people. But they reflected, almost uniformly, the perspectives of their class: the top 1% of the income scale."

Classic Obama: Say the right thing and the people won't mind so much when your words don't match your deeds.

Think of your millions of supporters, Mr. Obama. They want you to regularly stand up for them and fight the Trump-led assault on our weakening democracy.

THE BUFFALO NEWS
PHOTOGRAPHY.COM
©2017
ADAM
ZIGLIS



Why Uranium One 'Scandal' Is Still A Fraud

BY JOE CONASON

In mounting fear of special counsel Robert Mueller, Republicans on Capitol Hill and in the White House, as well as their media echoes, are reviving the discredited "Russian uranium" accusations against the Clinton Foundation.

The aim of this tale is to turn public attention away from the disturbing and well-documented connections between Donald Trump and the Kremlin by fabricating a conspiracy that enfolds the Clintons, the Obama Administration, and perhaps even the FBI into allegations of collusion with the Russians.

The original charges against the Clinton Foundation, first promoted by a strange journalistic partnership between Steve Bannon and the New York Times,

are old and stale. In an effort to refresh them, Republicans and right-wing media outlets allude to nameless secret sources who will offer damning testimony yet to be heard. But the inquisitors in Congress and elsewhere still confront an insurmountable problem that makes nonsense of their bribery theory: although Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State when the U.S. government approved Russian acquisition of some U.S. uranium assets, neither she nor the Clinton Foundation exercised any control over that decision. She couldn't have been bribed. She had nothing to sell.

The latest broadsides from the right on this topic

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

Reign Of Terror

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON

The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI

By David Grann

Doubleday

338 pages, \$28.95

BY JOHN WOOD

David Grann begins his book with a picture of petite prairie flowers spread over the vast blackjack hills along the countryside of Osage County in Oklahoma. Grann describes this area spread with a star-like cluster of Spring Beauties with five white to light pink flowers; Johnny Jump-ups, kindly known as “Love-in-idleness” for the tranquility they inspire in us; and Azure Bluets with their rather delicate pedals. Osage writer John Joseph Mathew’s described this sight as one where the “galaxy of petals makes it look as if the gods had left confetti.”

And yet in May, “when coyotes howl beneath an unnervingly large moon, taller plants, such as spiderworts and black-eyed Susans, begin to creep over the tinier blooms, stealing their light and water. The necks of the smaller flowers break and their petals flutter away, and before long they are buried underground. This is why the Osage Indians refer to May as the time of the flower-killing moon.”

This metaphor in Grann’s book reminds me of another one of Oklahoma’s massacres, the largely forgotten “Black Wall Street,” more officially known as Tulsa’s Greenwood district, where the 1921 Race Riot took place. It’s a subject usually missing from high school history books – if there at all, it’s barely a single paragraph or page.

I think Grann, unwittingly, makes the case that this “Reign of Terror” should also be covered in Oklahoma history texts. This is a massacre where at least 27 Osage Native Americans were killed in a variety of ways under the “care” of their white Wardens [Trustees].

Grann, by the end, says that further recorded evidence would make a reasonable person suspect that actually more than 600 of the Osage tribe might have died by the same despicable means between 1918 to the early 1930s. What’s more, if you go to the cemetery there today, you’ll find that, suspiciously, the gravestones often date to around 1923, and they cer-

tainly didn’t die of old age.

In addition, Grann opened Osage members records; there he found just the word “Dead.” Then another “Dead.” Systematically, Osage members were being murdered, officially 27, but he alleges many hundreds more – no one knew who was next or how to stop it. Grann explains that this story was of only one case, and that so many people were part of this. The white part of town was complicit – judges, police, coroners, politicians, ranchers, etc.

In May 1921, the “reign of terror” began. Two decomposed bodies were discovered in two separate places on the reservation. Anna Brown and Charles Whitehorn, both members of the tribe, had been shot in the head left to decay.

The Osage were at the mercy of jealousy, greed, and hatred by white settlers. And it is a deep and somewhat sordid history.

