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FRESH START



A New Governor. Nearly 40% Of House And Senate Seats Are Occupied By Freshman. But The State's Perennial Problems Persist. Will This Legislature Finally Take The Steps To Solve Them?

*Special Report begins on page 6
Photo: Brett Dickerson for The Observer*

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OUR MOTTO

To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO

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

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

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Observations

Cricket

With Chancellor Glenn Johnson seated just to his left, and college presidents across the state tuned in, Gov. Kevin Stitt had a perfect opportunity in his first State of the State to signal that higher education's decade in the fiscal desert is over.

Instead, administrators, faculty, staff and students who've endured a 25% cut in state funding since 2009 basically heard ... nothing.

Stitt effectively left the state's colleges and universities – key economic engines for Oklahoma's future – standing at the state Capitol's front door, empty bowls in hand, pleading, "Sir, may I have another?"

Admittedly, there were so many holes in recent state budgets that even the mythical Little Dutch Boy wouldn't have had enough fingers to plug them. Public schools, mental health care, roads and bridges, corrections and more – all key services starved by a perfect storm of recession and dunderheaded tax policy.

When lawmakers finally came to grips with the fiscal calamity last year, they took baby steps to reverse the nation's steepest K-12 schools cuts, authorizing the first across-the-board teacher pay raise in a decade and \$50 million for instruction.

Still, as the 2019 session opened, it was clear primary and secondary education remains woefully underfunded – and light years from even glimpsing Stitt's vision of a Top 10 school system. But at least the governor talked about it – at length.

Higher ed? He uttered the phrase "higher education" once – but only to say he would "sign into law any legislation that seeks to break down the silos between common education, career techs, and higher education so that we can better align the education experience for Oklahoma's children and prepare them for tomorrow's workforce of machinists, computer programmers, engineers, and more."

And he pledged \$62 million to the graduate medical expense program at OU and OSU to train doctors – which he mentioned as a "health care"

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THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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We know it's on Valentine's Day, but you won't want to miss a dynamite Observer Newsmakers Feb. 14, featuring OKC Democratic Rep. Jason Dunnington and other special guests, discussing criminal justice reform. See back cover for details.

Dart: To Gov. Kevin Stitt, doing the two-step on Medicaid expansion – he voiced support for it in a Jan. 30 meet-up with reporters, but backed away in his State of the State address Feb. 4. Trump 2.0?

Freshman U.S. Rep. Kendra Horn recently added two top-notch staffers, OKPolicy-ex Bailey Perkins as a DC legislative assistant and Journal Record-ex Catherine Sweeney as communications director.

Capitol insiders are still buzzing over Speaker Charles McCall's decision to boot House Chief Clerk Jan Harrison just days before the 57th session opened.

Laurel: To OKC Rep. Cyndi Munson, honored with the 2019 Oklahoma Conference of Churches Legislative Courage Award, given annually to a lawmaker who stands up for individuals and their needs, regardless of the political consequences. Formal presentation is Feb. 25 at the Capitol.

We mourn the passing at age 96 of Madeline Carwile, Observer subscriber and supporter for all of our 51 years. Our prayers are with her devoted husband of 72 years and our friend, Jay, and the family.

Dart: To Cordell Rep. Todd Russ, authoring HB 2214 that would attempt to ban teacher walkouts and undermine teachers' future collective bargaining rights. Too bad he's not term limited in 2020.

Restoration of the Governor's Mansion will cost \$8 million. We're die-hard preservationists, but the price tag is breathtaking.

