

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

• AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF COMMENTARY •

DECEMBER 2018 • VOLUME 50 NUMBER 12 • \$5.00

Changing Of The [Old] Guard



Are Days Numbered For Oklahoma's Political Patriarchy? Coverage begins on Page 8.



THE OKLAHOMA Observer

www.okobserver.org

VOLUME 50, NO. 12

PUBLISHER Beverly Hamilton

EDITOR Arnold Hamilton

ADVISORY BOARD

Andrew Hamilton, Matthew Hamilton,
Scott J. Hamilton, Trevor James,
Ryan Kiesel, George Krumme,
Gayla Machell, MaryAnn Martin,
Bruce Prescott, Bob Rogers,
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

Gov. Stitt

There are myriad reasons to be skeptical of Oklahoma's governor-elect.

Kevin Stitt is a political novice, assuming the role of state CEO at a perilous moment when long underfunded, vital services teeter on the brink.

He also is a poster child for political apathy – voting just eight times since 2000, not once in a governor's race.

And among the team he is assembling is a Rogue's gallery of Republican insiders whose Tea Party-esque views helped shove Oklahoma to the fiscal brink.

Even so, we are more than willing to be pleasantly surprised.

Perhaps Gov. Stitt won't be Donald Trump 2.0. Perhaps he can provide the leadership necessary to move Oklahoma forward – Top 10, as he promised. Perhaps he will stand up to the 1% and demand they pay their fair share of taxes.

There is precedent in Oklahoma history for a statesman to emerge from a seemingly unlikely source.

Henry Bellmon went from Billings wheat farmer to the state's first GOP governor to the U.S. Senate to a second term as governor where he helped engineer HB 1017 – at the time, the nation's model public education upgrade.

As he prepared to announce a second run for governor, Bellmon crossed paths with Observer Founding Editor Frosty Troy and offered the scoop: "I've decided to run for governor again."

The sharp-tongued Frosty responded: "Why? You were terrible the first time."

"That's the problem with you reporters," Bellmon replied. "You're too busy putting white hats and black hats on people. You never know when they're going to change hats."

For Oklahoma's sake, we hope Stitt demonstrates the leadership and

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.



Observerscope



Looking for the perfect gift this holiday season? An Observer subscription not only is a real bargain [\$40], but also keeps on giving all year long. See back cover for our holiday special.

Dart: To Amazon's Jeff Bezos, collecting \$3 billion in corporate welfare from New York and Virginia as payoff to expand operations into those states. How greedy can you get? Bezos earns \$191,000 a minute!

'Tis the season? Heads are rolling at high-profile state agencies – epidemiologist Kristy Bradley and immunization director Lori Linstead out at Health and executive director John Woods at TSET. Why? Stay tuned.

We mourn the death of our pal Jim Campbell, veteran United Press International reporter, state Capitol correspondent and Grid-iron performer. Keen mind, even sharper wit. He will be missed.

Laurel: To the Oklahoman's K.S. McNutt, revealing the state owes \$150 million in promised faculty salary matches to state universities. Students end up paying the price for a deadbeat Legislature.

Felony filings dropped 28% in year after SQ 780 took effect, reclassifying simple drug possession as a misdemeanor. – Open Justice Oklahoma

Dart: To Gov.-elect Kevin Stitt, naming Norman attorney Marc Nuttle to lead his transition team. Just days after the appointment, Nuttle abruptly resigned from the board of a South Carolina-based homophobic, Islamophobic Christian non-profit. The company you keep?

Malaysia's Nigel Richards won the recent World Scrabble Championship with the 68-point word "groutier." It's an adjective meaning sulky, surly or bad-tempered. Yes, we had to look it up.

It will be much harder the next four years to force a statewide vote via initiative petition. High turnout in last month's governor's race means proposed constitutional amendments now need 177,958 valid signatures [up from 123,725] and statutory changes 94,911 [up from 65,987].

Laurel: To state Pardon and Parole Board, finally – *finally!* – acknowledging the reality that OK locks up far too many for non-violent offenses. Recommending 22 inmates for commutation was a good, but long-overdue start.

Oklahoma lost a treasure with the recent passing of social justice activist Barbara Santee in Tulsa. A champion of reproductive rights, she also helped establish the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma.

Mark your calendars: Observer Newsmakers returns Jan. 10, 6-7 p.m. at Full Circle Books OKC.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Letters



Editor, The Observer:

Former Sen. Jim Wilson of Tahlequah recently lost his battle with cancer and stopped suffering. As they said about Abe Lincoln, “He now belongs to the ages.”

Jim was one of the best senators from SD 3 that ever represented his constituents. He was a Democrat who was truly a man of the people.

Jim worked hard for the people of his district, and the people of Oklahoma as well. He was not owned by the big oil companies, big insurance, big pharmaceuticals, or the State Chamber of Commerce.

He worked hard for public education, state employees, the elderly and disabled, veterans, and the working people of this state. Oklahoma would be a much better place if the Legislature had more members like Jim Wilson.

He lived a good life, and he will be missed.

A.J. Henshaw
Sallisaw

Editor, The Observer:

A half century since his passing, the protest songs of Oklahoma’s Woody Guthrie [1912-67] echo

with fresh meaning today.

In 1943, Guthrie’s guitar bore a label declaring: “This machine kills fascism.” With ultra right-wingers winning elections worldwide and staging a comeback in the U.S., the guitar’s message merits resurrection.

A song Guthrie wrote came alive in a recent letter to the editor in the New York Times. David English of Acton, MA, recalled that Guthrie’s 1950s song about Fred Trump, father of the sitting president, condemned racial discrimination: “Beach tower is Trump tower where no black folks come to roam ... “

English wrote that Guthrie’s Trump song was “one of his angriest, and is of special relevance today.” Indeed.

Joseph H. Carter Sr.
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

Face facts, good people. Oklahomans voted overwhelmingly to retain the GOP monopoly on state government. No Blue Wave. Not even a Blue Drip. Stitt’s margin was virtually same as Fallin’s in 2014.

Democrats need a complete

makeover – grassroots, messaging, voter education across all forms of media, candidate recruitment and training, plus [hardest of all] a huge financial need of “patient money.” There are close to one million voting age Oklahomans who are *not* registered to vote.

This is not rocket science. In fact, the blueprint is available right here. It is what Tom Cole, Fred Morgan, national groups [NRA, Moral Majority, major evangelicals] and state groups [OCPA, metro Chambers, Big Oil guys, Farm Bureau] did for two decades to slowly capture the hearts and minds of Oklahomans.

A very tall order indeed.

Mickey Thompson
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

FDR said it best: “You have nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Trump added hate, racism, blasphemy, lies and anti-Semitism.

How sad for our country.

Tom Birbilis
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

The ashes of Matthew Shepard were recently laid to rest by his family in the National Cathedral, Washington, DC, 20 years after his violent murder. His two convicted murderers are alive in prison to the end of their lives, deprived of their freedom and aware of the freedom they took from Matthew.

Religion offers no solace to me but I hope with all sincerity that the Shepard family finds satisfaction with the Cathedral ceremony and their religious feelings give them comfort. I wish it for all those uncountable homo-hatred victims, living or deceased, who follow a religious practice even if much of that hatred is countenanced as deserving by some of the myriad faiths that roam the world disguised as religious belief.

In this time of Trump and his

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



A Government Of, By And For The 1%?

It's mind-boggling, and more than a little disheartening, to think fundraising in this year's gubernatorial campaign exceeded \$22 million – nearly \$19 for every vote cast in the race on Election Day.

It's even more discouraging to see legislators take a page from the DC political playbook, doling out \$750,000 in excess campaign funds to bolster colleagues in tight re-election races or support like-minded newcomers.

Big money in politics is hardly new, of course. It was more than half-a-century ago, after all, famed California Treasurer Jesse Unruh coined the phrase "money is the mother's milk of politics."

But the tsunami of campaign cash flooding Oklahoma politics today should give us pause – especially as we consider its affect on public policymaking and on the notion of a democratic republic itself.

While it is true that all votes count equally, it's also true that not all voices are heard equally in the public square.

Remember what happened last spring when teachers descended on the state Capitol to rally support for schools? They found many legislative doors bolted – literally, not just metaphorically.

You see, with mega-donors on speed dial, members of the Republican supermajority could afford to dig in their heels and refuse to reverse a decade of starvation budget cuts imposed on public education and vital state services.

What happened next is instructive. The working class revolted. Twelve GOP incumbent lawmakers were jettisoned in primaries and runoffs. Every vote counts, right?

Yes ... but there's a sobering reality, too, illustrated by the political slogan "money talks and bulls--- walks."

The donor class, as expected, rallied around the Republican gubernatorial nominee – Continental Resources' Harold Hamm, Devon Energy's Larry Nichols and others writing checks. Stitt effectively matched them, "loaning" his campaign nearly half the \$10.3 million he raised so far.

Stitt campaigned as a Donald Trump-style outsider who'll shake things up. But if past elections are prologue, you can bet special interests will line up to help him retire his campaign "debt."

[For the record: Democrat Drew Edmondson loaned his campaign \$60,000 – big money to most Oklahomans, small potatoes in a record-setting election season for fund-raising.]

What was particularly revealing in the final, pre-election campaign report [for the period from Aug. 14 to Oct. 27] was the number of small, \$50-or-less donors. Stitt reported fewer than 200 such contributors, totaling about \$6,000; Edmondson, by contrast, had 2,840, generating \$61,000-plus.

Big donors versus small donors affords a glimpse into a candidate's likely public policy priorities.

Record-setting gubernatorial war chests were by no means the only evidence of big money's impact on the 2018 battle for statehouse supremacy.

An Oklahoma Watch analysis found legislators transferred \$746,000 to other candidates in the last two years – 88% from Republican to Republican.

Candidates often raise money they don't end up needing, of course – they are re-elected without opposition or draw only a token challenge that doesn't require much campaigning.

It's troubling, though, to think candidate-to-candidate transfers could be a way to sidestep campaign contribution limits.

Think of it this way: a donor gives a safe-seat incumbent a maximum contribution on the promise – wink-wink – it will be passed along to a needy candidate to whom the donor already maxed-out.

This further tilts the scales toward special interests. To re-balance them, rank-and-file Oklahomans must demand lawmakers impose tighter restrictions on campaign contributions and spending and on wining-and-dining.

These are perilous times for our democratic republic. Without vigilance, a smaller state like Oklahoma is especially susceptible to becoming a full-fledged plutocracy – a government of, by and for the 1%.



Santa Cal's Top 10 Stocking Stuffers – And That's No Bull[Stitt]

BY CAL HOBSON

An early Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all readers and supporters of The Oklahoma Observer – our state's most informative and respected periodical! Also, this festive holiday season of giving means now is the time for me to share with you a compilation of my fourth annual Top 10 holiday gifts and their most deserving recipients.

In no particular order of significance, relevance, logic, value, wisdom or common sense:

1. To President Donald Trump from the Left Coast: A long handled rake for his tiny hands to use sweeping up the forests and lovingly provided by former residents of burned out Paradise, CA.

2. To First Lady Melania Trump: A Rolling Pin to bop the biggest bully in America ... her husband.

3. To OU President James Gallogly: For the man

who seemingly has everything except compassion for his fellow university employees ... a heart transplant.

4. To former OU President David and First Lady Molly Boren: 2018 Christmas cards because now they really, really do matter.

5. To the new New York-based newspaper owners of The Oklahoman: Runaway winners of the 2018 Save Our Trees competition for reducing their use of newsprint by over 90%. Honorable mention goes to The Donald for applying job killing tariffs on Canadian timber.

6. To Vice President Mike Pence: A lap dog so President Trump will have ready access to a matching pair if he ever wants something from you ... two.

7. To new Congresswoman Kendra Horn: National

recipient of the 2018 Elephant Dehorning Award. She was the only Democrat challenger in the entire country to defeat an incumbent listed as representing a "safe Republican district." Turns out Kendra The Elephant Tamer was about as safe for Congressman/Lt. Col. Steve Russell as the fraidy hole was for Saddam Hussein.

8. To Oklahoma farmers and ranchers: These conservative, penny pinching voters will receive the 2018 Gullibility Gaff Gift for voting overwhelmingly to elect Gateway Mortgage mogul Kevin Stitt as our next governor. Makes no sense ... or cents. Property taxes – aka ad valorem – are the bib overall crowd's most despised form of fiscal confiscation because it is paid by the soil tillers and cow punchers regardless of profitability. Soon to be new "run gubmitt like a bidness" OKIE CEO also named it as his favorite "consumption tax" to raise, if necessary. No, I'm not making that up.

9 and 9(a): To the National Rifle Association's Executive Director Wayne LaPierre, this year's only double winner: First, Pinocchio's ever growing nose for all the whoopers Wayne wags to clueless con-

gressmen/women and second, a box of tissues to wipe gun victims' blood off his cold but not yet dead hands.

10. Finally ...

More good news for Oklahoma's New First Family, A Christmas tale just told to me by a very busy bee!

Another little Stitt is due in time, making the T-Town family total nine,

So please Sarah, with such a growing harem, Right after you finish your labor, do us a favor And get all your little tots ... their school shots!

That last one probably guarantees I won't be on any short list for a Stitt cabinet post but he could do worse ... like keeping any of Fallin's folks.

Merry Christmas and see you in the New Year! Cal Hobson, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore.

Editor's Note: The opening sentence was not paid for by The Observer. Nonetheless, we humbly accept the high praise as a wonderful early holiday gift from the Lion of Lexington!

Human Rights Activists To Be Honored

The Oklahoma Universal Human Rights Alliance will hold its annual Human Rights Awards ceremony on Dec. 8 in the House chamber at the state Capitol.

The event recognizes those persons or organizations that have made a significant contribution to human rights for all in Oklahoma.

This year's honorees are Silapberdi Berdiyev, Kayla Bonewell, James M. Branum, Mark Faulk, Victor Gorin, the Happy World Foundation, Adriana Loper, Ian O'Kidhain, Wilfredo Santos-Rivera and Bianca Valen-

cia, Marilyn Vann and Michael A. Veasey.

The ceremony, which begins at 10 a.m., will also feature speeches by Dr. Nyla Ali Khan and Ms. Sara Bana, both former award recipients, as well as Ms Bansari Mehta and Mr. Santos-Rivera.

The event is free and open to the public. A complementary lunch will follow, also at the Capitol. Those staying for lunch are asked to RSVP.

Call 405.631.3027 or visit okhumanrights.org for more information.

Creek County D's To Award Scholarships

The Creek County Democratic Party intends to award two \$1,000 scholarships next year, continuing a successful program that previously benefited students from Bristow, Mannford, Depew, Kellyville, Drumright, and Sapulpa.

The scholarship competition is open to all graduating seniors who are [1] residents of Creek County and [2] either registered Democrats or have at least one parent or guardian who is a registered Democrat in Creek County.

Public school, private school, or home-schooled students are welcome to apply. The scholarships can be used at any accredited trade school, vocational school, or institution of higher education.

Applications can be obtained by emailing CreekCountyDemocratScholarship@gmail.com or by calling Lynne Belcher at 918-247-6674. They also are available from all county high school counselors.

Applications must be postmarked no later than Feb. 15, 2019 to be considered. The awards will be presented in April.

For more details, visit the Creek County Democrats Facebook page.

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

Rocking Oklahoma's Political Patriarchy



BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

Historians may one day circle Nov. 6, 2018 as a watershed moment in Oklahoma's development.

For on that day, the political patriarchy – entrenched since statehood – began to crumble.

An energized Oklahoma electorate – 40%-plus more voted in this year's gubernatorial race than four years ago – sent 19 new women legislators to the statehouse to join 13 incumbents.

The numbers remain small, only 21% of 149 seats, and are hardly representative of the state's population, more than half of which is female. But ...

This. Is. Progress.

Especially when considering that women lawmakers now routinely sit in power positions – in the last Legislature, at least for a time, Sen. Kim David and Rep. Leslie Osborn served as chairs of the Senate and House appropriations committees, respectively.

Next year, both the Senate and House Democratic caucuses will be led by women – Sen. Kay Floyd and Rep. Emily Virgin.

Moreover, a legislative party caucus – for the first time – will be female-majority: The Senate Democratic caucus gender-splits 5-4.

This includes three new women senators elected in the OKC area, each of whom succeeded men: Sens. Julia Kirt, Carri Hicks and Mary Boren.

[The stunner breakthrough for women did not even involve the statehouse – it was Kendra Horn's upset of two-term incumbent U.S. Rep. Steve Russell in

central Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District. More on that later in this essay.]

One Election Day's results do not guarantee steady progress, of course. Like most things there will be zigs and zags, two steps forward and one back. Power does not give up power easily. Nor are societal norms easily changed.

Yet, there's no reason to believe this isn't the beginning of a trend that results in a Legislature that more closely reflects Oklahoma's growing, more diverse population.

It's hardly a preferred topic in so-called polite company, but the reality is that misogyny and racism remain far too prevalent in Oklahoma. These stains are not unique to our state, of course. But it's important to acknowledge them and their negative impact on decision-making at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

You doubt these problems widely persist?

Ask Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaign staffs about the racism they encountered in Oklahoma. Or Pittsburg County Democrats who faced strong resistance – even within their own party – to Peggy DeFrange's nomination to replace term-limited Rep. Brian Renegar in HD 17. [She lost to Republican Jim Grego.]

It is worth noting that women lawmakers are no more monolithic than men when it comes to public policy. But there is no doubt Oklahoma would have been better served in recent years had male-dominated, neck-bowed legislative leadership gotten out of

the way and let the likes of Democrats Floyd and Virgin and Republicans Osborn and Sen. Stephanie Bice negotiate the most intractable issues.

How did so many women win statehouse seats this year?

It begins with the math: A record 331 women ran for the House or Senate this year – up from only 216 four years ago. Moreover, 65 women ended up as major party statehouse nominees – 49 Democrats and 16 Republicans.

On Election Day, 10 R's and nine D's won, putting two-thirds more women in legislative seats next year than last.

Not only did more women run, but their prospects for success were bolstered by changing urban demographics and by the Republican-dominated supermajority's failure to solve the state's most significant problems – woefully underfunded public schools and declining access to quality health care.

It will take some months for all the data to be compiled and analyzed to ensure a complete portrait of the 2018 elections, but it appears white women and younger voters were the keys to knocking holes in the statehouse patriarchy.

Nationally, for example, Republicans enjoyed a 10-percentage-point edge among white women in 2016. This year, the margin was cut to zero – white women backing Democrats and Republicans equally [49%].

It is not a stretch to suggest white suburban women, in particular, played key roles in electing more women to the Oklahoma Legislature – and in Horn's upset congressional win.

Pre-election polling and anecdotal evidence suggested public education and health care were of paramount importance to female voters – though not necessarily in that order.