In the Osage’s first treaty with the U.S., nearly 200 years ago, they were forced to southeast Kansas. The Osage chief at the time thought the northeastern Oklahoma’s land so barren that the white man wouldn’t try to steal it again any time soon, so they settled there.

He was wrong.

This all changed by the late 1910s, when the mineral-rich Osage land then warranted a double-edged sword. With mineral rights, some of largest oil deposits in the U.S. brought money, a lot of it – nearly \$30 million, or around \$400 million today. With the influx of money, Pawhuska, for a time, was one of the largest Boom Towns across the country.

Not unlike “Black Wall-Street,” the surrounding white population couldn’t stand it. Not surprisingly, Washington intervened. Indians, they thought, were not mentally able to take care of a lot of money.

Such children!

They each needed a white legal guardian, or ward, to protect their interests from their perceived likely mismanagement. This abusive relationship, more of-

ten than not, was sometimes merely skimming off the top of their mineral rights check, but very often poisoning, or even ending up in outright cold-blooded murder.

Gann's riveting narrative makes one feel unease as the evil is unraveled detail by detail in true-crime series fashion. Coincidentally, our newly unburied history is a sad one, but it was actually the FBI's breakout case.

The book follows Mollie Burkhart, who married a Texan, named Ernest, who was the nephew of William Hale, the most powerful man in Osage County.

It was her older sister Anna Brown, who was shot in the head, her body later found rotting in a ravine.

The FBI, finally able to intervene when a murder took place on federal land, threw its resources into the case to demonstrate the need for a national police force.

J. Edgar Hoover's FBI became a huge success - "a showcase for the modern bureau" - making its case with a fledgling, yet systematic data collection to apprehend William Hale and his nephew Ernest.

Ernest played the "slow game" to parasitically steal his wife Molly's oil profits. The plan was to first eliminate her family, consolidating their money, and then poisoning her, too. She was one of the lucky few that survived.

When Molly finally accepted the fact that Ernest was behind the killings, and behind bars, she couldn't ever look him in the eye again.

Ninety years later, after the oil slowed and the schools and houses became overgrown, the U.S. government finally settled. The Osage won the largest trust settlement in U.S. history [\$380 million] to reimburse them for systematic mismanagement of the trust assets and resulting losses to its trust funds and interest income.

I think Douglas Coupland says it well when he utters: "There are three things we cry for in life: things that are lost, things that are found, and things that are magnifi-

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND RECEIVE A FREE BOOK!!!
(see restrictions below)

FIND TODAY'S HOTTEST CURRENT AFFAIRS TITLES AT **Full Circle**

1900 NW EXPRESSWAY
OKC OK 73118
405/842.2900

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

New subscribers only — Limited time offer
Non-transferable — Must be redeemed in person
Merchandise must not exceed \$20

WHY WAIT?

Now you can subscribe to The Oklahoma Observer at the Full Circle Books checkout counter and receive your free book certificate on the spot!

IMPORTANT RESTRICTIONS

To take advantage of this offer, visit Full Circle Books, where you can subscribe to The Oklahoma Observer at the checkout counter and receive your free book certificate immediately. You also may subscribe to The Observer using the coupon on page 3 of this issue or by visiting our web site www.okobserver.net. You then will receive via U.S. Mail a certificate from Full Circle Books for a free book [\$20 limit]. The certificate is not transferable and must be presented in person at Full Circle Books in order to receive your free book. No facsimiles, printouts or photocopies will be accepted as a substitute for the original Full Circle certificate. This book offer is for new subscribers only. Not valid with any other offer.

cent.”

Not unlike the 1921 Race Riot, the Osage murders of the same time period should be adequately covered in schools across the state to at least create a humbling tribute and lessons learned about how to go about current public policy.

More awareness of our state history - especially of those who were wronged for one simple fact: that the color of their skin is different - would be magnificent.

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

demand more detailed examination. For the moment, however, let's review how it all began.

I examined the origins of the trumped-up tale of Uranium One in my recent book *Man of the World: The Further Endeavors of Bill Clinton* [Simon & Schuster 2016] – which will be published in November in a convenient paperback edition, with a new Afterword about the presidential election and its aftermath.