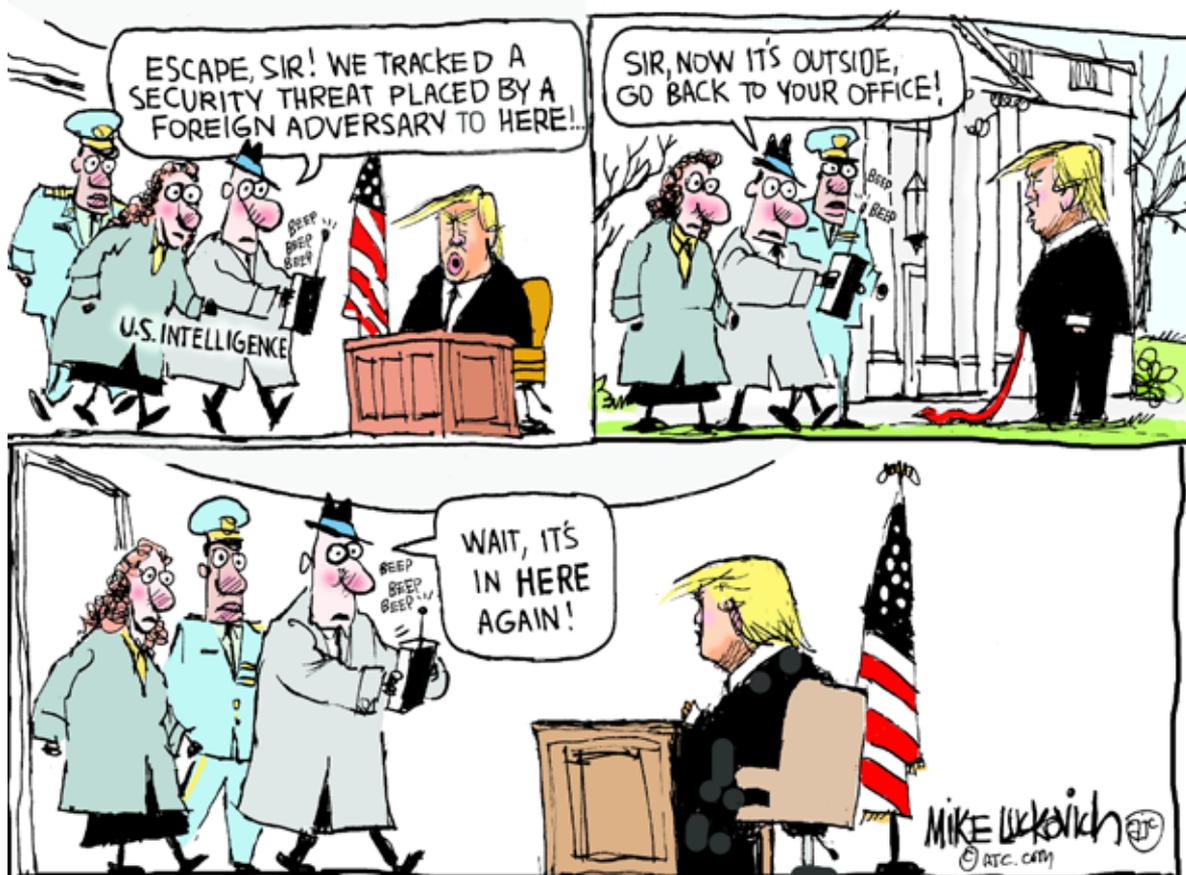
Laurel: To the Oklahoma Academy, taking on the cause of repealing SQ 640's supermajority requirement to raise taxes. The academy, founded 52 years ago by Gov. Henry Bellmon, is loaded with the civic heavy-hitters needed to mount a successful campaign.

Attention, Enid: Observer Editor Arnold Hamilton is featured speaker at the Garfield County Democrats Feb. 23 fundraiser at the RSVP Senior Center, 202 W. Walnut. For details and tickets, contact Nancy Presnall at 580.278.6068 or at nancy.presnall@suddenlink.net.

Dart: To anti-vaxxers who are exposing Oklahomans to a revival of long-controlled maladies like measles. Vaccinations are effective, safe and inexpensive – not a Big Pharma-Big Government conspiracy. So far, luckily, Oklahoma's escaped the worst outbreaks.

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Letters



Editor, The Observer:

If it rotates, reciprocates, accelerates, vibrates, oscillates, gyrates, fluctuates, it will eventually wear out and fail.

If a politician placates, postulates, exaggerates, extrapolates, syndicates, denigrates or fabricates, he [or she] will also fail.

Life on earth is temporary with each living organism heading for oblivion; so be kind to your fellow man during your brief stay.

Tom Birbilis
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

While the integration movement nationwide was led by Martin Luther King Jr., in OKC my fellow teacher Clara Luper [with legal support from E. Melvin Porter] was our leader.