Further, the explosive growth of millennials in urban centers undoubtedly factored into victories in three previously GOP districts in Oklahoma City – Kirt in SD 30, Hicks in SD 40 and Democrat Chelsey Branham in HD 83 – and one in Tulsa – Democrat Melissa Provenzano in HD 79.

At least one former Republican senator thinks the increase in women in the upper chamber could be profound, saying, “Kay Floyd has a kick-ass caucus.”

As former District 40 Sen. David Holt – now OKC mayor – put it, in an interview with the Oklahoman, “For anybody who's been following the demographic shifts and voting patterns of Oklahoma City, what happened was not a shock. It was clearly bound to happen at some point.”

Younger, more diverse urban populations across Middle America are turning once solidly red Republican areas Democratic blue – think Dallas and Houston as prime examples. The result is an elected elite that more closely resembles the urban mosaic: as many men as women, more blacks and Hispanics, more LGBTQ and religiously diverse candidates, just to name a few.

Enter Kendra Horn.

Even though many political insiders – including Republicans – long predicted the Oklahoma-Pottawatomie-Seminole county district would be the first to turn blue, few seemed to think this was the year.

What Horn's victory underscored is this: In politics, timing often is everything. She was the right candidate, in the right place, at the right time.

First, Horn clearly maximized her campaign's weapons, including an army of volunteers and contributors that reflected a broad swath of blue constituencies [think: public ed advocates, women, LGBTQ, organized labor, etc.].

Second, incumbent Russell campaigned as if victory was a GOP birthright. Anyone who's even glanced at the district's changing demographics and voting patterns – particularly in OKC – knew it wasn't.

Third, Horn likely benefited from a last-minute, \$400,000 TV blitz funded by former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Independence USA PAC.

One political tool that could slow the patriarchy's decline? Redistricting.

Republicans tightened their legislative supermajorities thanks to a solidly red rural vote. As Democrats continue to capitalize on changing urban demographics, the GOP no doubt will attempt after the 2020 Census to dilute blue voting blocs by splintering them into gerrymandered districts that stretch deep into rural Oklahoma.

It may not affect the number of women elected to the Legislature, but it could impact the public policy priorities they bring with them.

No matter how it plays out, Nov. 6 was a turning point. Remember the old feminist bumper sticker: *A Woman's Place Is In The House?*

It's coming true – in the *statehouse*.



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

CentralOklahomaAcupuncture.com

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



GOP's Internecine Warfare, Voter Unrest Deal Extremists Crippling Blow

BY JOHN THOMPSON

Two Cheers for The Oklahoman! It finally provided a little coverage about Oklahoma's biggest social and political tragedies that have been quietly unfolding, and it reported on the state's greatest progressive political victories of 2018.

The Oklahoman even editorialized on the biggest, virtually untold story of this pivotal year. But as will be explained later, we cannot depend on the newspaper to investigate this Republican civil war which could transform our politics.

Oklahomans often hear about the Republican tax cutting and the obvious messes that resulted. Less attention is paid to the precipitous decline of life expectancies of uneducated, mostly white, rural middle people which the Washington Post called "deaths by despair."

This year, Oklahoma reporter Ben Felder illuminat-

ed both the collapse of our health care systems and the health effects of over-incarceration, and his colleague Justin Wingerter showed how three of the nation's 10 towns with the lowest life expectancy are in Oklahoma. However, we could still use more journalism on the myriad of ways these tragedies are linked to the radical rightwing policies of the Republican governor and Legislature.

No newspaper could ignore the way Oklahoma cut education funding more than any other state and how the teachers revolted. We all heard about the primary losses of all but four of the Republicans who opposed a tax increase to raise teachers' salaries. The Journal Record reported how Oklahoma had been second-to-last in female representation in the legislature, but now, 21% of all lawmakers will be women. And the nation's greatest electoral upset was Kendra Horn's amazing victory over Steve Russell.

On the other hand, more attention should be paid to sociologist Mike Males' analysis of Horn's victory in her gerrymandered district.

Males, an OKC native who is senior researcher at the San Francisco-based Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, explains that between 2014 and 2018, "voter turnout in the district surged by 23% for Republicans and a volcanic 110% for Democrats, with every precinct showing substantially increased Democratic voting."

He found that Russell won most of the city's "40 rural white precincts, hard-core Trump territory," but they became significantly more Democratic. He reports, "Of the 80,000 new voters, Democrats won two-thirds in rural areas, three-fourths in Oklahoma City, and 88% in the suburbs."

Yes, Males shows that millennial districts voted Democratic by margins exceeding 75% but he also found that "gated, guarded Gaillardia, 15 miles from downtown, overwhelmingly white and wealthy, tripled its vote for Democrats, while the district's two arch-rural counties doubled their Democratic votes."

This good news for Democrats leads to the even more astounding, but under-reported story of the so-called "purge" of rightwing Republican legislators

On the eve of the election, the New York Times offered one of the best explanations for the overall Republican victories. It presciently predicted that the governor's race was "essentially a contest over who has the least to do with the current state government, which drew national attention last spring when teachers protested statewide over severely underfunded schools."

Both the Associated Press' Sean Murphy and The Times also reported a story that could be as pivotal as the spring teacher walkout – how state Rep. Chris Kannady, supposedly a "moderate" Republican, used dark money to help defeat conservative Republicans who fought against the teacher pay raise [and Medicaid expansion.]

Kannady said the Conservative Alliance PAC he supported was necessary to "cut out the cancer that was attacking us."

The only response in the Oklahoman was an editorial complaining that this Republican versus Republican battle is "backstabbing and double-talk." It editorialized that Republicans who the PAC helped oust voted with "the majority of the GOP caucus on many issues highlighted by the Conservative Alliance PAC."

According to the Oklahoman, Kannady told the AP he is involved with the PAC because, "We cannot let members of our own caucus actively be against the rest of us because we disagree on policy decisions." But the newspaper condemned the Republicans and their dark money providers for a "mass of pretzel logic."

And then it concluded, "Put simply, Republican lawmakers now must worry about being attacked by other Republicans even when they vote with those Republican lawmakers on most issues. This may

promote many things, but caucus 'unity' isn't one of them."

The Oklahoman is right on two things. This internal conflict illustrates the dysfunction of the legislature in recent years. Second, the so-called Republican moderates have not voted very differently than the extreme right. But to really understand this once-secret conservative civil war, a video of the Nov. 11 Oklahoma Conservative Political Action Committee [OCPAC] meeting is a must see. [To view the video, visit <https://bit.ly/2FUI4X9>.]

The meeting began with the typical rightwing complaints. Millennial professionals who are bringing liberal "feelings" to Oklahoma City were dismissed as "inplants." One speaker said that immigrants are bringing socialism. They are "not bad people necessarily" but "don't make good citizens."

OCPAC's president, Bob Lynn said, "Government education is the bane of American civilization." Lynn added that he learned about the Republicans losing the House of Representative from the "Jerusalem news media."

Above all, these conservative activists attacked teachers and attorneys. Charlie Meadows condemned teachers for "indoctrinating children, making leftists of our children." Had Kevin Stitt lost the governor's race, Meadows said, there would have been a "total takeover of state government by the education industry – teachers."

Former state Rep. Mike Reynolds then spoke on "Republican Party Treason." Reynolds eventually shifted gears to trial lawyers and teachers, who are their "useful idiots." He said Kannady got hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Conservative Alliance PAC to "take over" the Republicans and undo tort reform.

He said that Jon Echols, the House Majority Floor Leader, said he knew about Kannady campaign to defeat conservatives and he claimed to be alarmed by the assault. Echols supposedly replied that Kannady said he wants to be the "Gene Stipe of the House" – not Speaker.

Then, Reynolds' theories got even weirder. The dark money, he said, appeared to come from Tulsa billionaire George Kaiser. This led to the theory that the funding by anti-conservative billionaire[s] is linked to the legal battle over stolen Nazi art that the University of Oklahoma agreed to return in 2016!?!?

The discussion then shifted to Kendra Horn, the "Democrats' hero." To defeat her, Republicans "can't leave Oklahoma County whole." He called on U.S. Rep. Tom Cole to expand his district into Oklahoma City, U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas to take back an OKC area, and U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin to do his duty and absorb enough of Oklahoma County Democrats to defeat Horn.

As Mike Males explains, gerrymandering is no longer enough for Republicans to regain control of Oklahoma County. Horn's smile, her moderation, and her



A Place Called Hope

*No Surrender For
This Rural Democrat*

*A State Worth
Staying, Fighting For*

BY DONNA BEBO

When you're a Democrat in Oklahoma, the days and weeks following an election can often be rough. Old debates find new life and everyone seems to have insight into the races we lost.

Some believe we aren't running candidates who are bold enough progressives. Others feel that Democrats are not doing enough to court votes outside of our party.

This year, rural Oklahoma accomplished something that is rarely seen in the Democratic Party. We got Democrats to agree.

On Nov. 7, Democrats all across our state simulta-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

BY JOHNSON BRIDGWATER

"Where there is no hope, it is incumbent on us to invent it." – Albert Camus

Oklahoma is a survivors' state. And with that in mind, I was thinking of Elie Wiesel as I watched the election results roll in on Nov. 6. Elie so rightly shared, "I have learned two lessons in my life: first, there are no sufficient literary, psychological, or historical answers to human tragedy, only *moral* ones. Second, just as despair can come to one another only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings."

I am here to deliver hope. I know following the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

neously pointed their fingers at rural voters. Progressive state legislative candidates lost. Moderate and conservative Democrats lost, too. Statewide candidates took such a hit in rural Oklahoma that urban voters couldn't cover the deficit.

Following the devastating losses in rural and solid gains in urban areas, I was asked why I choose to live in my tiny little town in the heart of southwestern Oklahoma. Why do I set myself up to have my heart broken every election year? Why don't I just move to the city where I can make a real difference and work with candidates who can actually win?

I stay because this tiny little town is my family's home. It's where my husband and I coach our daughter's softball team. It's where my front porch sits under an endless sky. It's summer cookouts with friends who have become family and kids I couldn't love more if they were my own flesh and blood.

This is a town where our teachers only have four days with our children each week and still find time to make them feel valued, smart, and loved. I'm still here because those schools deserve to be fully funded and our kids deserve quality healthcare.

It takes real grit to run as a Democrat in rural Oklahoma. More than that, we run some of the finest individuals to ever seek office. Every candidate I've had the honor of working with has been serving their communities for years [or decades]. Each of them run for the purest of reasons – to serve the good of our people.

Our state would have been blessed by their service. They have each continued to serve as volunteers, organizers, activists, and community leaders. Their character and dedication fuels my hope and I believe that wins in southern Oklahoma are just around the corner.

We had candidates who came within 500 votes of winning. Others saw numbers on election night that were much less optimistic. I hope every candidate who worked hard and represented our people and our party well will run again. Even in heavily red districts, these are voices that need to be heard.

Our messages need to be carried to every dirt road and tiny town. We will never win if we allow ourselves to fade away. We need to double down on rural. We're here – ready to support candidates we can believe in!

In Ada, volunteers working with the Oklahoma Democratic Party's coordinated campaign visited over 3,000 doors in support of our candidates. The Garvin County Democrats got door hangers out to every targeted voter in Pauls Valley. Once they finished there, they loaded up their cars and moved on to Lindsay.

In McClain county, two volunteers met up several days each week to contact voters in Newcastle.

When they ran out of literature or weren't sure where to go next, they didn't just stop. They called to find out what was next.

Teachers in Stephens County hit the doors after putting in long days at school. In Carter, Bryan, Grady, Jackson, and other counties across Oklahoma, volunteers were out there representing the very best our party has to offer.

I put over 7,000 miles on my car from September to Election Day. I'm thankful for the friendships and experiences gained traveling every single one of them.

I wish everyone who is quick to write off rural Oklahoma could see what I've seen. We've opened temporary offices in volunteer's garages, studios, and sunrooms. We even opened one in the back of a dentist's office.

When we didn't have an office, we met at gas stations, parks, or local cafes. When things weren't working, we found a way. Rural Oklahoma is not ready to roll over and give up. I'm not ready to give up, either.

Earlier this year, a gentleman told me that he was the only Democrat working in his county. I promised him that wasn't true. That's why I stay.

Donna Bebo lives in Fletcher and was the 2012 Democratic nominee for Oklahoma's 4th Congressional District seat.

Fighting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

elections many of you are currently thinking, "OK, it is time to flee this state." However, I would claim that there is no state more in need of your hard work, effort and activism at this moment than Oklahoma.

Ultimately, no change in geography will exempt you from who you are, nor let you off the hook if you have awakened to your life's mission and purpose.

Sure, finding strength and safety in numbers is certainly permissible, but I would argue it is possible to build those numbers right here in our state if the need is great enough. And make no mistake: Oklahoma is a state in great need.

Oklahoma is home to multiple pipeline fights no different from Keystone XL; multiple water pollution issues as significant as the Gulf Coast Deepwater Horizon oil spill by way of mercury pollution, wastewater injection, and industrial agriculture such as the chicken farms of far eastern Oklahoma. Not to mention a government that places private profit ahead of public good on a weekly basis.

Like a great number of Oklahomans, I did not choose this state as my home. Nonetheless, my home it is. I am the fifth generation of a family forced here against its will. However, over the years I have come to love every one of its 77 counties, from McCurtain County and its palms and alligators all

the way to the very northwest tip of Cimarron County where Black Mesa shares its wondrous antelope, golden eagles and dinosaur tracks with those willing to make the drive.

Oklahoma holds a special magic that deserves all our time, attention, and love to protect and assure its natural wonders stay natural and wondrous.

Home to more ecoregions than all but three other states, and a Top 10 state in terms of overall biological diversity, I would argue Oklahoma is not only a state worth staying and fighting for, but a state of wonder and beauty that beckons all of you reading this to leave the comfort of your towns and cities to hit the road to discover its many secrets.

Despite the day in and day out bad news that we are so frequently reminded of, there is an abundance of positive metrics by which Oklahoma should be re-framed.

Oklahoma ranks second in the entire nation in the production of wind energy, with many days showing wind energy topping natural gas for production of electricity. Oklahoma also has cut its use of coal in half in the last 10 years. We also held a statewide teacher's strike last year – this is, and was, significant.

Sure we have a lot of work to do: We have coal incentives to get rid of. Bad anti-solar energy laws, regulations and misinformation to overcome. And the need for a complete re-invention of Oklahoma's economic future – one that phases out fossil fuels in exchange for a bright, clean renewable energy future built on a vision for our state that assures our children and their children not only have safe, stable jobs, but also a basketful of reasons to stay put rather than seeking out more creative, hopeful and thoughtful places like Colorado, Washington State, and yes, even Texas.

Oklahoma's future is in our hands, and it is not something to give up on, nor to take lightly.

We do not do the work because we expect to win. We do the work because we HOPE to win, because the work is good and just. We do the work because we HOPE to see change. But like those before us discovered, it is finding the joy in the struggle, finding the power to hope, that provides us with the true reasons to struggle onwards.

Maya Angelou summed it up this way: "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

We should not rely on the immediate gratification of joy as a basis for our work or our lives, just as I have not planted the trees I have planted for my own gratification.

Rather, I planted them for the generations to come. So please join me – stay put and plant some trees of your own.

Johnson Bridgwater is director of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Mid-Term Results Challenge Racism In Unexpected Ways

BY PATRICK COCKBURN

In 1898 the state of Louisiana held a constitutional convention with the declared aim of disenfranchising black people and perpetuating white rule. "Our mission was, in the first place, to establish the supremacy of the white race in this state to the extent to which it could be legally and constitutionally done," reads the official journal of the convention.

Legal means were found to scrub 130,000 registered black voters from the rolls and allow juries to come to non-unanimous verdicts in felony trials, including those involving the death penalty.

This measure might sound technical, or even be presented as a bid to make the court system more efficient, but its real purpose was thoroughly racist. It effectively sidestepped the constitutional requirement that black people should serve on juries, which gave them some leverage in resisting legal discrimination against the black population.

Since there were usually only one or two black jurors on a jury, they only had influence so long as verdicts were unanimous. Once a split verdict was allowed, then all-white juries could effectively decide the fate of defendants by a 10 to 2 verdict. This entrenched the legal bias against black people for over a century.

It was only last month that voters in Louisiana approved an amendment that abolished this toxic Jim Crow law that had survived the civil rights movement because it was not demonstrably racist written down, despite its obvious racist intent. Oregon is now the only state that does not require juries to reach unanimous verdicts.

Votes like the one in Louisiana – though little reported by the media – are often more important in their effect on people's lives than the choice of elected representative in Congress.

Some of these votes have vast political consequences: great attention is given to the races for the governorship and senate in Florida and too little to the decision by voters to restore the voting rights of ex-felons though this will re-enfranchise nearly 1.5 million people in Florida or 9.2% of the voting-age population. These are people who have completed felony sentences, but until now had lost the right to vote in a state that is often described as evenly divided between Republican and Democrat.

The purpose of denying ex-felons the right to vote was much the same as that expressed openly by those attending the Louisiana constitutional convention 120 years ago. Depriving felons of the vote was purportedly non-racist since it applied to every ex-convict, but in practice it targeted the black population.

Some 418,000 out of a black working age population of 2.3 million in Florida have felony convictions. This is just under 18% of the potential black voting population who, if they could have cast a ballot, would have ensured that the Democratic candidates for governor and the Senate were elected.

Only two other states – Iowa and Kentucky – bar former felons from voting, so the situation in Florida

was always out of the ordinary. This should be very obvious but pundits mulling over the political divisions in Florida last month seldom mentioned this crucial act of voter suppression.

The midterm elections confirmed the extent to which the U.S. is racially divided, though this was scarcely a mystery to anybody who has spent any time in the country. It was easy enough for President Trump to whip up racial fears and animosities by demonizing the so-called caravan of Central American migrants in Mexico.

Trump is always skilful in dominating the news agenda and he did so again in the final weeks of the campaign. His success was hugely aided by the lack of any Democratic leader able to rebut him in equally attention-grabbing terms. The media dances too easily to Trump's tunes, but since the Democrat leaders don't play any memorable tunes of their own, it is difficult to know what else the journalists can do.

The absence of an effective Democrat leadership also opened the door to Trump's partial success in claiming a great victory in the elections, though in losing the House of Representatives, he has overall suffered a defeat.

Many of these ploys are scarcely new: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan invariably claims an electoral triumph before all the votes are counted and a winner declared. Populist nationalist leaders with cult-like attributes the world over all show the same need to project an aura of inevitable success.

This unrelenting focus on Trump and the struggles at the apex of American politics is often irrelevant to what is happening, both good and bad, on the ground. It does not bring anybody very close to understanding what makes America tick and how far and in what direction this is changing.