What follows is a relevant excerpt:

Few American authors would dare to imagine the publicity bonanza that the editors of the New York Times bestowed on Peter Schweizer's Clinton Cash: The Untold Story of How and Why Foreign Governments and Businesses Helped Make Bill and Hillary Rich. During the weeks leading up to its publication in early May – and only days after Hillary announced her presidential candidacy – the Times published not one but two articles promoting and implicitly endorsing the book – which, as its title indicated, purported to expose the Clintons' enrichment by foreign interests.

It was the kind of publicity that money literally could never buy.

On April 19, the paper led its politics section with a story by Amy Chozick that described Clinton Cash as “the most anticipated and feared book of a presidential cycle still in its infancy.” The author's background as a Republican partisan and former speechwriter for George W. Bush and Sarah Palin, wrote Chozick, would be used by Clinton supporters to discredit him as yet another in a long line of biased critics – but that might be more difficult, she added, because Schweizer “writes mainly in the voice of a neutral journalist and meticulously documents his sources ... while leaving little doubt about his view of the Clintons.”

Beyond that affirmation of his methods, Chozick reported that both the Times and the Washington Post – as well as Fox News Channel – had entered into “exclusive” deals with Schweizer to pursue “story lines” in his book. To anyone in the Clinton camp who remembered the Whitewater “scandal,” which began with investigative stories in the Times and the Post, this collaboration between the two leading print outposts of the “liberal media” and hostile Republican sources looked all too familiar.

Scores of readers noticed the incongruous arrangement in Chozick's story and protested to Margaret Sullivan, the Times public editor. Sullivan posted a column four days later, expressing her distaste for the “exclusive” deal with Schweizer, while expressing complete faith in the paper's editors to handle such material properly.

But that same day, Sullivan's mild demurrals was overshadowed as the Times presented the fruit of its

collaboration with Schweizer on the front page of its print edition and in the top spot on its website – a 4,400-word story vaguely headlined “Cash Flowed to Clinton Foundation Amid Russian Uranium Deal,” by investigative reporters Jo Becker and Mike McIntire, which explored the disposition of uranium mining rights in Kazakhstan and the United States by a group of Canadian investors that had once included foundation donor Frank Giustra – and that left those strategic reserves in Russian hands.

Before joining the Times staff, Becker had shared a Pulitzer Prize at the Washington Post. She also had shared a byline on the January 2008 Times investigation of Giustra's uranium deal in the Central Asian nation and his connections with Clinton. Whatever other motives might have inspired the paper's deal with Schweizer seven years later, the Times editors leapt at a chance to revisit that story – which had provoked an embarrassing public correction in Forbes magazine.

The April 23 story revisited the first Times investigation in detail, even repeating one of its most easily checked errors: the claim that Giustra and Clinton had flown together on Giustra's jet to Almaty, the Kazakh capital. [Actually, Clinton and his staff had arrived four days later on another friend's plane.]

But the new story hinted at a more serious accusation: Through a complicated series of deals, Russia had gained control of a portion of U.S. uranium reserves through a Vancouver-based firm called Uranium One, while the Canadian investors who profited had given millions to the Clinton Foundation. The Russian acquisition of those American mines had been approved by the Clinton-led State Department, while those Canadian donations “flowed.”

The story noted that any such deal required the approval of “a number of United States government agencies.” It mentioned that some of the story's information had been “unearthed” by Schweizer, “a former fellow at the right-leaning Hoover Institution and author of the forthcoming book Clinton Cash,” who had “provided a preview of material in the book to the Times,” which added its own extensive reporting.

“Whether the donations played any role in the approval of the uranium deal is unknown,” the reporters acknowledged. But on the pages of the Times, even the suggestion that donations from Giustra or other investors influenced Hillary amplified Schweizer's theme. They also reported that Bill Clinton had received \$500,000 for a speech delivered in Moscow to a bank connected with Uranium One.

The story's insinuation was bolstered by the reporters' discovery that \$2.3 million from the Uranium

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

This much is clear: Inman made some powerful enemies in leading Democrats to demand Oklahoma's wealthiest residents and dominant industries shoulder their fair share of the state's tax burden.