One of our sit-ins that I've never seen written up was at the little hamburger joint/café north of the bus terminal [across the alley]. The place wasn't very big so we

filled it up and had people standing. Very soon the last of the two or three customers that were there cleared out. The man behind the counter came out and locked the front and back doors and said we couldn't leave.

Clara dropped a coin in the pay phone, placed a call, hung up and told us to wait quietly. Within about 15 minutes, E. Melvin Porter and some other man came to the door. The café man let him in and in just a few minutes unlocked both doors. I heard something about false imprisonment as Mr. Porter quickly convinced the man to let us go.

I guess we were just wanting integration, not trying to hurt our adversary, because he surely was guilty of false imprisonment.

Al Engel
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Of the 10-pager cover story in the January-February edition of the

Atlantic reporting on "Why we are so angry?" about one fourth spotlights Tulsa public school teacher Larry Cagle and last April's teacher walk-out in Oklahoma.

Cagle got more space from one of America's most respected publications than even the "red faced diatribes" of "Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the nominee and his Republican backers in the Senate."

The in-depth report on Cagle and the walkout noted that over the past decade, Oklahoma had lost plus \$300 million in state funding and that sometimes teachers at Edison Prep – "one of Tulsa's best public schools" where Cagle taught English – were sometimes prohibited from turning on heat or the air conditioner.

"My take-home check is \$1,980 a month," Cagle is quoted. "I have three kids in college. I'm driving a car that has 200,000 miles ... We can't live like this."

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GOP's Vacuous Attacks On Kendra Horn

Judging from my e-mail in-box, you'd almost think 5th District U.S. Rep. Kendra Horn was one month away from re-election rather than one month into her first term.

While the Oklahoma City Democrat still assembles her staff, the National Republican Congressional Committee already works overtime in an attempt to caricature her as a dangerous radical.

In their fantastical rants, Horn threatens to take away your health insurance and throw open the borders to terrorists, treat federal workers and Dreamers with Marie Antoinette-esque indifference, and is complicit in anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic hate-mongering.

Further, they routinely mention Horn in the same breath as their favorite villains – a “liberal purity squad” that includes House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Sen. Kamala Harris, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

[Isn't it interesting that all the boogeymen the NRCC cites are women?]

The attacks on Horn are vintage GOP playbook. For years, Republicans have successfully nationalized elections – particularly in rural areas in middle America. Broad-brush all Democratic candidates as San Francisco liberals or Massachusetts socialists – even though Oklahoma Democrats with few exceptions [Rep. Mike Synar? Sen. Fred Haris?] weren't even close to the caricature.

The problem now for Republicans is that urban areas are trending blue – even amidst Oklahoma's sea of red rural counties. Younger voters who aren't motivated by God, guns and gays are joining with the panoply of reliable Democratic voters – liberals, moderates and, yes, some conservatives – to change Oklahoma City and environs.

Thus, a moderate Republican – at least by GOP standards – can be elected the capital's mayor, David Holt; a moderate Democrat, like Horn, can unseat an incumbent Republican; and statehouse seats long held by Republicans now are in Democratic hands: think Sens. Carri Hicks and Julia Kirt and Rep. Chelsey Branham.

Here's what we know so far about how Horn will execute her duties as the D.C. rep for Oklahoma, Pottawatomie and Seminole counties:

She voted for her party's candidate for speaker, Pelosi. That is hardly unprecedented or earth-shattering. Her only other choice was the Republican nominee, Kevin McCarthy. You're gonna dance with the one that brung you.

She voted repeatedly to re-open the government and put federal workers back to work while the Congress and President Trump negotiate over border security. That's a no-brainer, too, when you consider the number of federal employees and contractors in her district, much less the impact on the economy of so many going without paychecks.

She joined a group of freshman lawmakers to introduce the Shutdown To End All Shutdowns Act aimed at protecting federal workers and contractors from being used as pawns in future political negotiations between Congress and the White House.

She voted with longtime Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Cole of Moore to give non-military federal employees a 2.6% pay raise.

And she was one of three freshmen to join the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, a group that identifies itself as “centrist Democrats” and promotes what it regards as fiscal responsibility – what most folks would consider “conservative Democrats.”