A better guide to this is often local or statewide initiatives or the election of new district attorneys or sheriffs who actually implement the law.



In Alabama, for instance, two counties have voted to ban their sheriffs from being allowed to take for themselves any money left over from that allocated to pay for food for prisoners after they have been fed.

This is a significant amount of money, with one sheriff keeping \$750,000 which he invested in the purchase of a beach house. Since it is in the financial interest of sheriffs to spend as little as possible on feeding their prisoners, it is not surprising that they go hungry. In one case, where the sheriff had legally pocketed \$200,000, a judge found “undisputed evidence that most of the inmates had lost significant weight.”

I found when I was a correspondent in the U.S. that visiting foreigners, who came from centralized states, usually exaggerated the role and power of the federal government and underestimated that of local officials in the states.

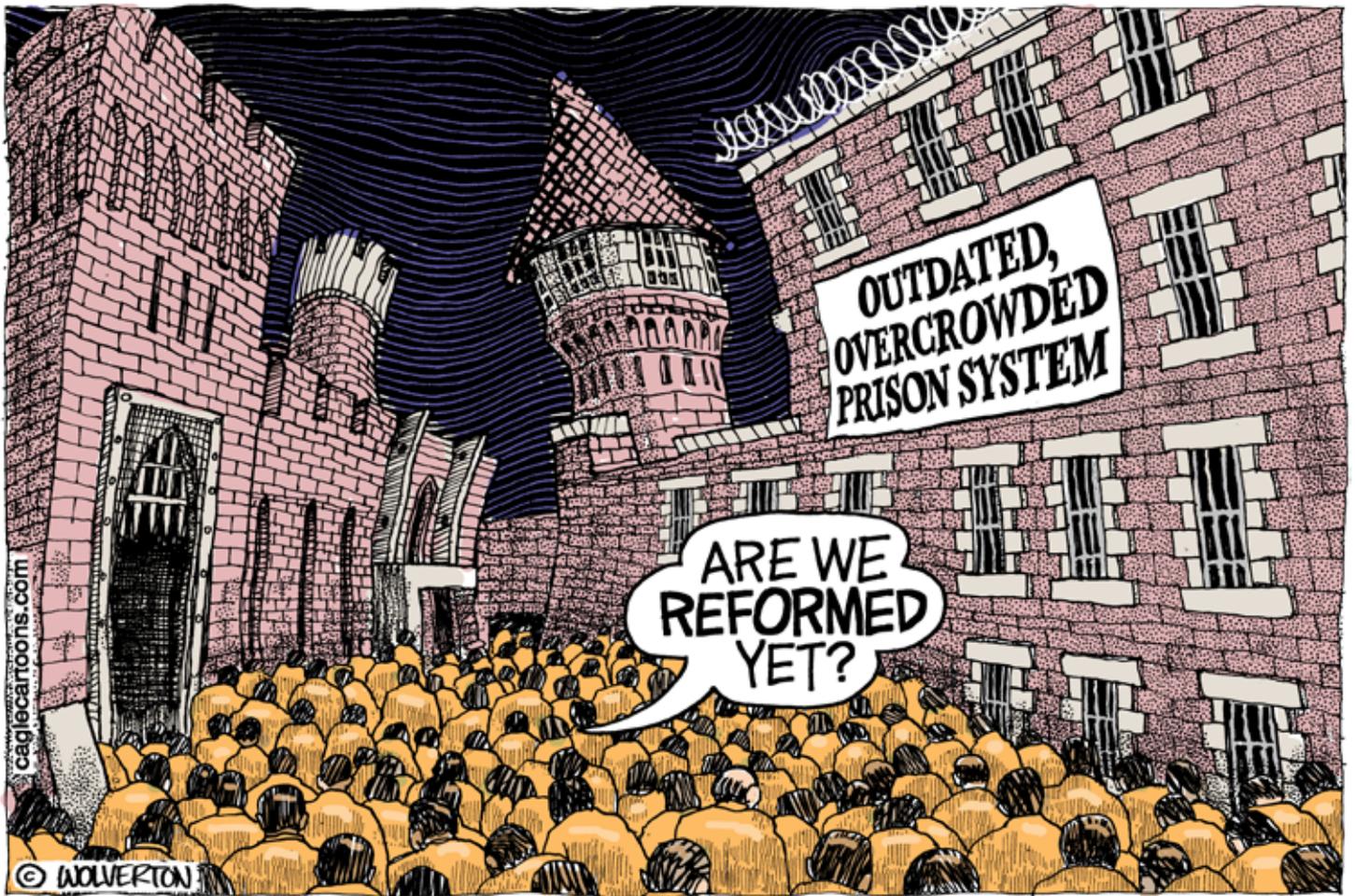
An example of this last month was the election of progressive DAs in Houston, Dallas and San Antonio in Texas, a state that holds 218,500 people in jail or prison. Many are there because the state authorities have criminalized poverty. The choice of DA will decide to what extent people who cannot pay minor fines end up spending years in incarceration.

Resistance to such injustices is strong and growing with the return of over one million people to the electoral roll in Florida being the most important sign of this.

The shock effect of the rise of Trump is great but is exacerbated in the minds of many Americans and most foreigners because they underestimate the extent to which the U.S. is a racially and socially divided country.

Slavery left a mark on black and white people that has never been eradicated. Trump is a symptom of this rather than an aberration. That is why his type of politics will persist, but so too will the opposition.

© Reader Supported News



Property Crime Dropped In Oklahoma After SQ 780 Reduced Punishments

BY DAMION SHADE

Before 2016, stealing a smartphone in Oklahoma could be charged as a felony with the possibility of prison time.

The passage of SQ 780 raised the felony theft threshold in Oklahoma from \$500 to \$1,000, meaning a person has to steal something worth more than \$1,000 to be charged with felony larceny.

These changes went into effect in July 2017, and the early returns are very encouraging: statewide reports of theft fell in Oklahoma between 2016 and 2017.

After SQ 780 reduced minor property crimes to misdemeanors, rates of theft continued to fall. Lower crime numbers, coupled with the sharp decline in felony filings, strongly support the idea that smart justice reform can lead to both less crime and less punishment.

These positive trends should help to sustain jus-

tice reform efforts as Oklahoma works to reduce its world-leading incarceration rate.

Opponents of recent Oklahoma justice reforms argued that criminality and theft would rise if Oklahoma's felony theft amount was lowered. The data shows that the opposite has occurred.

There were 3,443 fewer reports of larceny in 2017 than 2016. Felony cases involving property crime this year are also down 29% from 2017.

SQ 780 is only gradually beginning to alter prison admission rates, but these early results are promising.

It's hard to argue that low level thieves and shoplifters are a serious threat to public safety, but prior to recent reforms, nonviolent property crime was a major driver of incarceration in this state.

Between 2011 and 2015, the number of individuals entering the Oklahoma prison system for proper-

ty offenses grew by 29%. Research shows that these harsh punishments do little to deter crime, and a low level offenders' felony conviction carries lifelong consequences which can often lead to higher rates of recidivism.

On the other hand, the investments in substance abuse and mental health treatment envisioned by SQ 780 and SQ 781 are proven to reduce crime. A 10% increase in the substance abuse treatment rate reduces robbery and larceny theft rates by about 3% on average.

Less punitive criminal penalties, economic development, education, and investments in mental health and substance abuse treatment all lead to better outcomes than so called "Tough on Crime" laws.

Reducing the criminal penalty for low-level theft has become a common part of justice reform efforts across the nation. Thirty-nine states have raised

their felony theft threshold since 2000, and whether a state sets its felony theft amount at \$500, \$1,000, or \$2,000, there seems to be no significant effect on property crime and larceny rates.

Criminality seems to be driven by a lack of access to education, mental health services, and employment, and having a felony conviction makes each of these deficits more likely.

The numbers tell a clear story. Reports of theft are falling as our system has grown less punitive. We should not ignore these facts. Evidence-based justice should force us to reject the harsh sentences and threat-based methods of the recent past.

Theft is often driven by need, and a smart justice system should acknowledge these issues. It shouldn't make them worse.

Damion Shade is a policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

A Path Toward Better Health Care?

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

Oklahoma's health outcomes rank near the bottom of all states. According to KFOR, WalletHub recently ranked the Best and Worst States for Health Care and the results were not favorable for Oklahoma.

Researchers analyzed data and weighed several factors like health care cost, access and outcomes to rank the states with the best and worst health care across the country. Overall, Oklahoma ranked 45th on the list.

Oklahoma was one of the states with the highest average monthly insurance premium, the lowest percentage of insured adults between ages 18 and 64, and one of the states with the highest percentage of adults with no dental visits in the past year.

Health care experts often look at the infant mortality rate as a key indicator to measure the health and wellbeing of a population. Unfortunately, Oklahoma does not fare well there, either.

Oklahoma's infant mortality rate across all races has been growing since 2015 in Oklahoma and in 2017 was more than 30% higher than the national average.

To make that worse, according to a January 2018 report, the mortality rate for black infants in Oklahoma is twice that of white and Hispanic infants.

Not only do more children die in Oklahoma, adults die earlier. For instance, there are counties in Oklahoma where the life expectancy is less than 57 years, or 22.5 years less than the national average. That means that residents of some communities in Oklahoma face a shorter life expectancy than in the Congo and only months longer than Uganda.

The list continues and Oklahoma fails. From dental care to optometric care to mental health care, an

analysis of Oklahoma's health care delivery shows no bright spots. Plain and simple, people in Oklahoma aren't healthy and show no signs of becoming healthy.

These and scores of other low ranking categories fall into the category of health care. All indicators point toward a health care delivery system comprised of hospitals, clinics, ambulance services, nursing homes, immunization rates, and many other components that are not adequately delivering services to hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans who are underserved.

The fact that so many of our friends and neighbors are not receiving health care is not due to the state's hospitals. Oklahoma has quality hospitals that deliver cutting edge medical treatment to their patients. Likewise, Oklahoma's ambulance services and nursing homes employ staff and professionals who are well trained and able to provide quality care. We have dedicated doctors and nurses.

What is the problem and what is the path toward a healthier state? One idea that has been presented is the expansion of Medicaid for those working Oklahomans who have no health insurance and no current health care coverage. That approach has been soundly rebuffed by Gov. Mary Fallin for the past eight years.

The people of Oklahoma are now looking to a new governor and a new, larger legislative supermajority to have a plan and to put that plan into action. We need to give them that chance. But they must understand that time is a factor.

It is a matter of life or death to many Oklahomans. *Chickasha's David Perryman serves District 56 in the Oklahoma House.*

More Work Needed To Count All Oklahoma Kids In 2020 Census

BY GENE PERRY

Data from the U.S. Census is essential for deciding the distribution of billions of dollars in federal grants, helping private businesses make decisions about where to locate and expand, helping non-profits and public agencies target programs where they're needed most, and making sure Americans have fair voting representation in state and national elections.

For all of these reasons, it's essential that Oklahomans are accurately counted in the 2020 Census.

Unfortunately, Oklahoma contains many of the hardest to count Census tracts in the nation – areas where about one-quarter or more of households did not mail back their 2010 Census questionnaire. In particular, young children under five, who by estimates are about 7% of Oklahoma's population, are undercounted at a higher rate than any other age group.

Why are young children more likely to go uncounted? In Oklahoma and across the nation, poverty is highest among families with children, and poor households are the most difficult to count. Families may not understand that they need to list all members of the household on their Census form, and very young children are the most likely to be left out.

That confusion is compounded for young children with complex living arrangements, such as those living in foster care, with grandparents, or with parents who are cohabiting but not married. Poverty and complex living arrangements for young children are also more common among Oklahomans of color, putting our state's black, Latino, and American Indian children at especially high risk of going uncounted.

Besides these longstanding problems, changes in the upcoming Census threaten to make the undercount even worse.

The 2020 Census will be the first time that the Census Bureau will ask most households to submit their forms online. However, about 17.3% of Oklahoma households had no Internet access as of 2017 – and that's concentrated among the already hard-to-count low-income households.

Also, for the first time, families will be asked about their immigration status on the Census form. The Trump Administration added this question at the last minute, going around the traditional, careful vetting process for any new Census question.

STAR TRIBUNE
SOK



Many are concerned that it could intimidate families from filling out the form. The Census has strong safeguards against any of its data being used to personally identify a respondent, but fear of this data being misused remains a challenge.

Making sure we have a complete count in Oklahoma can't be left to the Census alone, and past Census counts have commonly relied on a broad collaboration in local communities. Reaching everyone in the hardest to reach communities requires contributions from on-the-ground partners who best understand those communities.

One good way to facilitate that collaboration is through a Complete Count Committee, which can be set up through the Census Bureau to combine the insights of government officials, health care and social service workers, educators, and private businesses to build local awareness of the Census.

Several state legislatures have already formed Complete Count Committees, and establishing one for Oklahoma should be a high priority for lawmakers next year.

In addition, you can speak to your friends, neighbors, and others in your community about why it's important to complete the Census form. Accurate Census data is an essential bedrock for our democracy and economy.

We can all pitch in to make sure all Oklahomans are counted in 2020 and beyond.

Gene Perry is Director of Strategy and Communication from Oklahoma Policy Institute; www.okpolicy.org.

'Tis The Season To Give To Foster Children

BY JOE DORMAN

With Thanksgiving behind us, 'tis the season for holiday decorations, non-stop Christmas music on the radio, and a lot of hard work for the public employees, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy [OICA] staff and volunteers working to get holiday presents for the roughly 8,000 Oklahoma children in foster care.

That effort begins with caseworkers at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services [DHS], who collect holiday wish lists from each foster child. Next, those wish lists are matched with partner organizations like OK Foster Wishes, the gift drive run by the OICA that works to fulfill these wish-lists with the help of generous donors.

We are proud to say that OK Foster Wishes is the largest gift-drive for foster children in the state, fulfilling more than half of the Oklahoma foster children's wish lists.

OICA and DHS operate the OK Foster Wishes warehouse [a space being generously lent to us, free of charge, by Hobby Lobby] where gifts are stored, sorted and eventually sent out to children. In Oklahoma County, we work directly to schedule foster family pickups to lighten the workload for DHS caseworkers.

In cases where donors are not found, or wish-lists are unavailable, OICA collects unwrapped toys and our staff personally makes shopping runs [funded by monetary donations] to make sure as many gifts as possible are sent out.

If this sounds like a massive operation, it is! It can only succeed with the help of generous and caring Oklahomans.

Please be one of them by going to okfosterwishes.org to request one of our remaining 500 wish-lists or to make a monetary donation. You can also call 405.236.5437 should you need assistance. Contributions ensure this program can continue and not leave a single child out of receiving gifts!

Ensuring that every foster child receives a holiday gift is a team effort, and we are not the only organization working to support this great cause through distributing lists or collecting donations.

In Cleveland County, the youth are served by the Secret Santa program, administered by the Citizens Advisory Board. You can request a list from their website at <http://cabok.org/>.

Tulsa County is served by the program Tulsa Advocates for the Protection of Children, and wish lists for those foster children can be requested at <http://www.tapchelps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-CFK-Donor-Checklist.pdf> by filling out their checklist.

There are other local programs assisting this effort, but in total, OICA supports 54 of the 77 counties. Contact our office if you would specifically like to know which group supports your county.

We are also thankful for other organizations, such as Citizens Caring for Children. They requested 1,200 lists directly from the Department of Human Services to aid in the effort. You can donate to them or request a list from them by emailing Julie at jkeller@cccokc.org with the subject line Joy 4 Kids Wishlist.

Oklahoma Lawyers for Children also began a project this year to assist foster youth over the holidays. If you would like to receive a wish list for this group, contact Tsinena at tthompson@olfc.org or DeMarco at ddavis@olfc.org, or you can also call the organization at 405.232.4453.

As you can see, there many groups working towards one goal: ensuring Oklahoma foster children have a special holiday season.

Please join with us to support this effort to assist our foster youth across the state!

Former state Rep. Joe Dorman is chief executive officer of the Oklahoma Institute for Child advocacy.

Extremists

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

commitment to communicating with voters stands in stark contrast to the bitterness which pervades Republican leaders. But we must make these differences clear to the so-called inplants who have never been to a OCPAC meeting.

The Oklahoman won't share the YouTube video with its readers. That is something that we all must share and thus help illuminate, as we explain how those extremists have dominated the majority party, and undermined the quality of life in most of our state.

John Thompson is an award-winning historian who became an inner-Oklahoma City teacher after the "Hoova" set of the Crips took over his neighborhood and he became attached to the kids in the drug houses. Now retired, he is the author of A Teacher's Tale: Learning, Loving, and Listening to Our Kids.

The American
Dream Starts
@ your library



© MATSON
caglecartoons.com CQ ROLL CALL

Rebooting The State Democratic Party

BY PAUL CARTLEDGE

If you've been to either or both of the last two Oklahoma Democratic Party state conventions, as I have, there are a couple of things that jumped out at you.

One: up to one third of the counties were not represented. And two: the average age of the attendees was somewhere around 65, and that's a generous estimate.

It makes you wonder how much of that lack of interest, particularly among younger voters, derives from the Oklahoma Democratic Party's failure to put forth coherent messaging on the important issues.

Oklahoma Democrats just took another beat down in the mid-term elections due largely to light turnout of Democratic voters.

The majority of Oklahoma Democratic candidates

up and down the ticket ran on the belief that a positive stand in strong support of public education would carry the day. It didn't, particularly as it concerns rural counties.

National polling on issues important to voters revealed the following ranking: health care; the economy; income disparity; voter disenfranchisement; and global warming. Democrats running on these issues across the nation enabled the Blue Wave that gave Democrats a solid majority in the U.S. House and pick-ups of a significant number of gubernatorial seats.

I would venture to say that most of these same issues are important to people in Oklahoma. The one exception would be voter disenfranchisement. Oklahoma is such a bright red state that Republicans

PUBLIC FORUM

don't have to worry about discouraging Democratic voters.

Obviously, Oklahoma Democratic Party officials have a long way to go if they ever hope to see even a tinge of purple in the state's political leanings. There is no quick fix, but we must redefine who we are as Democrats and what we stand for.

Health care in Oklahoma is in shambles.

Rural areas are losing hospitals because Oklahoma Republicans refused to participate in ObamaCare, to the great detriment of rural elderly and low-income citizens. Democrats running for office in Oklahoma should put health care at the top of their list of priorities.

Oklahoma's economy is in its worst condition since the Dust Bowl, thanks to 10 years of Republican political domination. A recent national study ranked Oklahoma only second to Texas among the states for having the most regressive taxation systems.

The study found that the poorest Oklahoma households pay 2.1 times of their incomes in taxes when compared to percentage of income going to taxes for the wealthiest 1%. In Oklahoma, the poorest 20% of households pay the fifth highest taxes as a share of their incomes – 13.4% – in the nation.