As Tulsa Rep. Eric Proctor, probably Inman's closest legislative friend, put it in a Facebook post, Inman's "courage and leadership are irreplaceable. If I was half the member he has been for the last 11 years the state would be a much better place.

"He was a statesman in a building that had few and a voice of reason in a sea of unfathomable ignorance."

Inman won't officially exit the House until the first of the year. But the leadership baton was passed during the special session – to Beggs Rep. Steve Kouplen, previously elected to succeed Inman when his sixth and final term ended next year.

Still, Inman's abrupt, mysterious departure is a gut punch to state Democrats – and to all Oklahomans pining for smart, talented representatives. We didn't agree with Inman on every issue, but we hope he someday will return to the public square.

Band-Aid Legislating

As expected, the carbon baron-controlled Oklahoma House worked all special session to derail efforts to hammer out a grand bargain providing a long-term fix to the state's structural budget deficit.

Gov. Mary Fallin wanted one – though most of her revenue-generating proposals increased the burden on the working class and poor. The Republican-dominated Senate even showed flexibility on taxes.

Not Speaker Charles McCall and Co. They first attempted to blame Democrats, who control only 28 of 100 House seats [one vacancy]. Then sought to declare victory even though they didn't really close the \$215 budget hole, much less invest in under-funded vital state services.

As Senate Democratic Leader John Sparks put it in a Facebook post:

"In a time of real crisis, Band-Aids and pandering do nothing but give us a false sense of security and accomplishment. A pat on the back may feel good for two months, but the reality that faces us moving forward is another \$400 million-500 million budget hole, a continuing crisis, and the insecurity that our teachers, employees, and constituents have lived with for too long.

"We have been given an opportunity to right the long-term instability of our fiscal house, yet we find our colleagues across the aisle trying to win the next news cycle, the next election, all while accomplishing nothing but feeling good for the short term."

Better Information, Better Policy

Oklahoma Policy Institute provides timely and credible information, analysis and commentary on state policy issues.

See our latest issue briefs, fact sheets and blog posts at:

OKPOLICY.ORG

David Blatt, Director ■ 918.794.3944 ■ dblatt@okpolicy.org

Johnston & Associates

Landowner Environmental and Pollution Law

Free Consultation

Ken Johnston - Wes Johnston

405-224-4000

118 North Fourth St

Chickasha, Oklahoma 73018

Johnstonlawfirm@SBCGlobal.net

TOM GOODWIN

Cheyenne, OK

*Reader and supporter of The Observer
for over 30 years and counting.*



*We salute all the
Veterans who have
served us well ...*



*... then take time to
serve the Thanksgiving feast!*

Especially disgusting was how the Republican-dominated Legislature dangled hope for – then all but dashed – long-awaited teacher and state employee pay raises, a craven strategy aimed at winning enough votes to pass a \$1.50 per pack cigarette tax before carrying out the old double-cross.

Facts are facts: there was never a serious GOP plan to fund teacher or state employee pay raises long-

Spring Creek Baptist Church

A Place Of Grace....
A Place Of Healing....



11701 N. MacArthur Blvd.
Oklahoma City, Ok. 73162

[405] 721-3252
springcreekbc.com



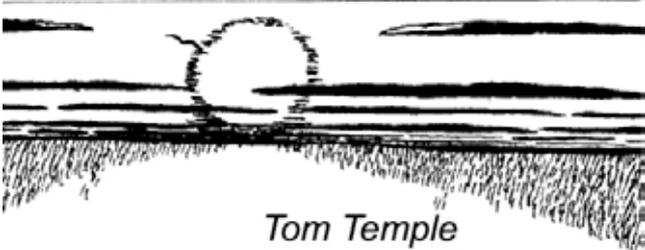
For a VOICE
and RESPECT
at work
ORGANIZE!