“The Blue Dog Coalition brings together like-minded members of Congress seeking common-sense solutions to provide for the financial stability and national security of our nation,” Horn said. “We share the same goal of putting practical solutions before politics, and I look forward to working with my Blue Dog colleagues on issues like a comprehensive border security strategy and the prevention of future government shutdowns.”

Not surprisingly, Horn's Blue Dog affiliation ignited a social media backlash from some hard-core liberals. But it accurately mirrors her centrist views. And more importantly, it exposes the vacuousness of the NRCC's campaign to destroy Horn before she even gets started.

With a political novice as governor and rookies occupying more than a third of legislative seats, the 2019 session is bound to be volatile and full of surprises. First rule of thumb:

FOLLOW THE MONEY

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

The opening day of a legislative session truly is like the opening day of school.

Lots of glad-handing and hugs as lawmakers greet old friends and welcome new classmates. Plenty of selfies, regardless of party affiliation. Overflowing optimism that almost anything is possible ... well, almost.

The near absence of cynicism is quaint, yet understandable given that nearly 40% of this year's lawmakers – 57 of 149 – are newbies and state revenues arguably are the strongest in nearly a decade.

Yet, as legislative leaders acknowledged on session's eve, it's often more treacherous politically when there's extra money than when there's not.

State agencies already have requested \$3.5 billion in funding increases for vital services starved since the Great Recession in 2008. At best, lawmakers will have \$612 million more to spend this fiscal year than last – but more likely only about half that much.

As Senate President Pro Tem Greg Treat put it, "We've certainly got our work cut out for us."

Sessions are always about the money. This year's will be no different. But what makes the first year of the 57th Legislature especially difficult to predict is its inexperience – nearly 70% have served four years or less – and a new governor who never held public office and only rarely voted.

Considering Gov. Kevin Stitt's inaugural address, State of the State message, and budget priorities along with the state's massive financial needs and an inexperienced Legislature with as many priorities as there are members, here are five things you should watch closely as the session unfolds:

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

As a corporate CEO with no political experience, Stitt is clearly taking his cues from the oligarch-financed, anti-government Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs that loves corporate welfare, but could care less about the working class or poor.

How do we know? Stitt essentially parrots an OCPA talking point that state government funding is more than the \$7 billion or so that state taxpayers commit to it. They contend that all federal tax dollars that help fund state programs – think highways, for ex-

ample – also must be included.

It's totally misleading, and creates the misimpression Oklahoma spends as much as a state 10 times its size, yet Stitt repeated it in his State of the State, claiming "it is important we talk in total dollars. This was the one consistent request I heard from Oklahomans across the campaign trail."

Really? Have you ever heard any work-a-day Oklahoman request that? Me, neither. Only the OCPA demands that – in a quest to mislead. Is this Stitt's version of Donald Trump's "everybody" says?

The demagoguery has a purpose, though: to thwart any talk of tax increases or even of tax fairness. For a decade, the Republican-dominated Legislature has systematically shifted the tax burden from the uber-rich to the working class by cutting income taxes [the fairest tax of all], increasing fees and using state tax policy to force local governments to increase sales and property tax.

We will know later this month how much new money lawmakers will have to spend next year. If it continues to shrink, as oil prices decline, it will intensify pressure on Stitt and lawmakers to do something bold for education and other vital services.

Stitt, for one, has made clear he thinks property tax hikes are the way forward. Seniors especially might want to keep an eye on this.

GUBERNATORIAL POWER GRAB

Treat and other GOP leaders are backing multiple bills aimed at giving the governor authority to hire and fire the leadership of state agencies. This is a continuation of the so-called Keating Plan, a CEO-as-governor scheme hatched and promoted during Frank Keating's reign.

Democratic control of the Legislature thwarted the empire building for a decade-plus. Once Republicans captured control, however, they began executing the plan by giving then-Gov. Mary Fallin power to immediately dismiss the existing State Board of Education – which was giving new Superintendent Janet Barresi hell, for good reason – and appoint new members.

As the GOP soured on Fallin and Barresi, the Keating Plan went dormant again. But now, with a new governor, the effort has shifted into high gear.