Democrats should run on tax fairness in Oklahoma. We should call for a rollback of the massive tax breaks given to wealthy Oklahomans and corpo-

rations, including oil and gas producers. Oklahoma needs the revenue and these folks got a generous double dip from Trump and the GOP.

There is a runaway freight train coming down the tracks, and it is picking up speed. It is global warming. Discussion on all of these other issues, while ignoring global warming, is like sitting in the living room trying to decide what color to paint the walls while the house is on fire.

Republicans have staked out an indefensible position on global warming. Democrats need to own this issue.

Young people are reluctant to identify with political parties in large part because they consider them irrelevant. Democrats can pick up the cause of global warming; sponsor forums featuring knowledgeable climate scientists and advocates, and draw young people in.

Who knows, we might even identify political leaders of tomorrow.

Global warming is all but ignored as a political issue right now, but sooner than we might hope, it will be the major issue. Advocating for renewable energy is not only good politics, it is a moral imperative.

Come on, folks. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. Let's go be Democrats and embrace all of the issues Oklahoma voters care about.

Durant resident Paul Cartledge is chair of the Bryan County Democratic Party.

The Deadliest Sin

BY SHARON MARTIN

It's a common joke in our house when something doesn't get done: "The owner of this establishment is not responsible."

The more I see of my fellow humans [and of myself] the more I realize that humans are pretty irresponsible creatures. The term "humanity" doesn't always have positive connotations. And America hasn't built a shining city on the hill.

We have contributed to the starvation [a gruesome death] of 85,000 children under the age of five in Yemen. The money earned by our war machine is more important than these children's lives, so how can we be surprised that the president is unmoved by the premeditated murder of one journalist?

As horrific as all this is, the administration's willingness to undo any steps toward slowing climate change will contribute to ever greater horror in the next 100 years.

It is impossible for anyone in the state of Florida to believe that climate change isn't happening, yet here is a man at Mar a Lago who claims that climate

change is uncertain. Whether he truly believes this or is just using the uncertainty as a political tool is the only thing uncertain. That so many people in this country do not believe climate change is settled science is testament to the power of mass brain-washing.

Greed and lust for power are the force behind this mass public relations campaign. In fact, oil company scientists were among the first to understand the effects on the climate of burning fossil fuels. And they were the first to adopt a policy of misinformation.

The same policy was adopted in the 2020 presidential campaign. A memo written by a Bush advisor, Frank Lutz, said, "Voters believe that there is no consensus about global warming within the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate."

To this day, Al Gore is an object of derision in

Oklahoma for speaking the truth.

Greed wins, and it is a loss for all of humanity, both the good and the bad of it. Because of war and climate change the number of refugees will only grow.

How we treat this planet, how we treat the truth, and how we treat those who must leave their homes depends on what kind of people we are. And it is up

to each of us to do what's right, because in Oklahoma and the U.S., our leaders are not responsible. *Oilton resident Sharon Martin's latest book, Not A Prodigal, is available through Barnes and Noble. Her recent children's book, Froggy Bottom Blues, can be purchased in hardcover or paperback from Doodle and Peck Publishing and in paperback from Amazon.*

Who's To Blame For DC Gridlock? Mickey Edwards Knows

BY JOSEPH H. CARTER SR.

In a precise unmasking of the dramatic damage that Republican ex-Speaker Newt Gingrich foisted on America's democracy, *The Atlantic* magazine quotes strong critical words unleashed by former Oklahoma Congressman Mickey Edwards, a fellow Republican.

"How Newt Gingrich Broke Congress" is the headline in the November edition story penned by McKay Coppins, a staff writer. "He turned politics into a vicious blood sport, broke Congress, and paved the way for Trump's rise. Now he's reveling in his achievement."

Former Oklahoma newsman, 16-year Congressman and American Conservative Union leader Edwards is bluntly critical, charging Gingrich was "responsible for turning Congress into a place where partisan allegiance is prized above all else," Coppins quotes.

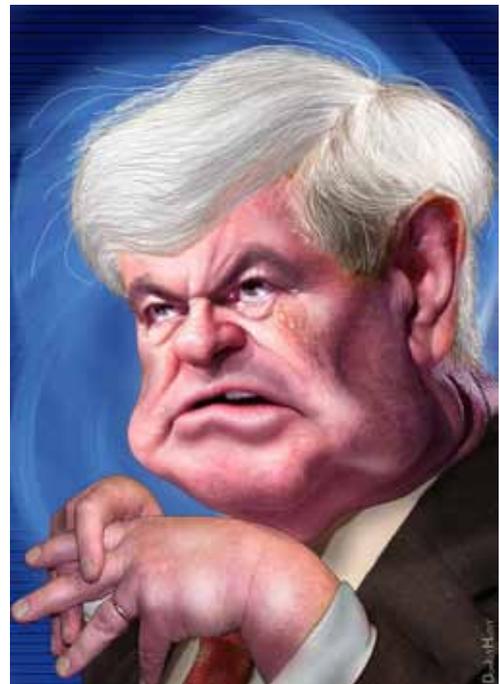
Edwards recounts that Democratic Speaker Jim Wright came off as gruff and power-hungry so that many mild-mannered moderate GOP Congressmen "started asking, 'who's the meanest, nastiest son of a bitch we can get to fight back?'"

"And, of course, that was Newt Gingrich," Coppins quotes Edwards.

Installed by Gingrich was a "strategy of gridlock" where Republicans, the minority in the House back then, "maneuvered to block every piece of legislation they could – even those that might ordinarily have received bi-partisan support – on the theory voter would blame Democrats for the paralysis."

Coppins writes that Edwards believes Gingrich is responsible for turning Congress into a place where partisan allegiance is prized above all else.

Edwards, now 81, holds an OU journalism degree and an OCU law degree and wrote a 1972 book titled "Hazardous to Your Health," attacking national health insurance. He broke fresh ground for state Republicans when elected to Fifth District Congressman representing Oklahoma City.



During Edwards' tenure, I was a House staffer and like most Democrats figured he was a "reasonable conservative" on most issues and always a team player with the Oklahoma Democratic majority when state issues arose.

Until Gingrich's 1979 election, the Georgia delegation, like Oklahoma's, was most Democratic. Immediately, he organized a rowdy group of young Republicans as extreme partisans that Edwards seemed to avoid.

After leaving Congress, Edwards taught at Harvard and became a political consultant in the Nation's capital. He often appears on political talk shows presenting a relatively moderate conservative view. *Norman resident Joseph H. Carter Sr. is author of Never Met A Man I Didn't Like: The Life and Writings of Will Rogers [HarperCollins] and The Quotable Will Rogers [Gibbs Smith Publishers].*

Identity Politics Of Another Kind

BY GARY EDMONDSON

“Don’t call them names. You’ll catch more flies with honey than vinegar.”

I receive a lot of advice.

But if our president – a spoiled brat who thinks anything he wants is, therefore, good and true – has bespoken more than 6,000 lies since taking office [roughly 10 per day], he most certainly is the Liar-in-Chief.

Should uncritical followers who endorse these lies be given a pass for their gullibility or complicity?

The president supports racism and racists – from his first day of campaigning, according to Paul

Ryan – and spouts hatred on a daily basis. One feels a certain duty in pointing out that endorsing him also supports this ignorance and evil.

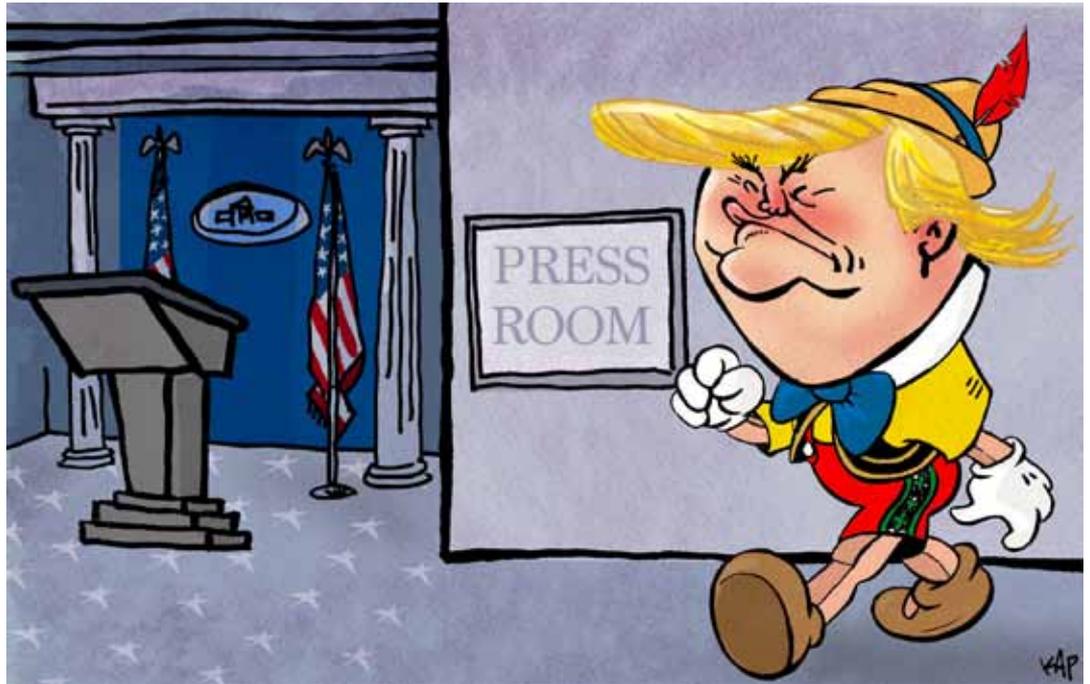
Our president brags about sexual assaults, attacks women for their appearance and pays off other women for extra-marital affairs. He is the Misogynist-in-Chief.

If Sen. Lindsey Graham promises “All Holy Hell” if the president fires Jeff Session and then backtracks and crawfishes and whimpers, is he not the Cowardly Liar?

The Irreligious Right wraps itself in a mantle of church attendance as if that justifies its support of racists and misogynists. Of course, God’s Own Party seems to take that designation seriously, especially the kooks who would replace our republic with a theocracy.

Greed’s Own Party sacrifices scientific truths – and the health and well-being of us and our heirs – on the altar of short-term profits. The “smell of money” argument stinks in comparison to the degraded and shortened lives that are left in its wake. And left behind it certainly will be – as Duncan, OK, well knows – when the exploiters pull up stakes.

When Oklahoma’s U.S. senators put polluted petro profits ahead of protecting people and the environment by denying mounds of scientific evidence detailing global climate change and continue spout-



ing lies and disinformation, they are truly Apostles of Ignorance.

Speaking of profits, I don’t see much profit in lauding Grifters On Parade Oklahoma legislative lackeys for crowding the corporate donation trough at the expense of the rest of us. The carte blanche treatment they have given the oil industry has driven the state toward destruction. Their call for “smaller government” merely means an elimination of well-conceived regulations designed to protect us from robber barons.

This Gang Of Pilferers wants to make government so inefficient that they can justify privatizing public services for profit for their pals – and themselves. They deserve no free passes for plundering the public coffers.

People should be held accountable for their actions. Mealy-mouthing about these atrocities becomes as despicable as the indecencies Republicans would prefer to keep out of the conversation.

Who wants to catch flies anyhow? Actually, the president’s rotting putrescence of lies and filth seems to be much more effective than honey. *Duncan resident Gary Edmondson is chair of the Stephens County Democratic Party.*

Read The Observer On-Line
www.okobserver.org



Trump Puts America Last With Whitewash Of Saudi Prince

BY JUAN COLE

Donald Trump's statement on his policy toward Saudi Arabia in the wake of the murder in Istanbul of dissident Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi brought a profound shame on the United States that will, as FDR put it, live in infamy.

Trump began by saying he was putting America first, but that was the last thing he was doing. He was putting his own personal predilections and policies, and perhaps profit, above the interests of the United States.

Here are the ways he put America last:

1. Trump did not wait for the final Central Intelligence Agency report on the Khashoggi killing, elements of which were leaked last Thursday. According to the Washington Post, the CIA has concluded that Saudi crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman ordered that Khashoggi be whacked. They have evidence that the prince's brother, Khalid Bin Salman – the Saudi

ambassador in Washington – helped lure Khashoggi to the Istanbul consulate by assuring him it was safe to drop by. By ignoring and putting aside the findings of professional investigators, Trump has weakened U.S. security.

2. Trump admitted that the crown prince may be implicated in the murder: "Our intelligence agencies continue to assess all information, but it could very well be that the Crown Prince had knowledge of this tragic event — maybe he did and maybe he didn't!" He went on to say that we will never know what happened at the consulate.

But we do know what happened at the consulate, and after the murder one of the thugs said to another, "Let your boss know it is done." The assassin team leader works for the crown prince.

By openly admitting that it is possible that Bin Salman ordered the hit, but declining to take any action, Trump is announcing that the United States gov-

ernment just does not care if its allies use bone saws on U.S.-based journalists working for the Washington Post. The U.S. ought to stand for the First Amendment, one of its high values that is admired around the world and which is essential to the functioning of American democracy. Trump has dishonored the Constitution.

3. Trump is unbearably transparent about the financial incentives for him to overlook Khashoggi's murder. He makes up a completely ridiculous number for new Saudi purchases from or investment in the United States of \$450 billion, of which he says \$110 billion will "be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and many other great U.S. defense contractors."

First of all, all that money Trump mentioned is vapor, with no reality. The supposed \$110 billion in arms purchases are mostly non-binding memoranda of understanding, just expressions of interest.

Second of all, arms industry investments produce very few jobs. Saudi money likely produces less than 20,000 jobs annually.

Third of all, filling up the volatile Middle East with sophisticated, high-powered weapons makes the U.S. less secure, not more. The Saudis use that fancy equipment they do buy to destroy countries like Yemen, where the al-Qaeda threat has grown, not receded, because of this chaos.

4. Trump is also clear that he is running interference for the crown prince for the sake of Israel and in order to keep together his coalition against Iran. But Israel would not need to suck up to bone saw murderers if it would make peace with the Palestinians and stop colonizing their land and keeping them stateless.

As for Iran, the U.S. had made an epochal settlement with Tehran that mothballed most of its nuclear enrichment program in 2015. Trump trashed that agreement and tried to put Iran behind the eight ball, cheered on by aggressive Saudis willing to fight Iran to the last drop of American soldiers' blood.

Trump created a potential conflict where there was none, and now has to consort with murderers because mafiosi need capos.

5. Trump gave as another reason to wink at Khashoggi's murder and go on doing business as usual with Mohammed Bin Salman that Saudi Arabia is a key partner in fighting terrorism.

The odd assertion frequently met with in Washington, DC, that Iran is the foremost font of terrorism and Saudi Arabia is a useful ally against terrorism is bizarre.

Saudi Arabia backed the Bureau of Services in Peshawar in the 1980s, which mounted violence in Afghanistan and

evolved into al-Qaeda under the Saudi Usama Bin Laden. [Riyadh and Bin Laden fell out in 1990].

Saudi Arabia backed the Army of Islam group in Syria after 2011, which issued bloodthirsty screeds against Shiites and blew stuff up in Damascus and dismissed democracy. Some of the weaponry the CIA passed to the Saudis for Syrian rebels made its way to the al-Qaeda affiliate.

Saudi Arabia in its war on Yemen has at times showed little concern about al-Qaeda in that country while concentrating on the Houthi rebels, who hail from a moderate Shiite sect.

Saudi Arabia kidnapped the prime minister of Lebanon and attempted to force him to resign under duress.

And Saudi Arabia murdered a Washington Post columnist with a bone saw in its Istanbul consulate. With allies like this, who needs enemies?

As for Iran, it has acted not as a radical or terrorist force in the past couple decades in the Middle East, but as an enforcer of the status quo. Iran helped keep the Bashar al-Assad government in power and helped defeat al-Qaeda and ISIL in Syria.

Iran helped defeat ISIL in Iraq and propped up the



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



Baghdad government. Iran has helped assure that the Israelis don't just steal southern Lebanon, which they tried to do 1982-2000.

Iran has been one of the main pillars of counter-terrorism in the Middle East in the past two decades, at a time when the U.S. has rampaged around bringing al-Qaeda into new countries, as in Occupied Iraq, and contributing to the rise of ISIL.

Overlooking Bin Salman's grisly act of murder on

the grounds that Riyadh is needed for counter-terrorism and to block Iran is like everything else in Trump's "statement."

An act of insanity.

Juan Ricardo Cole, a public intellectual and essayist, is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. His blog, Informed Comment, can be found at <https://www.juan-cole.com>.

Overcoming 21st Century Fascism

BY MARK Y.A. DAVIES

A global rise in fascism and other forms of nationalistic authoritarianism is a rather predictable phenomenon in a world moving towards ecological and economic collapse caused by an extractivist capitalism that is unsustainable for both people and the planet.

As the world economy becomes more and more unstable and as our natural environment and the climate become more and more hostile to a flourishing human civilization, leading to increasing conflict from climate change induced scarcity, it becomes easier to move people with the propaganda of fear and even hate.

The desire among many for "strong" authoritarian leaders who will protect them and provide quick and simple solutions to their problems and fear grows stronger as they long for a greatness that they perceived has been lost in a world that feels more and more uncertain, unsafe, and chaotic.

The compelling message of fascism in times like ours is that it creates simple explanations of the challenges we face that build on inherent racism and prejudices in society while providing simple [though most often extremely evil] solutions to those challenges.

Fascism promises to protect the "people" from the "other." It is always the "other" – other religions, other races, other ways of thinking that are responsible for what is wrong. If the "people" just ban together and control or eradicate the other, then the problems will dissipate they are told.

The "other" is responsible for our economic problems, for taking our jobs, for our crime and violence, they are told. It is all based on a lie, a big lie, yet is a rather simple lie, a lie that a large number of people are ready and willing to believe.

We have seen the effectiveness of the big lie of fascism before in the '30s and '40s of the 20th Century. In a time of deep economic insecurity, in a country of deep racism and anti-Semitism that had been decimated by World War I, Hitler used the German "people's" longing for a lost greatness to get them to believe his big lie that he could fix Germany by getting the people working again and by solving the "Jewish

Problem."