Call Brad at
(405)947-2333
Teamsterslocal886.com

REX FRIEND *Attorney at Law*

Immigration
General Practice of Law
3801 N. Classen Blvd., Suite 8
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

(405) 557-1277
Reasonable Fees — Terms Available



Tom Temple
Natural Design

405.478.4936
www.TTemple.com

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER

*Your Passport To Oklahoma's Most Progressive,
Socially Responsible And Intellectual Audience*

*Advertising rates start as low
as \$40 per issue.*

Call 405.478.8700 for details.

term – just more smoke and mirrors.

Imagine what it's like for state employees, who've endured nearly a decade of stagnant salaries, deep budget cuts and reductions in force.

Put yourself in teachers' shoes: They still cash the region's smallest paychecks. Out-of-date textbooks are falling apart. Class sizes are exploding. One hundred or so districts are deploying four-day weeks to save money.

Why wouldn't Oklahoma's best and brightest instructors follow the money?

The exodus to other states or professions has created an alarming teacher shortage – the state forced to approve 1,674 emergency teaching certifications so far this year, 500-plus more than all of last year.

The problem is obvious. So is the solution. Oklahoma needs to put its money where its mouth is when it comes to public education. Failure to do so is legislative malpractice of the worst sort, because the state's future depends on a well-educated and -trained workforce.

Consider this: In December 2007, just as the Great Recession bloomed, Georgetown University began studying the workforce of the future. In the decade since, it found less than 1% of new jobs created were open to workers that were high school graduates or less.

Couple that research with last month's release of test scores showing a majority of Oklahoma students struggling to reach proficiency in most subject areas and it's apparent the time to invest in public education is now.

Simply increasing teacher pay to the regional average?

Regional average isn't acceptable in football. It shouldn't be in teacher pay, either.

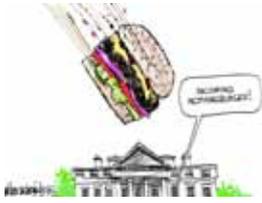
This state isn't too poor to do right by its kids and grandkids. The money is available. All that's needed is the political will to fully restore gross production and income tax cuts that disproportionately benefited the state's wealthiest few.



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

The Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit. All donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

OK taxpayers could be on hook for \$600,000 if a special election is necessary to replace 1st District U.S. Rep. Jim Bridenstine, President Trump's choice as NASA administrator.

Speaking of Bridenstine, it's beyond bizarre that Trump would nominate a climate denier and LGBTQ hater as leader of a science-driven, diverse agency with 19,000 employees. Then again, Trump thinks Scott Pruitt is dandy.

Thinking outside the box: Seattle is experimenting with ways to offset big money in politics, giving eligible residents a \$100 taxpayer-funded "democracy voucher" they can donate to candidates of their choice.

Oklahoma served 1.6 million free meals this summer to children as part of the state Department of Education's Summer Food Service Program – a 14% increase over the previous year. Sixty-two percent of public school students are eligible for free or reduced lunches.

Five wingnut legislators are part of a rightwing effort to call a national convention to amend the U.S. Constitution. Sens. Nathan Dahm, Michael Bergstrom and Julie Daniels and Reps. Mark Lepak and John Bennett all attended a recent planning session in Arizona. Their absences from Oklahoma raised the IQ of both states.

Remember when state Reps. Lewis Moore and Bobby Cleveland called for a "line-by-line" review of state spending during the special session? Yeah ... and pigs fly.

New law took effect Nov. 1 making it a violation to "camp out" in the left lane on divided highways. Driving in OKC area, it's clear most motorists didn't get the memo about the fines – up to \$235.

Common sense: New study in Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences projects 910 gun-related deaths could be prevented annually if all states enacted waiting periods between purchase and acquisition of handguns.



okea.org

BEN F. SANDERS

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

3000 UNITED FOUNDERS BLVD, SUITE 107G
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73112

BFSCPA@HOTMAIL.COM

PHONE 405.843.0037 / FAX 405.947.0209

Oklahoma Retired Educators Association



The only organization
that works for
Retired Educators

405.525.2230

800.310.2230

www.orea.org



PLUMBING
HEAT & AIR

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL

FOR ALL YOUR PLUMBING, GAS & AIR WORK

WE WORK BY THE JOB... NOT BY THE HOUR

BEST FLAT RATE PRICE

www.jeans-plumbing.com
OKC & Surrounding Areas **844-1951**

International Brotherhood of
Electrical Workers Local Union 1141
405/670-4777



WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Fraud

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

One investors had not been disclosed on the foundation's website, but made public only in Canadian tax records. A Times editorial the same day complained about the "messiness" of Hillary's connection with her husband's foundation, and urged her to impose tighter restrictions on its fundraising.