Democrats rightly warn that the current system – in which agency boards, appointed by the governors on a staggered basis, select professionals to agency directors – has kept the good ol’ boy system and nepotism to a minimum. Republicans seem determined to return to the bad old days.

A word of caution: While Oklahoma is a reliably GOP state today, it won’t always be. Remember when Democrats thought their reign would never end? If Republicans invest so much power now, they might not like the results when a Democratic governor is seated next.

SCHOOL CHOICE

The OCPA and other privatizers are gearing up for an all-out assault this session on public education – under the guise of school choice. Look for a big charter school push. Perhaps even an expansion of vouchers, allowing public dollars to be re-directed into private schools – some religious, others virtual.

This isn’t just happening in Oklahoma. President Trump called for it in his State of the Union address, too – with a grinning Education Secretary Betsy DeVos cheering him on.

The push for school choice is about two things: monetizing our children and breaking the teachers’ unions. One thing it is not about: ensuring all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, race or religion an equal shot at a quality public education.

MEDICAID EXPANSION

On Jan. 30, in a meeting with reporters in the Capitol Blue Room, Stitt expressed support for Medicaid expansion – a sure-fire way to improve health outcomes for the working poor and protect rural health care. But four days later, in his State of the State message, he backed off – instead parroting opponents’ fear-mongering that the federal government might decide to cut funding, leaving states holding the bag.

Of course, never in its 50-plus years of existence has Medicaid funding been cut. It is a third rail of American politics – just like Social Security and Medicare.

If Stitt and enough lawmakers can overcome the ideologues who still oppose it because [a] it’s ObamaCare or [b] they oppose federal funding or [c] both, it will relieve huge pressure on the state budget long-term – helping create a healthier taxpaying work force and general public.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

GOP statehouse leadership finally seems on board with fully implementing voter approved SQs 780 and 781, designed to end the life-destroying, budget-busting lock-em-up and throw-away-the-key approach that has made Oklahoma the world’s incarceration leader.

“This is low-hanging fruit,” Stitt says, clearly understanding the cost savings [fewer inmates to house and feed] and the revenue potential [more tax-payers]. But many of the state’s district attorneys are adamantly opposed, for political and fiscal reasons.

If the bipartisan legislation by House Floor Leader Jon Echols and Democratic Rep. Jason Dunning wins

approval – making SQ 780 retroactive for non-violent offenders – you’ll know the state truly has turned a positive corner.

UNLEASHING THE CRAZY

Finally, the usual pro-gun, anti-abortion bills are in the legislative hopper, as are measures aimed at thwarting Capitol rallies like last year’s teacher walk-out, breaking teachers unions and stifling dissent in the Capitol’s galleries.

Most of the proposals are clearly unconstitutional. It will be a sign of legislative progressive if they’re ignored – not even a committee hearing.

But Sen. Nathan Dahm’s constitutional carry bill is back. Fallin vetoed it last year at the business community’s behest. But Stitt indicates he may be open to signing it.

Stay tuned.

Our Revolution Legislative Forum Set For Feb. 27

Democratic legislators will be featured at a forum hosted by Our Revolution Oklahoma on Feb. 27 at the Pioneer Library in Moore. All are invited to this free event. Light refreshments will be served.

The panel will review bills being considered in the 2019 Legislature, with a focus on citizen advocacy to advance legislation that aligns with OR-OK’s mission of “restoring democracy for working people.”

House Minority Leader Emily Virgin has confirmed her attendance. Senate Democratic Leader Kay Floyd has also been invited and will attend if her schedule allows.