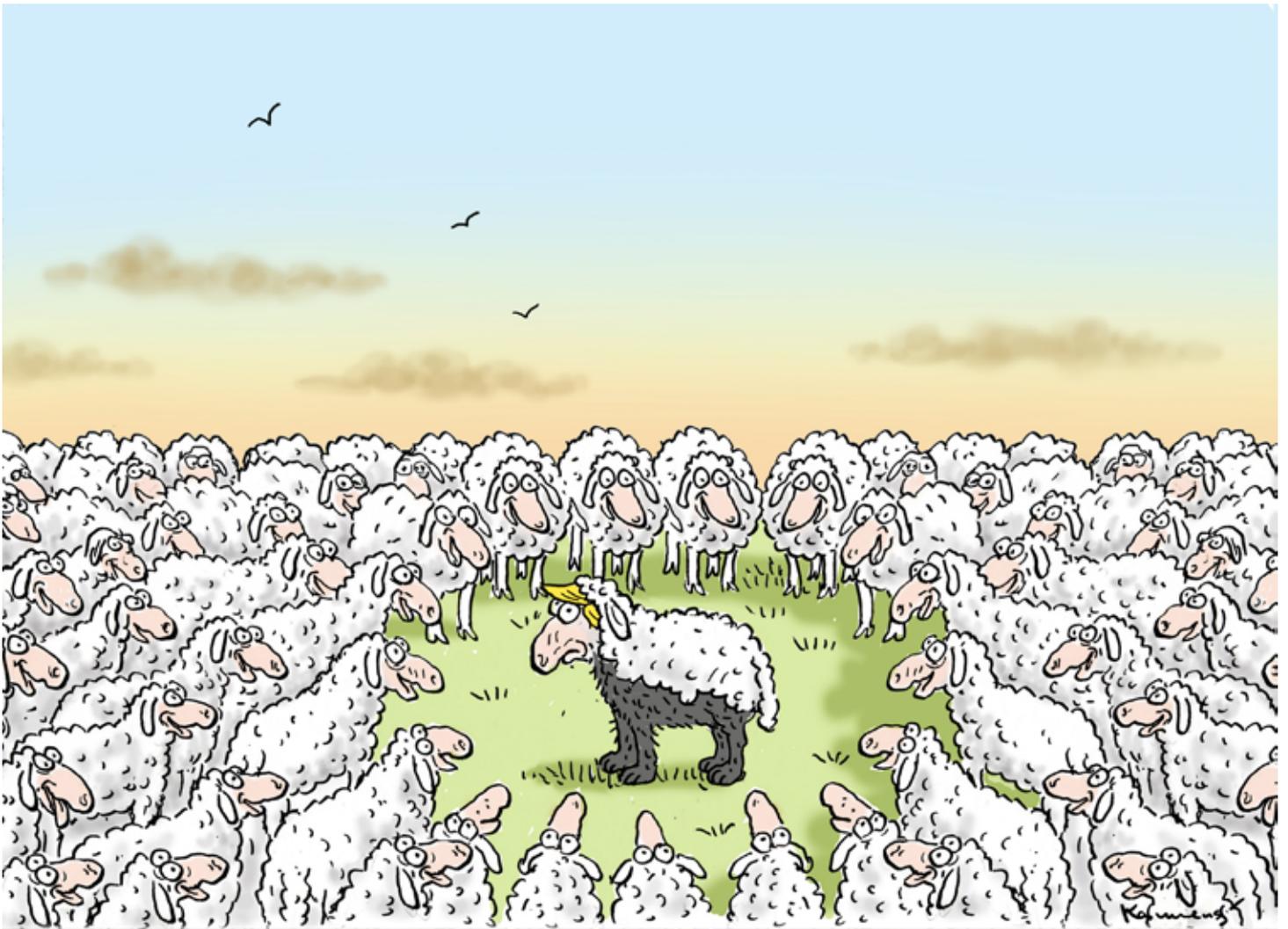
The Jews are not good people, he told the German people; they are not really Germans, he told them; they are the cause of our problems, he told them; if we eradicate the Jews, it will make Germany great again, he told them; and the white Christian Germans followed Hitler down the path of ever increasing evil towards the Jewish people and others – suppression of the press, forced public identification and tracking of persecuted groups, restricted areas of living and movement, forced deportation, detention camps, concentration camps, slave labor, starvation, torture, firing squads, gas chambers.

As Hannah Arendt, the 20th Century philosopher and historian of totalitarianism, writes, "It was the nature of the Nazi movement that it kept moving, becoming more radical with each passing month, but one of the outstanding characteristics of its members was that psychologically they tended to be always one step behind the movement – that they had the greatest difficulty in keeping up with it, or, as Hitler used to phrase it, they could not 'jump over their own shadow.'" [Eichmann in Jerusalem, p. 63].

Whether its followers were a step behind or not, we all know that the Nazi movement quickly led them to some of the worst expressions of evil ever experienced in the history of humankind; and this expression of fascism was only defeated through a second world war and at the cost of millions of lives.

The current form of fascism being led and encouraged by the president of the United States and being emboldened globally by the president and his supporters has already moved into the stages of attacking the press, scapegoating other ethnic groups and persons of other religions, implementing travel bans, increasing forced deportations, creating detention camps, the emboldening of fascist organizations and activities, attacking the rights and equality of persons who are LGBTQIA, increasing violence against Muslims and Jews, and even the separating of children from their parents at our borders.

The current fascist movement in the United States and around the world is becoming more radical with each passing month, and perhaps the typical MAGA



devotees are still psychologically one step behind the movement, unable to jump over the shadow of their MAGA caps, but the movement keeps progressing to more radical and dangerous levels nonetheless.

We know from history that the only way fascism was defeated in the last century was through a horrific world war. It is difficult to know when or how fascism of the 20th Century could have been stopped before it gained its grip on power and made war inevitable. What we do know is that no other compelling vision or political strategy was able to convince or empower the German people and the people of Germany's fascist allies to reject and overcome fascism internally before it was too late.

This is the great challenge we face today – how do we overcome fascism internally before it becomes too late to do so peacefully and through constitutionally prescribed political processes? How do we create effective political strategies and a compelling vision of a new way to be as a people that will address the economic uncertainties and ecological challenges that are leading so many people to listen to the message of fear and hate rather than the message of hope and love?

One thing is certain: we will not be able to fight fascism by simply doubling down on an adherence to

economic and political systems that are leading the world to both economic and ecological collapse.

Capitalism may have been effective at creating tremendous wealth and economic growth, but it has done so in a way that has treated non-human life, our ecological community, and often people themselves merely as commodities while ignoring the limits of the carrying capacity of the planet.

Whatever benefits of economic growth capitalism has created are greatly overshadowed by the sixth great extinction and climate chaos it is unleashing on our world.

If the political answer to the rise of global fascism is simply more of the same extractivist and unsustainable capitalism, things are only going to get worse ... a lot worse, and more and more people will be drawn to more extreme and often evil solutions to our problems.

If we cannot figure out how to live within our planetary means and maintain a livable climate, the evils of the 20th Century might end up being eclipsed by the evils of the 21st.

Mark Y.A. Davies is the Wimberly Professor of Social and Ecological Ethics and director of the World House Institute for Social and Ecological Responsibility at Oklahoma City University.

U.S. Must Take Responsibility For Asylum Seekers And The History That Drives Them

BY DAVID L. WILSON

Most people are capable of holding two or more conflicting ideas on any given issue. Immigration is no exception.

A large segment of the U.S. public was horrified in May and June when they saw the Trump Administration snatching toddlers away from Central American mothers who arrived at the U.S. border seeking asylum. Many would still be appalled if they knew that the White House is seeking to continue the practice in a different form.

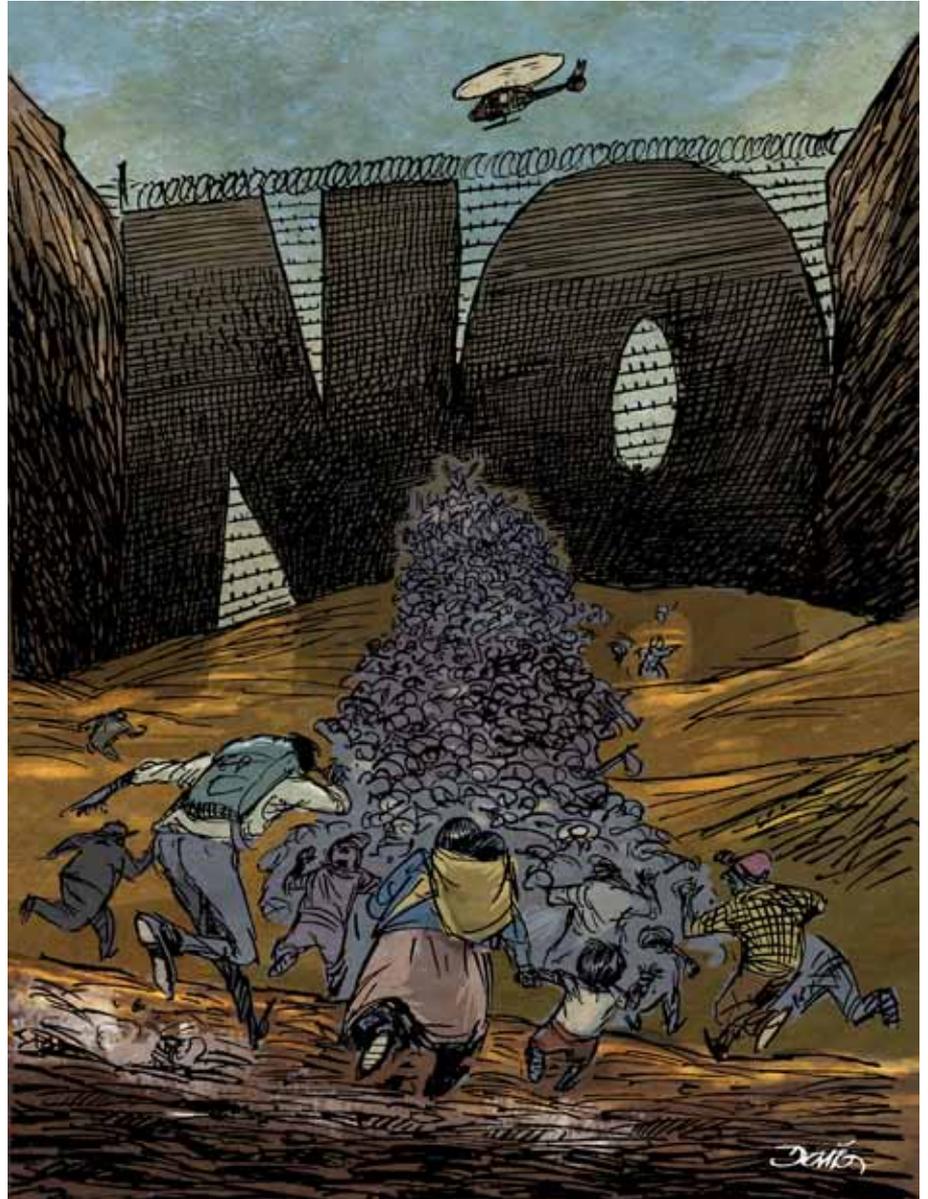
Most undoubtedly feel genuine sympathy for young people trying to escape violent gangs or abusive partners. Still, a lot of these same sympathetic Americans don't actually want the asylum seekers to come here.

Some may be influenced by administration efforts to induce panic about immigrants "invading" the U.S. – for instance, President Trump's decision to send troops to counter the latest migrant caravan, even though U.S. Army planners have concluded that "only a small percentage of the migrants will likely reach the border."

But others look around at failing schools, collapsing infrastructure, neighbors dying of drug overdoses or going without affordable medical care, and they ask themselves whether the United States can really spare

any of its limited resources to help people from somewhere south of the border. When they hear Fox News commentator Laura Ingraham saying, "It's not our problem," and President Trump at the United Nations telling migrants to stay home and "[m]ake their countries great again," they tend to nod in agreement.

These are real concerns. One of the most important questions before immigrant rights activists today is whether we're going to take these concerns seriously



and make a sincere effort to address them.

BURNING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE

Anyone who has followed the history of U.S. involvement in Latin America and the Caribbean knows that the current crises in the region are absolutely "our problem."

The U.S. government and U.S. companies have dominated much of this hemisphere politically, economically and militarily for more than a century. There's

no shortage of studies and articles describing how U.S.-backed policies and regimes have driven migration here over the decades, especially from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Investigative journalist Allan Nairn summed the case up forcefully on Democracy Now! in 2016. Many of the undocumented Guatemalans now living in the United States fled a genocidal campaign that a U.S.-backed military regime carried out against their country's Indigenous population in the 1980s, explained Nairn, who reported from the country at the time.

"And then Americans complain," he continued. "Well, you know, if you go and burn down your neighbor's house, don't complain when, as they run from the flames, they come on to your lawn."

But a decently large segment of the U.S. population knows nothing about their government's role in spurring immigration.

On the contrary, people misguidedly think of U.S. foreign policy as humanitarian, characterized by much too generous giveaways to ungrateful foreigners. After all, they rarely hear anything to the contrary, since U.S. foreign policy is basically bipartisan. Establishment Republicans and Democrats hold the same views on most of the issues, and the corporate media follow their lead.

The U.S. relationship with Honduras provides a textbook example.

In June 2009, the Honduran military overthrew the country's relatively progressive president, Manuel Zelaya Rosales. President Obama and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave de facto support to the coup's organizers, who solidified their position five months later with a highly suspect presidential election.

In 2017, another questionable election further consolidated the coup regime by handing right-wing President Juan Orlando Hernández a second term. Trump endorsed the election results.

Crime increased significantly after the coup, with the homicide rate jumping from an already high 60.8 per 100,000 in 2008, to 81.8 in 2010 and 91.4 in 2011. But most U.S. political and media actors ignored the correlation between the right-wing takeover in Honduras and the rising violence that sent asylum seekers fleeing to the United States.

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENGAGE

So what can immigrant rights activists do to break through the silence about the link between immigration and U.S. policies?

We could encourage the corporate media to provide more nuanced coverage. Many reporters on the immigration beat understand migration's root causes, but in the absence of pressure from the other side, they end up giving into more conservative editors, or else just reflecting the environment in which they work. Still, it's unrealistic to expect the media to do all our work for us.

Fortunately, many groups are already working to provide context for migration to the U.S. For instance,

Witness for Peace, founded in 1983 by faith-based peace activists in response to U.S. funding of the right-wing contra rebels in Nicaragua, recently concluded a Northwestern speaking tour with journalist Jennifer Ávila addressing threats to the free press in Honduras. When reporters are kept from investigating, Ávila noted, the government is free to continue the corruption and repression that drives people in her country to undertake dangerous journeys to the U.S. border.

Meanwhile, María Luisa Rosal, an organizer for School of the Americas [SOA] Watch, was touring campuses in the Midwest and California to promote her organization's annual gathering at the US-Mexico border, bringing U.S. and Latin American activists together for rallies, panels and workshops on such topics as organizing for "the right to stay." This is a term Mexican activists coined for people's right not to have policies imposed on them that force them to leave their homes.

SOA Watch was started in 1990 to draw attention to the role of the U.S. Army School of the Americas military training program [renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001] in producing Latin American human rights abusers. SOA Watch activists say their focus is currently on raising public awareness of "militarized U.S. foreign policy as a principal root cause of migration."

Efforts like these need broader support. Grassroots education is hard work, but it pays off. Right now, we have an important opportunity to end, once and for all, the delusion that the U.S. government is acting as the world's benevolent big brother.

We don't lack examples of U.S.-supported regimes giving people reasons to flee; each week seems to bring new ones. On Oct. 21, the Guardian reported that the trial for the March 2016 murder of Honduran environmental and Indigenous rights activist Berta Cáceres was now "in chaos."

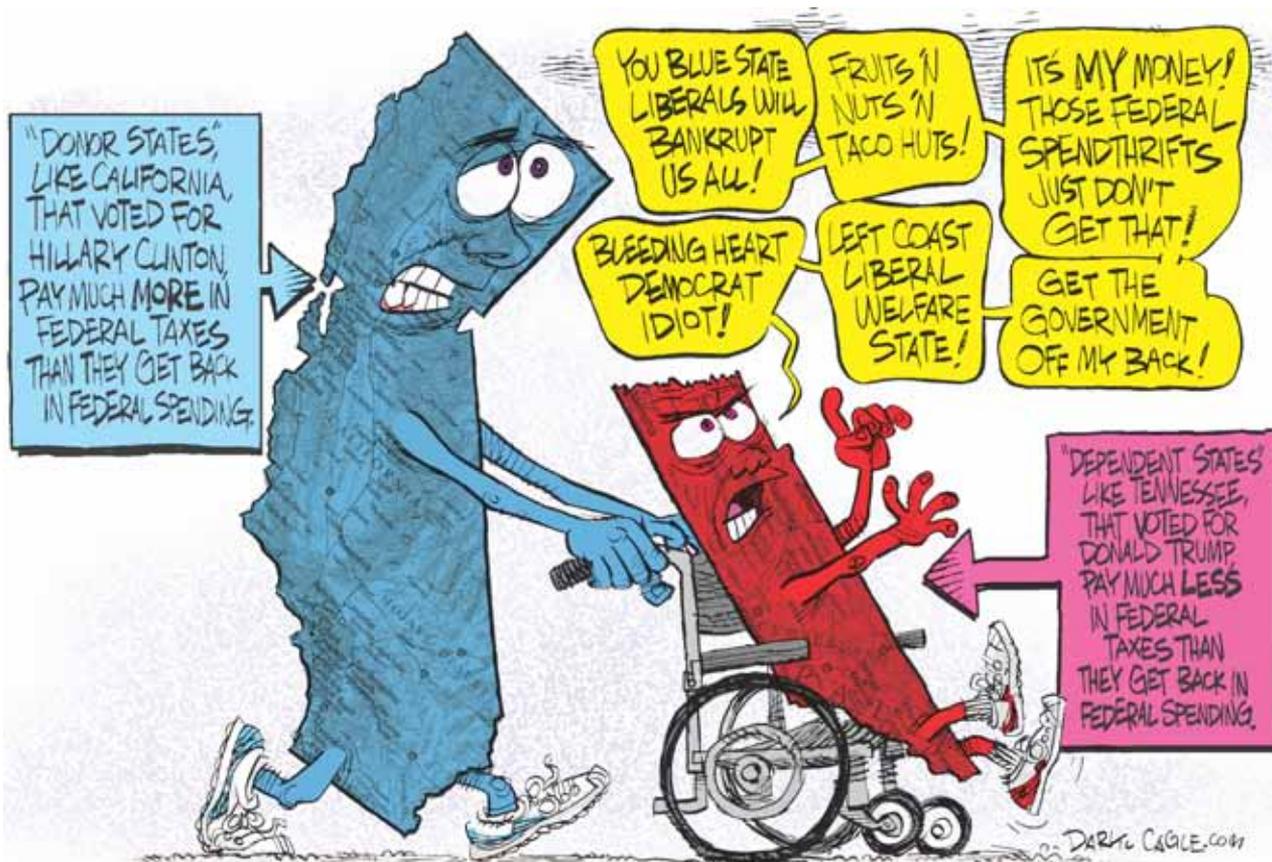
Cáceres – one of the best known and most popular grassroots leaders in Honduras, and a 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize recipient – was killed while leading a struggle by the Indigenous Lenca against an internationally financed hydroelectric project.