The question that the Times failed to raise, let alone answer, is why anyone interested in the Russian uranium deal would have sought to influence the secretary of state – when her department had only one vote out of nine on the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States that had to approve the deal.

While Clinton Cash attributed a "central role" to Hillary, she hadn't participated at all in the Uranium One deliberations. According to the assistant secretary of state who represented her on the panel, "Mrs. Clinton never intervened with me on any CFIUS matter." Knowledgeable observers of CFIUS believe its decisions are dominated by the Pentagon and the Treasury Department, which chairs the committee, not State. And the nine agencies on CFIUS had unanimously approved the sale of the remainder of Ura-

nium One to the Russians in 2013, several months after Hillary had left the government. That sale also required additional approvals from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Canadian regulators.

In short, cultivating the Clintons would have guaranteed nothing for the Uranium One investors. They had given well over \$2 million during a period of several years, but a foundation spokesman – and Giustra – insisted that Canadian and provincial tax laws forbade disclosure of their names without their specific consent.

As for Giustra, the Uranium One investors were his friends and former partners, and he was assuredly a very big Clinton donor. But he had divested all of his Uranium One stock almost three years before the Russian sale went through.

Yet somehow all those exculpatory details were ignored in the subsequent coverage on cable TV and talk radio, where Clinton's opponents talked loosely of "bribery" – often during interviews with Schweizer, whose book debuted on May 24 as the No. 2 Times nonfiction bestseller and stayed on the list for several weeks.

Football

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

phasis placed on football at an institution of higher learning. Saban will have been paid over \$11 million this year.

Though a football coach's raking in more than the university president is not news, it's remarkable that three of Saban's coaching assistants also make more, hundreds of thousands more. President Stuart Bell's compensation totals \$755,000.

Alabama's fabled coach Bear Bryant, who retired in 1982, was sensitive to the message football prominence sent to the rest of the school. He insisted on making at least \$1 less than the university president. Those brakes are clearly off.

Except for the star teams, college football is losing audience. Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton built a \$70 million stadium in 2011. In recent times, its seats have been 80% empty.

URI football hasn't had a winning season since 2001. Its 6,500-seat stadium ranks with New Hampshire's as the smallest in the Colonial Athletic Association.

As a sportswriter at The Providence Journal gently noted, Rhode Island is "a place where college football isn't exactly king."

Big-time college football, meanwhile, faces its own challenges. Players are challenging a system that pays millions to the coaches and schools while treating them as amateurs. Scholarships are a relative pittance. The humorist Will Rogers once suggested giving student-athletes a fair take at the gates, and then they could pay for their own tuition.

Brain injuries caused by the sport have also taken some of the luster off the game for some fans and many mothers.

Instead of pretending that college football is one big family, perhaps we should let the hotshot programs operate as big businesses. Others might choose to skip the game altogether and just do the picnic.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER

*Your Passport To Oklahoma's Most
Progressive, Socially Responsible
And Intellectual Audience*

*Advertising rates start as low
as \$40 per issue.*

Call 405.478.8700 for details.

© Creators.com

Anti-Trump

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

of these campaigns. But officials involved say the backlash he has elicited has left liberal voters hungry for aggressive candidates who promise big changes.

But progressive strategists are also eyeing the long-term effect of putting so many liberal candidates in local office. For a party that often looks to citywide officials as its next generation of leaders, installing progressives now means that future governors, House members and senators share the activists' liberal values.

"Electing the next progressive president or a new generation senator or governor, really that work be-

gins immediately and it begins at the local level, in city council and in mayor's offices and changing the way DAs think about their jobs," Kembaiyan said. "That's what it's going to take."