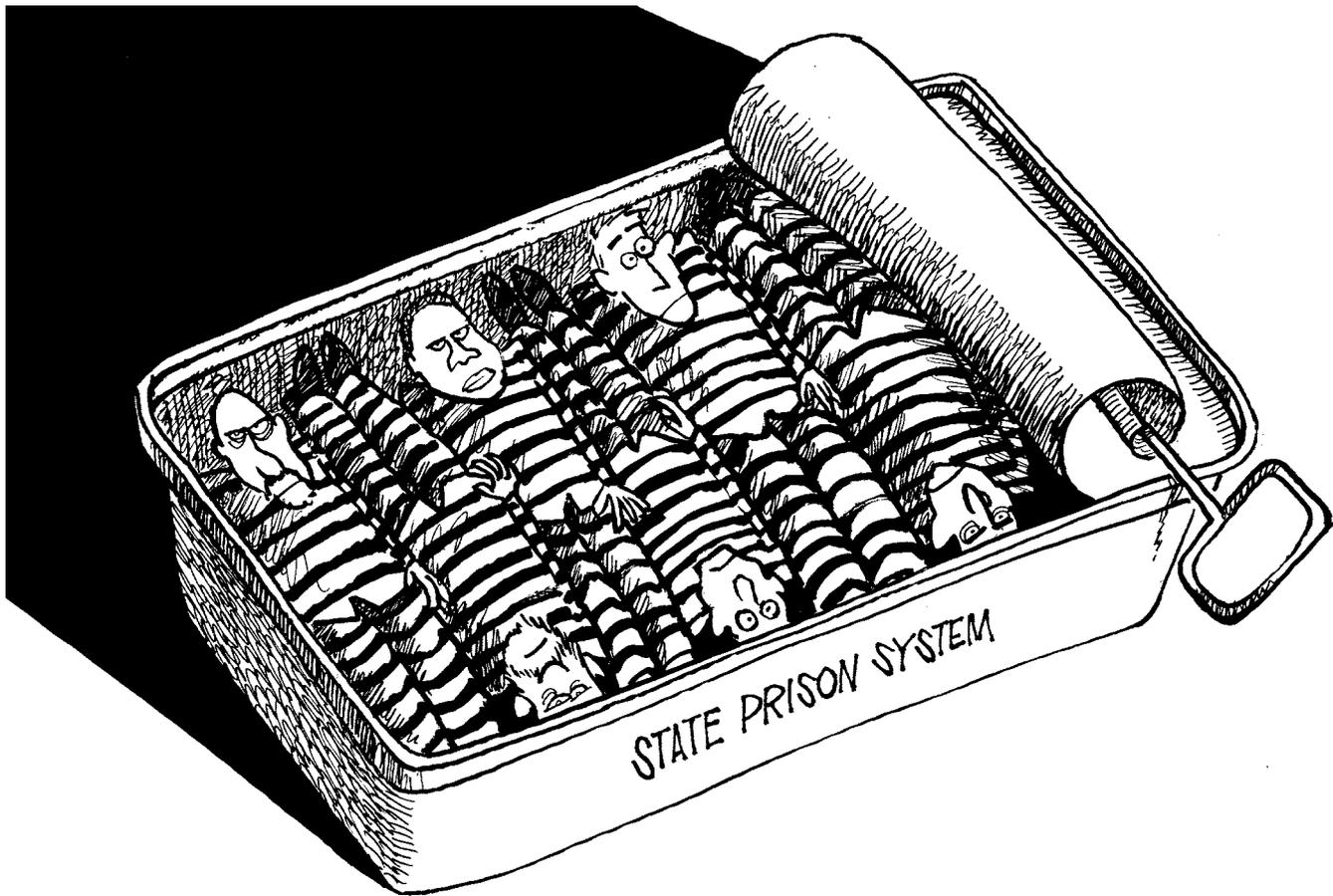
Other confirmed participants include newly elected Sen. Carri Hicks, who was endorsed by OR-OK in her 2018 campaign that successfully flipped a mid-OKC Senate district. Also attending are OKC Rep. Collin Walke and Norman Rep. Jacob Rosecrants.

Christine Byrd, a member of the OR-OK board of directors, will moderate the panel.

“We are tracking bills and votes, including those that address our key progressive issues for this term: protecting public education, increasing the minimum wage, and expanding health care options,” she said. “We will provide tools and resources for advocating on important bills that address these goals.”

The library is located at 225 South Howard in Moore. Socializing begins at 6:15, followed by the program at 6:30.

Our Revolution Oklahoma is a chapter of Our Revolution that serves Oklahoma and Cleveland Counties. For more information, visit ourrevolutionok.com. – *Rena Guay*



Parole Is Broken In Oklahoma. Here's How We Fix It.