The accused include a manager from the Honduran company owning the dam and three active or former military officers; two of the officers received training from U.S. military programs. Irregularities in the trial suggest that the defendants may get off with acquittal or a light prison sentence.

The U.S. political class isn't paying much attention to these developments; it's too busy obsessing over the migrant caravan, which in fact, originated in Honduras. But the Cáceres case points to the sort of treatment Hondurans and other Central Americans can expect when they try to "make their countries great again."

David L. Wilson is co-author, with Jane Guskin, of The Politics of Immigration: Questions and Answers.

© Truthout



How Blue States Help Red States

BY ROBERT REICH

Ronald Trump and Republicans in Congress love to demonize government handouts, which, in fact, their own supporters depend on and are increasingly financed by taxpayers in blue states.

The federal program Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – what we used to call “welfare” – provides cash assistance to fewer than 1% of Americans.

But the Trump Administration is proposing to lump many social programs under a new agency with the word “welfare” in its title.

A recent White House report on imposing work requirements, for example, put Medicaid, food assistance, and housing aid into a rebranded program called “noncash welfare.”

Defined this broadly, a large chunk of America relies on welfare. Add in disability benefits, unemployment insurance, and medical benefits, such so-called “welfare” amounts to 17% of the average American’s income.

Welfare has become especially unpopular in “red” states that vote Republican and support Trump.

But these same states are often the biggest beneficiaries of government assistance.

Include price supports for agriculture, subsidies

for land management and forestry, and defense contractors, and you find that a large portion of the economies of red states depend on federal dollars.

Here’s the irony. Residents of “blue” states send more tax money to Washington than they get back in federal help, while residents of “red” states send less money to Washington than they get back in federal help.

In 2015, for example, New Jersey got back only 74 cents in federal spending for every tax dollar it sent to Washington. New York got back 81 cents, Connecticut 82 cents, and Massachusetts 83 cents.

But when you turn to the red states, it’s the opposite. Mississippi received \$2.13 for every tax dollar it sent to Washington. West Virginia, \$2.07. Kentucky, \$1.90. And South Carolina, \$1.71.

Taking the Trump Administration’s expansive view of the meaning of welfare to its logical conclusion to include all those benefiting from federal spending, blue states are sending welfare to red states – the same red states that say they don’t like welfare.

Under Trump’s new tax law, blue states will be giving even more welfare handouts to red states. That’s because the law set new limits to the amount of state and local taxes people can deduct from their

federal taxable incomes.

And since people in blue states pay much more state and local taxes than people in red states, blue-staters will be paying that much more in federal taxes. Which means an even bigger transfer from blue state residents to all those red state Republican voters, whose party despises handouts.

Now, I should add that some of us here in blue states don't mind giving red states a bigger helping hand. The vast majority of Americans also oppose cuts to programs that aid the poor, elderly and sick. Because most Americans figure we're all in this together, and those of us who can do so ought to help out those in need.

We don't regard it as welfare handouts. We call it

social insurance. Indeed, social insurance is needed and used by almost all of us, when you include Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance. And even programs relied upon mostly by the poor end up helping a large portion of us because roughly one-third of all Americans are poor at some point in their lives.

So remember, attacks on so-called welfare are just another means of attacking the things most of us need, and dividing the country into us and them.

In reality, voters in red states are as dependent on the federal government as voters in blue states, and, truth be told, even more dependent.

Robert B. Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley.

For GOP Moderates, It's Quit The Party Or Go Native

BY FROMA HARROP

If there was one place where the moderate Republican could make a brave last stand, it was at the Metropolitan Republican Club on Manhattan's Upper East Side. New York County [Manhattan] was one of the few counties outside Ohio to prefer John Kasich over Trump in the 2016 primaries.

The club was home base for John Lindsay, the legendary liberal Republican mayor of the 1960s. Michael Bloomberg was a member when he was elected mayor in 2001. [He's now a Democrat.] The club's past speakers tended toward the likes of Jeb Bush and foes of the estate tax.

As the Republican Party became the Party of Trump, the club had two choices: stick to its genteel tradition, offering solace to the few moderate Republicans left, or go native. It chose the latter, causing grief to many members.

Across blue America, neither variety of Republican did particularly well on Election Day. In the Northeast, Republicans were nearly wiped out. Not long ago, their party held half of New Jersey's 12 congressional seats. They're now down to one.

Staten Island was the only New York City borough to vote for Donald Trump and the only one to send a Republican to Washington. But then Rep. Dan Donovan, who bragged about his ties to Trump, lost to a Democrat.

Most of the Republican survivors walked the other way. Long Island's Pete King, an exemplary moderate, won another term, though barely. He ran ads touting his bipartisanship and leaving out the words "Donald Trump."

You may have read about the brawl outside the Metropolitan Republican Club after it hosted the founder of the alt-right Proud Boys as the featured

speaker. Gavin McInnes had just entertained the assemblage with a samurai sword dance re-enacting the assassination of a Japanese socialist leader.

Antifa-type left-wingers were protesting on the street. When the Proud Boys emerged, a rumble ensued. The police arrested violent members of both groups.

The club's leadership conceded that McInnes' act had been "a bit edgy." But President Deborah Coughlin held that members found the speaker's views to be in the range of conservative "civil discourse."

The Proud Boys present themselves as Western chauvinists. There may be something immature about holding what some would call a "pissing match" with other civilizations, but there's nothing wrong with praising the achievements of the Western one.

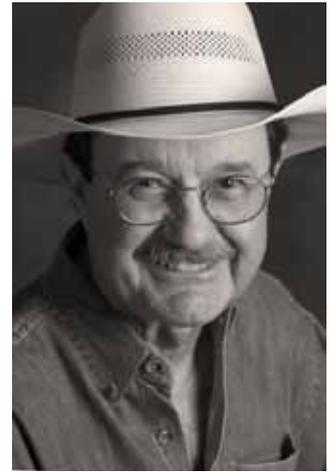
The Proud Boys, however, don't stop there. They have become fixtures at white supremacy marches. In one Proud Boys video, a group leader refers to American Muslims as "literally a virus." The club member who arranged McInnes' talk appears in the video.

PayPal has just canceled the Proud Boys' account and a separate account used by McInnes. It has also booted several antifa groups from its service. The radical groups used the online payment system to raise a lot of money, which is what they are largely about.

"We do not allow PayPal services to be used to promote hate, violence, or other forms of intolerance that is discriminatory," a PayPal spokesman said.

A former club president, who did not want to be named, told BuzzFeed News that the current leaders

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35



Privatization Not An Option

Unable to find a fatal flaw in our far-flung public mail delivery network, the anti-Postal Service forces manufactured a fake flaw.

In 2006, then-president George W. Bush, congressional Republican leaders, the powerful “privatizer lobby” [including FedEx, UPS and Wall Street speculators] and Koch-funded think tanks and Astroturf front groups colluded to put a one-of-a-kind paper “debt” on the books of USPS.

Congress enacted a postal-service “enhancement” provision requiring the public postal corporation to pre-fund the health and pension benefits for all postal-service retirees 75 years in advance!

Think about that. This arbitrary, wholly unprecedented, legislated requirement to pay now for the retirement benefits of future employees [including those not even born yet] has piled a false cost of about \$5 billion a year on the debit side of the agency’s balance sheet.

By cooking the books with this false entry, the right wing has been able to wail that our Postal Service is broke and continuing to bleed money, endangering taxpayers with a massive bailout. As you’d expect, Fox News and the entire gaggle of alt-right media screechers keep flinging this falsehood far and wide.

And this year, their most gullible fan and leader of the “free world” has joined the fling-fest, bloviating in serial tweets about “our money losing post office” and, in the official text of his executive order to form a postal task force, rubber-stamped the Chicken Little myth that “USPS is on an unsustainable financial path and must be restructured.”

Chances are that you, too, have been caught up in their lie, because supposedly responsible, mainstream news sources [Washington Post, AP, network TV channels, NPR, etc.] have swallowed it whole and routinely repeat it unedited and in unison. At the end of each fiscal year, when USPS is compelled by law to announce yet another multibillion-dollar “loss,” mass media outlets report the dramatic number without explaining the bookkeeping hoax hidden in it.

This artificial, 75-year pre-funding decree is an

absurd burden that no other corporation or government agency is forced to carry. Take it away, and voila! The Postal Service is a moneymaker. Since 2014, it has posted operating profits totaling \$2.7 billion – a healthy average of \$900 million a year.

Their assertion about the necessity of postal privatization is a fraud, but worse is the exorbitant price We the People would pay if they succeed. Surprisingly, Trump’s in-house task force puts the public cost right in their restructuring proposal, apparently thinking they were writing a prospectus to attract property hustlers like Trump, rather than a document that we might read. They candidly presented privatization as a fantastic profiteering opportunity for a corporate cost-cutter:

“A private postal operator that delivers mail fewer days per week and to more central locations [not door delivery] would operate at substantially lower costs,” says their proposal. “A private entity would also have greater ability to adjust product pricing in response to changes in demand or operating costs. Freeing USPS to more fully negotiate pay and benefits ... and allowing it to follow private sector practices in compensation and labor relations could further reduce costs ... [and] a privatized Postal Service would be more insulated from politics.”

Let’s review what that tells us:

- Instead of six-day delivery, you’d get your mail maybe three days a week, though you’d have to drive at least a couple of miles to collect it, paying an ever-rising monthly fee for the privilege.

- Delivery to “more central locations” also means abandoning the Postal Service’s historic egalitarian principle of universal service, substituting the FedEx principle of “profitable service,” which excludes wide swaths of rural and inner-city America.

- The “ability to adjust product pricing” means the cost of stamps and other postal services would [like today’s prescription medicines] rise on corporate whim.

- Freeing a private operator to “more fully negotiate” employees’ pay, benefits, working conditions, and rights means they would be based on the Walmart/McDonald’s race-to-the bottom standard,

rather than a civil-service scale of upwardly mobile, middle-class opportunities.

- And “insulating” a corporate mail service from politics means shutting out customers, workers, communities – and, well, you and me, the Public.

Nothing symbolizes our fight for the democratic ideal of the Common Good more than our public post office. This essential, egalitarian, nationwide service literally is us: It was a unifying center of American life before the USA itself was formed, and it is the only agency enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

More profoundly, its 31,000 branches belong to us, not a handful of rich corporate investors, tangibly linking your mailbox and mine to all others. Our postal service is daily proof that we really are “all in this together.” To save our public postal service, go to USMailNotforSale.org.

© Creators.com

Pulling A Con On The People

Donald Trump hates you. But don’t take it personally, he hates me, too – and all of us who constitute The Public.

The billionaire’s antipathy is not directed at us as individuals, but as users of publicly provided services – such as schools, parks, health care, buses, collective bargaining, libraries and environmental protections.

From his privileged perspective, all of that is welfare, nothing but an expensive waste that puts burdensome taxes and annoying regulatory constraints on the entrepreneurial creative class, ie, him.

Moreover, as he’s made clear, it galls him that the American people as a whole own such a wealth of shared assets, benefits and programs. He sees no need for them, apparently unaware that the great majority of people clearly do need, use – and want – more of them!

But being The Donald has always meant not caring [or even noticing] what common folks want or need. As we’ve witnessed again and again, his presidential policies [incarcerating terrified refugee toddlers, pushing a trillion-dollar tax giveaway for the super-rich, etc.] routinely reject the public interest and the people’s will. Instead, they’re based on his narcissistic desires, personal biases, insecurities and assorted right-wing furies screeching inside his head.

All of those psychic forces have been in play again as Trump and his gang of GOP accomplices have quietly but intently pursued an aggressive policy of taking as much of America’s common wealth from the public domain as they can.

A few of their robberies have briefly popped onto the media radar [Scott Pruitt’s bloody axing of the EPA, for example]. But the totality of their daily, furtive efforts to constrict, deconstruct, eliminate or privatize all things public has largely gone undetected – and, thus, not widely challenged.

It’s time to pay attention. In less than two years in office, they’ve already laid siege on such public assets as:

Our National Parks, Trails, Historic Sites, Etc.

They’ve whacked park service budgets, forcing reductions in hours, staff, amenities and basic maintenance work.

And various Trumpeteers are pushing, both publicly and privately, to open these spaces to everything from fracking and uranium mining to luxury homes and private resorts.

Public Lands

Trump’s interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, has drastically shrunk the size of several national monuments, and he ordered that fracking must be allowed on all federal and tribal lands.

Trump’s Fish and Wildlife Service has unilaterally opened America’s national wildlife refuges to bio-tech pesticides and GMO crops.

Trump signed a bill allowing Big Oil drilling rigs and pipelines into the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

A 2017 Trump order allows new offshore drilling in nearly all coastal waters, endangering not only the environment, but also thousands of local fishing and tourism businesses.

And the Trumpsters are mounting a “No More National Parks” campaign while pushing schemes to privatize and sell these national resources to corporate profiteers for their short-term gain.

America’s Social Safety Net

While Team Trump has been working tirelessly to save corporations from the “burden” of treating people with a modicum of fairness, they’ve simultaneously been working to impose truly onerous personal burdens on people needing the most basic public help – food, unemployment income, health care, etc.

Trump signed an executive order to require that someone getting a typical allotment of \$134 a month in food stamps must first take a job.

And Trumpistas across the country are also demanding that parents needing public medical assistance for their children must submit to drug testing.

And So-Awful-Much More

Even as the need for public housing has grown greater than ever, the Trump budgets have slashed funds for maintenance and construction, and housing secretary Ben Carson has proposed tripling the rents paid by the lowest-income residents.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, set up to be a fierce watchdog policing the greed of Wall Street banksters and predatory lenders, has been taken over by Trump’s budget director, effectively

turning the consumer protector into an industry lapdog.

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin quietly ruled that super PACs will no longer have to reveal to tax regulators the names of the “dark money donors” who corrupt our elections.

And on and on every day, purposefully removing public policies and structures that are useful and desirable for the people while rewiring rule after rule to force the public’s interests to give way to the monetary interests of corporate exploiters, polluters, defrauders and plutocrats. – *Jim Hightower*

Fighting Climate Change In Your Own Garden

BY DEONNA ANDERSON

During World War I, Americans were encouraged to do their part in the war effort by planting, fertilizing, harvesting, and storing their own fruits and vegetables. The food would go to allies in Europe, where there was a food crisis.

These so-called “victory gardens” declined when World War I ended but resurged during World War II. By 1944, nearly 20 million victory gardens produced about 8 million tons of food.

Today, the nonprofit Green America is trying to bring back victory gardens as a way to fight climate change.

That’s according to Jillian Semaan, food campaigns director at Green America, who added that the organization wants “to allow people to understand shifting garden practices towards regenerative agriculture and what it means for reversing climate change and sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere and putting it back into the soil.”

The organization is doing that through an educational video and a mapping project. Recently, more than 900 people added their gardens or farms to the Climate Victory Garden map that tracks U.S. agricultural activities that use regenerative practices.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said – and continues to reiterate – that carbon sequestration accounts for a large portion of global agricultural mitigation potential.

Globally, agriculture accounts for 11% of greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans, according to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. But a movement called regenerative agriculture is pushing for farming practices that improve, conserve, and build up soil [and soil carbon].

Experts say that practices that increase soil carbon – known as carbon farming – could curb emissions.

Over the next two years, Green America plans to educate people on the benefits of regenerative agriculture through its Climate Victory Gardens campaign. It is producing videos that will explain regenerative practices, and staff members will attend conferences to encourage gardeners and farmers to join the movement.

By 2020, it hopes to have at least 5,000 gardens and farms on its map.

In its recently released campaign video, Green America describes five ways to make “climate victory gardens” using regenerative practices – such as ditching chemicals, covering soil, and encouraging biodiversity.

In addition to helping reverse climate change, regenerative practices also produce healthier soil that in turn produces healthier food.

“Soil health is so powerful, and we as a society, we as a people, need to understand what we’re putting in our bodies, and it all starts with the soil,” Semaan said. “It all starts with what we are about to eat, but we can’t have healthy food if we do not have healthy soil.”

© Reader Supported News

Getting Older

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor’s office.

“Is it true,” she wanted to know, “that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?”

“Yes, I’m afraid so,” the doctor told her.

There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, “I’m wondering, then, just how serious is my condition because this prescription is marked ‘NO REFILLS.’”

•

An older gentleman was on the operating table awaiting surgery and he insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation.

As he was about to get the anesthesia, he asked to speak to his son.

“Yes, Dad, what is it?”

“Don’t be nervous, son; do your best, and just remember, if it doesn’t go well, if something happens to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife ...”

•

When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to youth, think of Algebra.

•

First you forget names, then you forget faces. Then you forget to pull up your zipper ... it’s worse when you forget to pull it down.

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

For Democrats, The Age Problem

BY SUSAN ESTRICH

It's against the law to discriminate in employment. As an old lawyer, I firmly subscribe to the canon of young doctors and old lawyers.

And old legislators, some of the time. Nicholas Pelosi would be the King of the Hill, and no one would be commenting on his clothes. It should be called Obama-Pelosi Care. But Nancy Pelosi's still 78, an old House Speaker who needs some youthful consorts, or whatever it is appropriate to call them. I call them candidates.

Ronald Reagan was 76 when he left office. And that was four years after that ride to nowhere up the California highway in the first presidential debate of 1984, where the press finally started raising the "age" issue. He was 72 at the time he took the ride. Seventy may be the new 50, but I was there and he sure seemed old.

Bernie Sanders will be 79 on Election Day 2020. Mike Bloomberg will be 78, and Joe Biden will be 76.

Bill Clinton is younger than any of the Big Three, and he's been out of office for 17 years.

Come 2020, Hillary Clinton will be a sprightly 73, and Elizabeth Warren, the baby of the group, will be 71. God willing, of course, all of them.

Bill Clinton was 54 when he left office, and Barack Obama was 55. George W. Bush was 61 when he left office. Did they really seem too young?

And dare I point out that Donald Trump will be 74 for the 2020 election, and 78 if he gets four more years. Why, after watching exactly who generated all the excitement last week, are Democrats fronting the platinum-anniversary crowd? The 70s are no time to run for president, not when the party is teeming with new energy and old resentments.

I don't care who you are; aging gracefully is still an oxymoron. Confronting mortality, sagging skin, painful joints and greying hair, if you're lucky, has nothing to commend it but the alternative.

So it's easy to understand why some of the most talented and committed people in American politics have difficulty letting go. I'm not doubting their ability to do the job, if by that you mean the job of making appointments and decisions, and facing endless

pressure and the like. But that's the piece you only get to do if you win.

There is only one question for me at this point: Can any of the old-timers beat Trump?