The movement's ambition grew further still after the unexpectedly competitive presidential campaign of liberal icon Bernie Sanders.

"Bernie's movement expanded people's view of what was possible," Dinkin said. "And the Trump presidency has made people hungrier for a more aggressive vision of change."

© Reader Supported News

DACA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

gelical Lutheran Church, and The Episcopal Church.

Thereafter, Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-UT; James Lankford, R-OK; and Thom Tillis, R-NC, introduced the Succeed Act, a bill providing a 15-year path to citizenship for young, undocumented immigrants affected by the DACA repeal.

Under the proposed Succeed Act, if the immigrant arrived before the age of 16 and before June 15, 2012, they can be granted residency for five years with certain additional requirements. At the end of five years, they undergo a review and can be granted another five years of residency or be deported. After 10 years, meeting all other criteria, they can apply for legal permanent residency, and at 15 years, they can finally apply for citizenship. The bill also prevents immigrants in the program from sponsoring family members wanting to come to the U.S. – referred to as "chain immigration."

Although Lankford was one of a few to respond to the president's call to repeal DACA, some Succeed Act provisions seem overly punitive and inconsonant with immigration principles.

Checking the websites of Oklahoma congressmen and senators, available statements are disappointing and divisive, variously accusing President Obama of "brazen use of executive action;" "granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants;" "exceeding his constitutional authority by implementing policy through executive order;" and "implementing DACA by executive fiat."

Despite these concerns, the Succeed Act seems unduly severe for the defined generation of Dreamers. Attending a Sept. 10 rally at the Oklahoma Capitol, Dreamers who spoke were educated in Oklahoma public schools, colleges, and universities. Educated, articulate and committed to a better life, already contributing to their communities, these young people are a credit to the opportunities they have already ex-

perienced in Oklahoma. Denying them a work permit to force "self-deportation," as Steve Bannon recently suggested on 60 Minutes or consigning them to a 15-year path to citizenship and requiring them to pay a minimum of \$1,000 to initially apply for and renew their deferred status, seems unduly punitive.

Under the Succeed Act, participants who must be gainfully employed and pay taxes for 15 years, or be enrolled in the military or college, can lose their residency status if they become dependent on government assistance, yet taxpaying citizens can and do need government assistance during unforeseen adversities.

Many Dreamers, as many as one-fifth of them, work in the health care and educational sectors of the U.S. economy, suggesting the loss of thousands of nursing assistants and home health aides at a time when more of this critical help will be needed to meet the demand of America's aging population and the loss of qualified teachers for our classrooms – something that should resonate with all Oklahomans.

Coupled with that are the immigrant workers who have acquired skills, often becoming accomplished tradesmen as America begins to rebuild its infrastructure and renovate and revitalize its aging neighborhoods.

Dreamers and other immigrants want a piece of the American pie. They came or were sent for the same reasons our ancestors came to Colonial America. They want more opportunity and a better life.

I'm glad Great Grandfather Forsman, seven generations ago, wasn't deported or made to wait 15 years for citizenship – especially since he and six of his sons fought in the American Revolution.

A more enlightened, less punitive approach to our immigrants would be welcome and would characterize America's more generous spirit of the past.

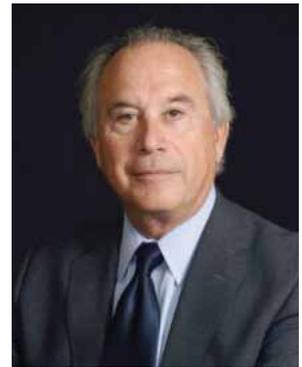
Jan New is a retired public administrator.

THE OKLAHOMA
Observer

Newsmakers Series



*Join Observer
Editor Arnold Hamilton
for a lively, one-hour
discussion of progressive
politics and the 2018
Oklahoma elections with
State Democratic Chair
Anna Langthorn and
former Gov. David Walters.*



Thursday, November 9, 2017
Full Circle Books
1900 Northwest Expressway
Oklahoma City
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Admission is free
Light hors d'oeuvres will be served
Wine and beer available for purchase