BY DAMION SHADE

Incarceration is expensive in Oklahoma. The cost of our overcrowded prisons is projected to skyrocket in the next decade. The Department of Corrections requested \$1.5 billion next year to address long-neglected repairs and to build a new prison to keep up with the current rate of inmate growth.

Typically, states mitigate the cost of prison with parole, allowing offenders to serve the last part of their sentence under community supervision if the offender is no longer a threat to public safety. Parole should have two goals: incentivizing good behavior for those currently and formerly incarcerated while easing their re-entry into communities and saving taxpayer money.

Unfortunately, Oklahoma's parole system is broken. The number of inmates granted parole decreased 77% from 2008 to 2017. Even worse, policies in Oklahoma

encourage many inmates to forgo parole and leave them without the support structure available in other states.

Every month, about 600 inmates become parole eligible, but only about 200 apply for it, passing up an opportunity for early release. This is in part because parole in Oklahoma comes with fees that can add up quickly.

Unless a parolee's fees are waived for hardship, anyone on parole in this state must pay \$40 per month for DOC supervision in addition to court fines and fees, as well as some additional amount of financial restitution depending on the offense.

In addition, a parolee may have to pay for up to two years of drug tests, a GPS ankle bracelet, a breathalyzer for their vehicle, and any cognitive behavioral therapy or classes which the parole board deems necessary for their release.

These financial obstacles are often compounded by the fact that many of those on parole have suspended drivers' licenses, making attending required meetings and maintaining employment remarkably difficult.

To help more offenders access parole, lawmakers should eliminate the supervision fee and provide more hardship waivers for other costs to those who are unable to pay. Some parole conditions are both necessary and reasonable, but if conditions make employment and paying bills more difficult, it's hard to see how they promote public safety.

Exacerbating the situation is that many prisoners in Oklahoma view parole as a trap because its terms are so strict. Failing to meet the conditions of probation or parole was among the most common reasons Oklahomans went to prison in 2018. In 2015, roughly a quarter of prison admissions in this state were for technical violations of probation or parole conditions.

"Oklahoma parole is just a gotcha game" for many offenders, according to Kris Steele, Parole Board

member and executive director of Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform, "because they've seen how many inmates get parole only to end up back in prison."

A landmark parole reform bill, HB 2286, did pass the state Legislature last year.

The law creates a new system of release for non-violent offenders called administrative parole, an automatic parole process for certain inmates which should have a huge impact on the prison population in the next several years, though legal questions about the implementation timeline may delay the impact of the law.

HB 2286 also increases the availability of graduated sanctions, so that sending someone back to prison is not the first response to a parole violation. It's a much-needed step toward a parole system that does what it's meant to do: equip people coming out of prison with the resources to successfully rejoin the community.

Damion Shade is the criminal justice policy analyst for Oklahoma Policy Institute; okpolicy.org.

Read The Constitution, Sen. Allen!

BY MIKE W. RAY

It never ceases to amaze me when lawmakers who bill themselves as protectors of individual liberty and promoters of "family values" introduce measures contrary to the supreme "law of the land."

The latest example is SB 592 filed by state Sen. Mark Allen, a Spiro Republican. SB 592 would require any group of 100 or more persons that assembles at the state Capitol "in an organized protest" to post a bond of \$50,000 "in order to offset the cost of additional security, clean up and repairs."

Allen's page on the Senate's website says he is a "staunch conservative" who is "concerned about safeguarding traditional values ..."

Complying with the Constitution of the United States is something I consider to be a "traditional value."

Perhaps that's because I am a fifth-generation newspaperman; I've been employed in the news/communications business for 50 years.

All of the journalists in my family have been intimately familiar with the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

It decrees, among other things, that Congress "shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ..."

Allen has already served in the Oklahoma Senate for eight years and has sworn an oath *three times* declaring that he would support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Yet apparently he is unfamiliar with the First Amendment.

Because besides freedom of the press, freedom of

speech and freedom of religion, it also decrees that Congress shall make no law abridging "*The right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*"

And if Allen had paid attention in his high school history class, he might have learned that ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America and the development of the incorporation doctrine extended the Bill of Rights [the first 10 Amendments] to the state and local governments.