President Trump lost the House with the lowest unemployment rate in nearly 50 years. That is not easy to do. I'm not one of those Democrats who thinks he's stupid, and not one who thinks his supporters are all deplorable. I spent years on talk radio, and even more disagreeing with Sean Hannity on Fox. It's no fun to have people look down on you, which is how a good chunk of Americans feel when they turn on the news – or listen to elite Democrats.

But while it may be true that Trump's base would actually like him to kill former FBI Director James Comey [and not just get away with it, as he boasted he could], Trump's base is not enough to re-elect him. That's the problem with bases. The base Democratic vote going into 2020 is probably even greater, which means that the election will be decided by a combination of the preferences of the people who aren't paying attention and the intensity of those who are.

The president didn't win the Senate this time; he just won the draw. The Democrats had 26 seats up – more seats up than any party has had to defend in the last hundred years – and the Republicans had nine. Democrats gained 30 House seats – and maybe more. A victory for the president? How do you figure? There was never any chance of winning the Senate, and it had nothing to do with the president's base.

In presidential elections, you don't start with a 3-to-1 advantage. Whether Trump can continue to drive this country apart depends not only on how Speaker Pelosi and her team navigate the dangerous waters that the president so relishes but also whether her colleagues who are already dialing for donors remember what it felt like to be itching for the oldsters to step aside and give them their chance.

We had it, my friends. Now it belongs to our kids – and grandkids, even.

Creators.com

Moderates

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

have only the haziest idea of what the Proud Boys are about. "It sounds like the Gangs of New York," he said.

Over recent years, the moderate Republican has been pretty much insulted, primaried or otherwise exorcized from power. The Trump era may be the iceberg, but this grand tradition of fiscal conservatism

and social forbearance was already taking on water.

Still, locals didn't expect the Metropolitan Republican Club to surrender to the dismantling of their party as they knew it. The sad reality may be that the Republicans who maintained the old standards are no longer Republicans.

© Creators.com



No Place For Hateful Rhetoric In Civil Society

BY MARSHALL ANDREW GLENN

It is my hope those still “on the fence” about Donald Trump’s leadership will finally understand that he is appealing to a small but exceedingly dangerous audience of otherwise rationally-minded people [irrespective of political party] whose troubled thinking – which typically lies dormant like potential viruses which mutate and spawn pandemics – can sweep through our country and wreak havoc in its wake.

This not an indictment of the majority of supporters of Mr. Trump, but rather to the hate groups and rogue individuals who have been embolden by his incendiary rhetoric.

The values and virtues of conservatism, the party of Lincoln and Reagan, have been undermined by Mr. Trump’s leadership. His leadership has changed the identity of the Republican Party.

As citizens, we are becoming more imperiled to be able to move freely around our society without the even greater threat of harm, and the places we considered safe are no longer safe or sacrosanct, even schools, churches, courts, or our live concerts.

Pause for a moment and realize that America – the “land of the free and home of the brave” – is becom-

ing more militarized like Israel, where the presence of armed militia has become normalized into the fabric of its society. The continued militarization of society is the only remedy supported and advanced by the NRA [re: Mr. Trump’s response that a synagogue should have armed security as the ultimate prophylactic].

The consequence of President Trump’s policies is the sanctioning of sectionalism stamped upon democracy. Implicit in these policies is the we-they bifurcation that suggests some belong, others do not.

It is the antithesis of one of our most cherished American virtues – E Pluribus Unum – out of MANY, ONE – the motto of the United States of America, engraved on our coins as a reminder.

It is doubtful Ronald Reagan, one of the GOP’s most venerated Republican leaders, could get elected today. I can imagine him in heaven, with tears in his eyes, pleading, “Mr. Trump, tear down this wall of HATE!”

May we remind ourselves of President Regan’s speech on Nov. 3, 1980:

“I have quoted John Winthrop’s words more than once on the campaign trail for I believe that Ameri-

cans in 1980 are every bit as committed to that vision of a shining 'city on a hill,' as were those long-ago settlers ... These visitors to that city on the Potomac do not come as white or black, red or yellow; they are not Jews or Christians; conservatives or liberals, or Democrats or Republicans. They are Americans awed by what has gone before, proud of what for them is still ... a shining city on a hill."

Our city on a hill shines by the light of the virtues of civility, not by the torching of hateful speech.

There are those in positions of leadership who are advancing a policy of governance by inciting fear and threat that the U.S. government will confiscate a citizens' firearms. It is at best an immodest and disingenuous accusation.

Rather, if you examine history, what leads to the confiscation of freedoms like the rights of gun ownership is – pause, swallow, the lightbulb goes on in the cerebral cortex – nationalism and authoritarianism.

We are living in a time where our free press is vilified by Mr. Trump unless it satisfies his ego. This is not a lame rejoinder. History is replete with examples and the rise of the Third Reich is one of many.

Our society will always have the mentally disturbed, the hate-filled, paranoid, xenophobic, the conspiracy-minded regardless of political affiliation who think there is an enemy around every turn. But the light of our virtues of democracy is the therapeutic antiseptic that keeps the threat of hate dormant and in check.

But that is only accomplished when our leadership stands up and helps inoculate our society by espousing our virtues, not by appealing to the lowest common denominator of our base limbic system, of an inflamed, irrational and reflexive amygdala.

May we collectively not give voice to this usually latent, subterranean virus.

The Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, elucidated the complex facets of the human condition in his writings. He once wrote: "Beauty will save the world."

There is nothing beautiful, redeeming or worth supporting in the leadership of those who inspire division and hate. Remember, the mark of leadership is what Abraham Lincoln took from Psalms 147:3 and mentioned in his second inaugural speech " ... to bind up our nation's wounds ... "

May our love for one another take center stage and allow us to save ourselves from the consequences of inciting hate and violence regardless of persons or parties who take pleasure in dividing us rather than uniting us.

I find virtues in the leadership of both political parties. I look for the "we" – the covariance of the virtues found in both parties – that open debate brings forth and lead to compromise.

Compromise is not surrender. Compromise is the product of the proper exercise of democracy. *Marshall Andrew Glenn, PhD, is a retired professor who dedicated 40 years of service to children as a school psychologist and as a licensed mental health professional.*

Nationalism, Patrotism And Trump

BY RANDOLPH M. FEEZELL

We live in a time in which fundamental questions are occasioned by what we see and hear, if we are awake, attuned to what is happening here and in the world. Perhaps it's always like this and there is nothing unusual about living in the age of Trump. It feels different, however.

It certainly seems that we live in an unusual time – since 2016 – because many of the unifying values and institutions that we have assumed are shared have become unhinged, due to the speech and actions of a person unprepared, both morally and intellectually, to lead the most powerful democracy in the world.

We want to talk about health care, education, and roads. Instead, we find ourselves thinking about other things: the existence, nature, and value of truth; the authority of science; the substance of moral character; the value of civility and respect as social lubricants; the importance of honesty and inquiry; the significance of a free press in a democratic [or any] society; and institutional assaults that threaten democracy. Interesting times for the philosophically inclined.

The latest puzzler was produced not by our president but France's, Emmanuel Macron, at a ceremony in Paris commemorating the anniversary of the armi-



stice that ended World War I. "Patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism." More deep questions.

Many interpreted the claim to be a veiled criticism of Trump's version of nationalism, expressed in the straightforward slogan that has guided his non-stop campaigning as well as his foreign policy, from trade deals to NATO alliances: "America First." When asked whether he is a nationalist, Trump replied unambiguously. He said he is "absolutely a nationalist."

He also said he had never heard of the term being associated with "white nationalism," an astonishing claim that expresses either his dishonesty or his ignorance, both of which are characteristic of the man. I doubt that even Trump could be so obtuse, given the way that "white nationalism" reverberates in our consciousness after the Charlottesville debacle and the outrage directed toward his response, when he called neo-Nazis "very fine people."

Macron was speaking as a European and thinking historically. Surely he was thinking about the nationalistic origins of World War I, the rise of German nationalism and national socialism, the more recent examples of nationalist conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet republics, as well as the rise of contemporary nationalism in Europe and the United States.

What does Macron assume about the meaning of patriotism and nationalism in order to make this claim? For some the terms are interchangeable. If they are so closely related by many, how could they be "exact opposites," as Macron claims?

A standard way to understand the two is to distinguish nations and states. States are political entities with sovereignty, whereas nations are ethnic or cultural communities that may or may not have sovereignty. In fact, actions associated with nationalism have often had as their goal the achievement of some significant degree of sovereignty. Nationalism and patriotism involve attitudes [or affections or sentiments] and actions.

Isaiah Berlin, the great historian of ideas, described the nationalist state of mind in the following way [1972]: "... the conviction ... that men belong to a particular human group, and that the way of life of the group differs from that of others; that the characters of the individuals who compose the group are shaped by, and cannot be understood apart from, those of the group, defined in terms of common territory, customs, laws, memories, beliefs, language, artistic and religious expression, social institutions, ways of life, to which some add heredity, kinship, racial characteristics; and that it is these factors which shape human beings, their purposes and their values."

For the nationalist, a nation is the source of meaning and purpose for an individual. The nationalist believes, as Berlin says, "... the essential human unit in which man's nature is fully realized is not the individual, or a voluntary association which can be dissolved or altered or abandoned at will, but the nation."

It follows that an individual's beliefs and actions are subsumed into the notion of a national identity. "The most compelling reasons ... for holding a particular policy, serving a particular end, living a particular life, is that these ends, beliefs, policies, lives, are ours." According to Berlin's interpretation of nationalism, in so far as I deeply identify with a group constituting a nation [think of "white nationalism"] my values are those of my nation.

Now consider patriotism. The typical dictionary definition of patriotism, love of one's country, is a good starting point, but needs to be thickened. Patriotism involves a special affection and allegiance to one's country [or the state in which one is a member]. The patriot identifies with her country, is concerned about its well-being, and may be willing to sacrifice in order to advance its interests.

Igor Primoratz, an important scholar of patriotism, defines it as "love of one's country, identification with it, and special concern for its well-being and that of compatriots."

It's clear from this brief analysis that nationalism and patriotism are closely related. They involve similar attitudes toward some group: allegiance, affection, concern, identification. In some cases the objects of these attitudes are identical, when nations, groups of people related by various commonalities [history, language, traditions, culture, ethnicity] have political sovereignty. But when groups of people are united by ethnic-cultural factors rather than civic relationships, the two notions diverge.

As Primoratz says: "To be sure, there is much overlap between country and nation, and therefore between patriotism and nationalism; thus much that applies to one will also apply to the other. But when a country is not ethnically homogeneous, or when a nation lacks a country of its own, the two may part ways."

Suppose we waive the crucial and obvious questions about how we identify a nation, what it means to be a member of a nation, and what might justify the kinds of special allegiances and sentiments that define both nationalism and patriotism. How should we understand Macron's original claim? If the two are so closely related, how could they be "exact opposites" and how could his distinction stand as a rebuke of Trump's worldview?

I believe that Berlin's account of nationalism, as well as historical events, help us understand Macron's claim. The robust form of nationalism described by Berlin is, in the words of Primoratz, "a full-fledged philosophical and political doctrine about nations as basic units of humanity within which the individual can find freedom and fulfillment."

Given this understanding, nationalism has been associated historically with hostility, confrontation, aggression, and unilateral action in order to achieve fundamental national values. Our values and way of life – us vs. them.

On the other hand, the sentiments associated with

patriotism need not be incompatible with cooperative and multilateral attitudes and actions. Love of one's country and special concern for its interests need not morph into nationalistic hostility and aggression.

Macron seems to have this in mind when he says, "Nationalism is a betrayal of patriotism by saying: 'Our interests first. Who cares about others?'"

In a later interview he identifies himself as a "patriot." "I do defend my country. I do believe that we have a strong identity. But I'm a strong believer in cooperation between different peoples, and I'm a strong believer of the fact that this cooperation is good for everybody, where the nationalists are sometimes more based on a unilateral approach and the law of the strongest, which is not my case."

Macron's view echoes Berlin's, who says that nationalism is "ideologically important and dangerous." For Macron a nationalist ethic expresses a partiality that excludes concern for others' interests. The virtue of patriotism [if it is a virtue] is consistent with an impartial concern for the interests of others, regardless of national origin, a traditional understanding of the moral point of view.

In this sense, they are "exact opposites," or, as I would say, moral contraries.

To be charitable to Trump – which is difficult – his embrace of "nationalism" may be a simple statement

about the supremacy of American interests in relations with other countries rather than the adoption of a full-fledged political and philosophical doctrine. However, given his over-arching egoism, in which appeals to his own and his country's interests seem to exclude concern for others' interests, his version of nationalism may be closer to the way Macron and Berlin understand the notion than is initially apparent.

Given the historical resonance of the term, a more subtle thinker might recognize that appeals to "nationalism" are loaded with nasty associations. In this case, charity towards what Trump may mean must be combined with a less charitable but realistic recognition of his inexcusable ignorance. And there is still the question whether his appeal to nationalism is yet another dog whistle to his least savory supporters.

A final thought. Given the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the United States, with its history of exceptional aspirational ideals and mixed results in fully realizing those ideals, a more robust form of nationalism might be difficult to sustain, since the question, "What does it mean to be an American?" is so perplexing.

Randolph M. Feezell, PhD, grew up in northwestern Oklahoma and is professor emeritus of philosophy at Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

Why Pelosi's Opponents Are So Wrong

The tiny faction of Democrats who aim to block Rep. Nancy Pelosi's election as House speaker are only missing two things: a candidate of their own and a rationale that makes sense.

The easier problem is the absence of a candidate, even though the members who have been mentioned so far seem small when measured against Pelosi, who is often described with superlatives such as "formidable" and even "legendary." And most of her declared opponents within the Democratic caucus are white men, so they may have trouble persuading colleagues that ousting history's first female speaker to install one of them would be an uplifting change.

They say that Democratic leadership needs "new blood" or "new leadership." They note their pledges to constituents to oppose Pelosi, although the reason behind those pledges has never been made clear either. Is it because Republicans keep smearing her?

The putative leader of the anti-Pelosi faction, Rep. Seth Moulton, D-MA, used to say that Pelosi had to go because the Democrats were losing elections. Now he grumbles that she is "arrogant" for thinking "she's the only person who can do this."

She may not be the only one who can do this – lead the House Democrats against a would-be authoritarian president and his senatorial rubber stamps – but there is no evidence that anyone else available can do it nearly as well.

Forget the obvious fact that against the predictions of critics like Moulton, she led the caucus to a smashing midterm victory. Her qualifications are personal. She is seasoned, cool and not intimidated by any of her avowed adversaries in either party. She knows how to craft legislation and count votes, as she has proved repeatedly since President Trump entered the White House – most notably during last year's budget negotiations, when she ate the Republicans' lunch. Any Democrat who thinks replacing Pelosi will advance progressive goals should take a closer look at Moulton and his buddies.

It is remarkable that in this hour of constitutional confrontation ... a rump group of House Democrats insists its most important mission is to overthrow the woman who returned them to power. It is astonishing that this group plans to carry the grudge onto the House floor come Jan. 3, even knowing that it will lose a vote within the caucus by an overwhelming majority. And it is disturbing that they would ignore their duty to hinder Trump's depredations, instead rupturing the only institution with the will and authority to oppose him.

There is a good reason that Republicans have sought to demonize this highly effective and determined woman. Unlike most Democrats, she has shown the ability to beat them. And that is the best reason to elect her. – *Joe Conason's complete column can be found at okobserver.org.*

A Matter Of 'Willfull Ignorance'

THE FIFTH RISK

By Michael Lewis

W.W. Norton and Co.

221 pages, \$26.95

BY JOHN WOOD

Michael Lewis' *The Fifth Risk* is an insightful and graphic portrayal of a transition of power from the relatively stable Obama Administration to the rather enigmatic Trump Administration.

Lewis' clear-eyed tale describes the innumerable technical risks we take daily, but more often than not, can't imagine – ala former George W. Bush Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's "Unknown, knowns." Rumsfeld's curious declaration rightly received many jeers, given his unimaginable fortitude over flawed Iraq War intel nearly 15 years ago, and yet he was oddly onto something.

Lewis, the agile and seductive storyteller of *Moneyball* and *The Big Short*, will ensnare you in his story. He relates the many experiences of affable civil servants and lists risks – i.e, a North Korea attack or becoming enmeshed in a total war with Iran – before you realize the frightening title of Lewis' 19th book is merely the not-so-scary domain of "project management."

And for a public administration professor, that's all it took, but I'm sure you'll find it just as intriguing!

Lewis aptly describes government's focus on keeping us safe. Not unlike an insurance salesman, he says our government has a portfolio of risks it's managing – tornadoes, poverty, nuclear strikes, drought, job-related accidents, etc.

There are thousands upon thousands of them! It takes more than two million federal employees to manage the complex enterprise that is our federal government. Lewis introduces readers to just a few individuals within each agency.

His heartwarming stories tell of the importance of our government through the eyes of the people who work in it.

As his two terms neared an end, Obama was prepared to pass the baton to the next administration. He had 1,000-plus federal employees prepared to

brief the new administration on these complex bureaucracies. Doing so was certainly not ideological as there is just too much to risk!

However, these public servants often waited in vain for Trump appointees to show up. Many departments they had to wait weeks, even months. Others were never visited at all.

Lewis suggests Trump started his administration from a point "willful ignorance."

Trump's administration was understaffed, Lewis noted, with only 400 of more than 700 vital government positions securing Senate confirmation by the time the book was written.

Lewis says: "His campaign hadn't even bothered to prepare an acceptance speech. It wasn't hard to see why Trump hadn't seen the point in preparing to take over the federal government: 'Why study for a test you'll never need to take?'"

For example, Lewis points out the Commerce Department's responsibilities are not what you would expect – it's really about one thing: data. From the Census to weather to economic statistics, the Commerce Department helps give us a snapshot of ourselves and our environment. And yet Trump has neglected it!

Another example: The National Weather Service has been transformed in the last 30 years by weather Geeks. They save lives. And yet, the service has been criticized for "competing" with the private sector.

Not surprising then Barry Myers was tapped as Trump's nominee to lead the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA], which includes the Weather Service. Myers is actually a businessman and the Weather Service's main competitor as the chief executive of AccuWeather, his family's company.

Myers even nefariously lobbied to prevent NOAA's National Weather Service from having direct contact with the public. Indeed, Myers contended "the gov-

ernment should get out of the forecasting business.”

What’s amazing is that AccuWeather doesn’t create its own weather data – instead appropriating it from the Weather Service and merely repackaging it for a profit.

Without our valuable government’s Weather Service data, we would not have AccuWeather!

I even find Lewis’ sentiment credible and backed up by statistician, election forecaster, and all-around data Geek Nate Silver when asked about AccuWeather.

“The further you get from the government’s original data, and the more consumers facing the forecasts, the worse this bias becomes. Forecasts ‘add value’ by subtracting accuracy.” And yet we have Barry Myers?

As I read this book I was especially thankful for the Storm Prediction Center [SPC] in Norman and Colorado State University’s Tropical Meteorology Project.

They issue severe thunderstorm and tornado watches for their accurate reporting of the weather, particularly important here given Oklahoma’s propensity for destructive tornadoes. Their work is based on more than 30 years of analytical data with an average of 12 named tropical storms and 62 tornadoes in Oklahoma alone a year. That’s a lot!

Lewis points out that analytics have gone from little to no accuracy just 15 years ago to being able to detail weather changes a week out. Pretty impressive – and something only the government has the capacity to do.

Likewise, Lewis finds how Trump’s team filled Department of Agriculture jobs with mainly “nonagricultural non-experts.” For example, these non-experts were pure patronage, including the owner of a scented-candle company and country club cabana attendant.

Trump has also repeatedly placed essential agencies under the leadership of people who have advocated for the limitation or destruction of the agencies themselves. You know Rick Perry, the 14th U.S.

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.

Secretary of Energy? Remember the agency he wanted to eliminate, but forgot its name during a debate when he was running for president nearly eight years ago? Oops! Wolf running the hen house!

You also might be familiar with Oklahoma’s “favorite son,” former

EPA head Scott Pruitt, who described himself as “a leading advocate against the EPA’s activist agenda.” He sued the EPA 14 times as Oklahoma’s attorney general and yet ironically headed it a few years later. He left the EPA uncer-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47

21st Century 'Grapes Of Wrath'

HEARTLAND

A Memoir Of Working Hard And Being Broke In The Richest Country On Earth
By Sarah Smarsh

Scribner

304 pages, \$26

BY JOSEPH H. CARTER SR.

Poverty on the edge of Oklahoma is the subject of a new book that packs the power of John Steinbeck 1930s *Grapes of Wrath* fiction depicting poverty-stricken Okies.

Titled *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* reports on small town, country folks near the Oklahoma border but on the Kansas side of the line.

Author Sarah Smarsh writes about the struggles of by her own impoverished family and friends who are striving and failing on the outskirts of Wichita.

Matching Steinbeck's fiction with real life revelations, Smarsh offers powerful exposure of economic perils and, at the same time, few clues about ways to cure afflictions of downtrodden people.

Smarsh dramatizes the pains of poverty that run amok and escape notice by most wealthy folks. While staged in around the native town of the super rich, right wing Koch brothers, they also escape her mention.

Smarsh was born into a family of small-time wheat farmers who braved wicked weather, lacked viable economic choices and suffered their own destructive personal habits.

From an impoverished childhood, the obviously gifted Smarsh rebelled and excelled. She declined drugs and drunkenness.

Born to a teen mom, she later declined real motherhood and soared to become a journalist, pundit, tenured college professor and now a first-time published author.

The book repeatedly details why she, her family and many hard working but broke neighbors remain politically "conservative," abhor government, refuse handouts and despise "welfare." She never got even a Pell grant for college.

"I didn't think the world owed me anything, but it also seemed the world wouldn't give me anything that I didn't reach out and grab for myself," she explains.

Then she relates her high academic achievements in public schools and at the University of Kansas – both "liberal" institutions financed by progressive taxation but recently and starkly becoming underfunded. She neglects to make the second point.

But in the book, she says she became enlightened about shortcomings in the nation's finances and distribution of wealth. Instead of advocating remedies, most of the book depicts the misery of folks who are white, troubled, Republican and broke. Contrasting is Smarsh – a talented writer and college professor with "tenure" and benefits. She nabbed the brass ring.

"I have a graduate degree but a heap of debt acquired in attaining it," she explains without noting that most progressives tout free public education through college and that student debt in America now tops \$1 trillion.

Like Steinbeck's novel, Smarsh's true-life memoir is powerful in socially revealing ways. Movie rights to *Grapes of Wrath* made Steinbeck rich and Oklahoma folks furious. Smarsh's story, despite its shortfalls, merits cinema treatment of the spotlight it casts.

Luckily, *Heartland* is a Kansas expose but not a new direct hit about equally deprived and vulnerable folks in Oklahoma.

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

amazon smile



You shop. Amazon gives.

When you shop on smile.amazon.com,
they'll donate to the
Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation.

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

political skills required to reverse eight years of Republican-dominated, fiscal mismanagement at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd.

It won't take long to know whether it's truly a new day – or business as usual. Compare the rhetoric in his inaugural address and State of the State message to the fine print in his proposed budget.

If his priorities indeed are tax reform [i.e. ending corporate welfare], major new investment in public schools and health care [Medicaid expansion is a no-brainer], and full implementation of criminal justice reform, Oklahoma could be on the path to a brighter – dare we say, more progressive? – future.

It then would be up to rank-and-file Oklahomans to keep the heat on a GOP legislative supermajority that routinely bent to the will of deep-pocketed special interests that feasted at the taxpayers' trough while key services got crumbs.

By mid-February, Stitt's agenda should be abundantly clear. Stay tuned.

Opportunity Missed

Everything seemed to be falling in place for Drew Edmondson.

He was competitive financially – rare these days for a statewide Democratic contender – in a \$22 million-plus governor's race in which the Republican nominee poured in \$5 million of his own money.

He was courting a disgruntled electorate: 56% of likely voters told the pre-election SoonerPoll they believed Oklahoma was headed in the wrong direction after eight years of unified GOP control of state government.

And the former state attorney general was on the right side of two issues of paramount importance to polled voters: investing in public education and expanding access health care.

Yet Edmondson lost by a 54%-42% margin, despite becoming the first gubernatorial nominee in Oklahoma history to capture a half-million votes.

What more could he have done?

He and Linda worked their hearts out, criss-crossing the state to detail specific plans for a smarter, saner public policy and brighter future. He wanted to pump more state dollars into financially strapped schools without raising taxes on the backs of the working class. He also vowed to expand Medicaid, which healthcare experts say would save rural hospitals on the brink of bankruptcy because of uncompensated care.

Stitt, by contrast, made clear he would not have signed last spring's teacher pay raise, later insisting, however, he does want better-paid teachers and bet-

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.*



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.

ter-funded schools. But he was adamantly opposed to Medicaid expansion, which means federal tax dollars Oklahomans already sent to Washington now are being spent on healthcare in other states.

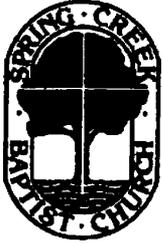
Edmondson polled well in the state's urban centers, but lost by lopsided margins in many rural areas. The question is, why?

What is more important in smaller towns across

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

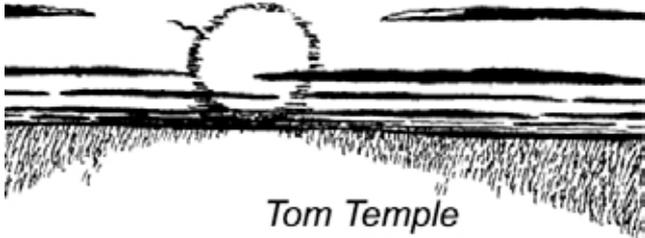
Spring Creek Baptist Church

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



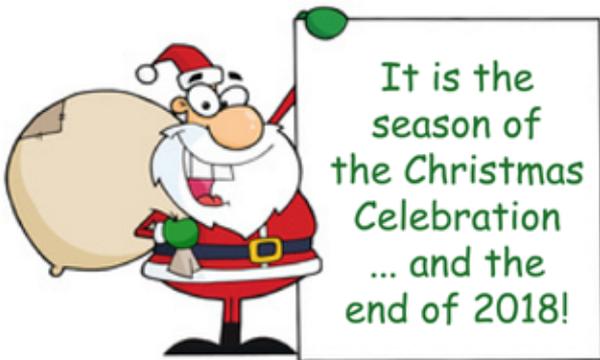
11701 N. MacArthur Blvd.
Oklahoma City, Ok. 73162

[405] 721-3252
springcreekbc.com



Tom Temple
Natural Design

405.478.4936
www.TTemple.com



Message Sponsored by Iris Lochner

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

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.

Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Dart: To Senate Intel Committee member James Lankford, R-OK, who says he believes the CIA report tying Saudi's crown prince to the murder of a Washington Post columnist – yet refuses to hold President Trump accountable for failing to take action.

Speaking of Lankford, the Koch Brothers are showing him the love, funding mailers touting his tight-fistedness on government spending – even though he doesn't face re-election until 2022.

What hath the anti-vax movement wrought? In Oklahoma, an outbreak of mumps – at least seven cases at OU and 13 in Garfield County alone. Sadly, the state's vaccination rate dropped again last school year.

Laurel: To Norman Rep. Emily Virgin, chosen by her colleagues to serve as House Democratic leader next session. She succeeds Beggs' Steve Kouplén, who lost his seat in the November general election.

Oil bust after oil bust state leaders vowed to diversify the state economy. Yet a new State Chamber report finds the energy industry remains No. 1 source of state revenues – 22%. Leadership, where art thou?

Gov. Mary Fallin and her Arkansas' counterpart Asa Hutchinson are hailing a new pact to protect the Illinois River. Don't hold your breath. It could be another scheme to thwart enforcement of water quality standards.

Good News: The state Health Department now will certify that Oklahoma hospitals are complying with a 2014 law requiring they identify and assist caregivers – a key component in proper patient care. – AARP

Uh, oh. A five-year study suggests a low-dose aspirin a day not only fails to reduce the risk of heart disease, but also may increase cancer death. Researchers aren't sure why. – New England Journal of Medicine

Mirroring the nation, Oklahoma reported more hate crimes in 2017. Nationally, the FBI reported hate crimes jumped 17% – to about 250,000. In Oklahoma, 37 hate or bias crimes were reported, up from 33 the year before.

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

near magical power to raise the un-dead themes of racial, gender, and orientation discrimination back to acceptable status, exposed unashamedly to daylight, I think no plaque, no monument, no civilized public space is safe from invasion and vandalism.

Trump and his grotesque courtiers across the country must be legally stopped with overwhelming numbers against them. X's on ballots will put these monsters out of office and in the ground where they came from.

James Nimmo
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Texans like to blackball us Okies.

Take Texas lawyer Mike Ramsey who said, "Failure is not a crime. Bankruptcy is not a crime. If they were, we would have to turn Oklahoma back into a penal colony because there would be so many people to lock up."

Here's how to make a silk purse out of our sow's ear: Erect a statue at the Capitol and on the campus of Oklahoma State University honoring "Second Chance" Sutton.

"I got a second chance," said Eddie Sutton, a functioning alcoholic. "Why shouldn't I give others a second chance?"

Sutton opened his OSU basketball roster to 17 second-chance players.

We, Okies, should be proud to be the state of second chances.

George Chiga, an OSU wrestler and Red Angus breeder, said, "The best thing about us Okies is we don't kick you when you're down or hold it against you and we give you a chance to get up."

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner

Editor, The Observer:

Nov. 11 we celebrated [?] the end of the "Great War." President Wilson had dubbed it "The War To End All Wars." Of course, such did not happen. Why not?

For starters, Wilson made a LARGE mistake by asking, in April 1917, for a declaration of war upon the Central Powers. Prior to that event he correctly ascertained that the U.S. could not be an effective arbiter in settling an effective post-war peace if our country became a combatant.



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*

The U.S. was never attacked. Germany had declared a blockade of the British Isles via their U-boats. Our ships sailing in to that zone were taking a big risk to be sunk. Several suffered that fate. In retrospect, Wilson erred in not firmly declaring that U.S. ships sailing in to the blockade were doing so at their own risk.

So Wilson lost his cherished hope to be a “neutral arbiter” at any peace talks. At Versailles, Britain, France and Italy [“allies” who claimed they lost the most during the war] effectively “neutralized” Wilson’s ability to settle a fair and lasting peace. Instead, the world suffered the fate of an even worse war [beginning in the 1930s] in large part due to the very “punishing aspects” of the unfair agreement at Versailles. We’ve been at near continuous war since.

Prior to our entry in to the “Great War,” the combatants had thoroughly exhausted each other. The war should have ended in a “stalemate” requiring the end of combat and the return to “antebellum conditions:” long time borders respected and “victory” awarded to no country or countries.

Instead, the Versailles Treaty laid down the ideal conditions for the rise of fascist dictators in Ger-

many, Italy, and Spain. Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco might never had risen to power absent the punishing aspects of the Versailles Treaty.

The “partition of the Mideast,” redrawing borders, creating new countries, and awarding “dominance” to either Britain or France, laid down ideal conditions for the awful wars that continue to this day in countries like Iraq and Syria. Trace these “war roots” to the Treaty of Versailles.

Our bankers and munition makers who had profited immensely from the “Great War” were dubbed the “Merchants of Death” by many Americans in the post war period. What we might best now recognize is that these “merchants” are thriving to this very day in the U.S.

Anti-war activist John Reed [very familiar with the war in Europe] was invited in 1916 to a businessman’s luncheon to “say a word” about the causes of the Great War. John stepped to the podium [before promptly sitting back down] and delivered what he was asked to do. He simply stated: “profits!”

Frank Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

Oklahoma than the local school? With declining population because of changing agricultural economics, many rural communities rightly live in fear the Capitol’s powers-that-be will find a way to force widespread school consolidation. Lose your school, lose your identity and sense of community.

Just as disconcerting – especially if smaller towns have a chance for economic revival – is the loss of the local hospital, an all-too-frequent occurrence in Oklahoma [Pauls Valley is the latest]. It’s not easy to attract new business when the nearest emergency care is more than an hour away, on often narrow, sometimes winding two-lane highways.

It will take some serious, long-term, social science research to decode the self-interest vs. voting puzzle. But this much is certain: First, rural Oklahoma remains overwhelmingly red for now. Second, voters put the GOP on notice that they’re paying attention and aren’t averse to changing horses if incumbents don’t fix the state’s problems.

This year it was a dozen Republican incumbents knocked out in primaries and runoffs. In 2020, it could be Democrats that benefit, if the GOP fails again.

If it does, voters will be left to lament what might have been, had Edmondson won.

The Rookies

Term limits, voter unrest and routine turnover [death, early retirement, etc.] have combined to cre-

ate a wet-behind-the-ears statehouse in 2019.

Nearly seven in 10 lawmakers has four years of experience or less. Fifty-seven members of the 57th Legislature are brand-spanking new.

Some Oklahoma no doubt think that’s just grand. Couldn’t be any worse than the knuckleheads who drove the state off the fiscal cliff and teachers away in droves?

Don’t be so sure. Yes, there can be progress when factoring in so-called addition by subtraction – more thoughtful, moderate lawmakers, fewer hard-line ideologues. But we won’t really know whether that is the case for at least two full legislative years.

What we do know is this: Now, more than ever, statehouse power resides in special interest hands.

Thirty-eight percent of lawmakers are rookies and nearly 70% have four years or less navigating the public policy wars – yet many of the state’s nearly 600 registered lobbyists are grizzled veterans who return year after year to the Capitol’s marbled halls.

They know how to grease the legislative machinery. They know how bills are drafted. They know who has the power to get a bill heard. Heck, they know where the bathrooms are!

Term limits robbed the Legislature of the institutional memory that helps scrape off the special interest-slathered gravy and get to the actual meat of the matter. That helped create a dysfunctional Legislature that drew voters’ ire and produced extensive turnover.

Hopefully the good news will outweigh the bad when sine die arrives next May.

Ignorance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

moniously with at least 14 separate federal investigations by the Government Accountability Office. Wow, talking about “draining the swamp.” Or is he filling it? Seems to be the latter to me.

So, one part idiotic patronage, the other part wrecking crew.

Lewis says further that Trump is just a symptom, not the cause of his anti-government, pro-free market view that has led him to take a sledgehammer to the administrative state.

I find this sentiment reminiscent to Americans for Tax Reform’s Grover Norquist, who said: “I don’t want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.”

I don’t know about you, but drowning government in a bathtub pretty much destroys government like so much limp toast.

Lewis says we miss value in the public sector. I just finished Nancy MacLean’s *Democracy in Chains*, and I learned from her that this mentality isn’t organic, natural or inevitable. Rather, it’s strategic, a Libertarian notion in rightwing rhetoric that has largely captured the GOP mindset.

It’s something very simple but important that I learned from The Observer’s Founding Editor Frosty Troy – that groups like the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs [OCPA], a State Policy Network “think tank” funded by the likes of the Koch Brothers, want to “Defund, Delegitimize, and Destroy” our public institutions. Instead they hide their anti-government disdain through “free market” and “limited government” rhetoric.

I totally agree with historian Tim Snyder, who wrote *On Tyranny*: “If we simply think that the institutions [on their own] will save us, then we are complicit in a process where the institutions cannot save us. If we say that it can’t happen in America, we negate the underlying logic of the whole system that is that it can happen anywhere. You need to have institutions and also proactively take actions to ensure that it doesn’t happen here.”

Our public institutions can’t protect themselves – only we can do that.

John Wood is an associate professor of political science at the University of Central Oklahoma. The views he expresses are his and not necessarily the university’s.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer Shop



Vintage Logo T-Shirt

Show your love for The Observer and your solidarity with the 99% with a classic “T” featuring our iconic logo on the front and our motto on the back. Available in black. M-XL \$18, XXL \$20 plus \$3 postage/handling.

To order visit <https://okobserver.org/store/products/>
Or mail payment to PO Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113

We Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends

As loyal readers of The Observer, you know the vital role it has played for 50 years in giving voice to the voiceless, exposing corruption in state government and explaining – clearly – what the Powers-That-Be don't want you to know.

More than ever, we need your support to ensure the state's premier independent journal of commentary survives to influence public debate for generations to come.

Each year at this time we ask you to dig deep. Your holiday gifts truly carry us throughout the year. They make it possible to keep the lights on, the presses running and our website updated.

Do you know someone who isn't currently receiving The Observer, but would benefit from its progressive analysis and hard-hitting reporting? Gift subscriptions are a bargain – only \$40 for a full



Happy Holidays From The Hamiltons!

Arnold, Beverly and The Five Grands: [from left] Maddox, Lyndley, Nolan, Tilly and, our newest, Hollis

year. We'll even send a card announcing your gift!

Or would you become a Friend of The Observer? Gifts of \$100 or more earn a spot in Helen's Hall of Fame, named for our beloved founding publisher.

We're counting on you to ensure The Observer remains a voice of reason amid the rightwing vitriol. Won't you join us in the fight?

**Send your check to The Observer, P.O. Box 14275, OKC 73113.
We also accept all major credit cards:**

Card No. _____ Expiration: _____ Security Code: _____

Send gift subscriptions to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please sign gift card from:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please sign gift card from:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please sign gift card from:

Your info:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (_____) _____