Allen – who pledges on his Senate page that he will "continue to work hard to maintain our high quality of educational opportunities" in Oklahoma – filed his odious bill in retaliation against the thousands of school teachers who rallied at the state Capitol last year.

Those teachers justifiably demanded that their elected legislators – who, like Allen, constantly claim how important education is to the future of this state and nation – start supporting education instead of slashing funding for public schools year after year after year.

Allen should read the U.S. Constitution and then abide by his oath of office. NO LAW means NO LAW, sir.

Mike W. Ray spent 45 years as a journalist on newspapers in Oklahoma and Texas, two years in public relations with Southwestern Bell Telephone, plus 19 years as a media director at the Oklahoma House of Representatives.



Photo: Brett Dickerson for The Observer

A Stitt In Time May Be Fine – Or Put Us In A Bind

BY CAL HOBSON

For me the headline says it all. Newbie Gov. Kevin Stitt, a long shot in April who transformed himself into a landslide winner by November, appears to be just what the doctor, and voters, ordered. Enamored with his own bottom line, candidate Kevin breezily promised the long-suffering masses he would bring order into the chaotic, creaky, corrupt, dysfunctional and antiquated ruling wreck of a government that has populated the Capitol rotunda for far too long.

Of course, every new governor says that.

However, and by his own admission, direct participatory democracy is not Stitt's shtick as confirmed by the fact that he didn't bother to vote for about two decades. Other priorities such as raising a family, building a business and leading a Christian life have dominated his daily routines and certainly those qualities will serve him well on 23rd Street in Oklahoma City.

Anyway, not showing up on Election Day isn't

found in most folks Top 10 list while Stitt's promises to put Oklahoma in high rankings for all things good probably are. Education, transportation, health care, government efficiency, job growth and reform of the criminal justice system make up the core of his priorities going forward.

Notably absent is any immediate prioritization of so-called social issues such as further restricting abortion or church and state conflicts like where to put the Ten Commandments monument. Of course, legislative leaders, especially new Senate President Pro Tem Greg Treat, R-OKC, plan to still push, again, greater restrictions on a woman's right to choose while at the same time offering gun owners fewer barriers to packing a piece ... concealed or not and without any training. Oh, boy and oh, no.

Surprisingly, though, the new governor also has been willing to rattle some elephant cages by suggesting he is open to Medicaid expansion – hot but-

ton heresy to most Republicans. Also, Stitt will push a budget plan to wean district attorneys off their dependence on fees, fines and other assessments to operate their offices. In reality, the likelihood of either effort succeeding in the Legislature appears dim primarily because they both make such good common sense, a characteristic sorely lacking in the "people's building" as well as within the skulls of those running and often ruining the place.

Like all previous governors, Stitt has set as another goal massive job creation by expanding the industrial base without him picking winners or losers. Good luck on that. What does he think will be in many of the proposals he'll sign into law – or less likely, veto – over the next few months? They can't all just be resolutions naming a bridge for someone long dead or recognizing a seventh grade basketball team for finishing seventh in a forgettable Tournament of Champions in Tulsa.

Conversely, one growing profession he does want to curb is that of lobbying. By executive order, the former mortgage magnate has mandated that no state agency, including institutions of higher education, can hire members of the second oldest profession to represent them if paid by taxpayer money. Sounds great, but what about, say, private for-profit prisons, who presumably still employ contract lobbyists to tell lawmakers, over dinner and drinks, their story about the wisdom of locking up felons for fun and profit ... mostly profit. Maybe that's an example of running government like a business – more attention to the bottom line than sound public policy.

However, on a similar note, Stitt has not banned contributions from lobbyists to him, or any other elected official, as evidenced by the tens of thousands he has received from special interests since Election Day, Nov. 6.

Thus a reminder, as if readers need one, that reform can go only so far, so fast.

Speaking of money, just a cursory, and curious, glance at a recently filed campaign report for Stitt reveals some interesting data, donors and expenditures. For example:

[1] Over \$10 million was raised as of Dec. 31, split nearly 50/50 from the candidate's back pocket, or wife Sarah's purse, and contributors, including hundreds of thousands from political action committees and/or lobbyists. Banks, doctors, insurance executives, oil moguls, a few farmers, realtors, the anti-vaccination crowd, a preacher or two, multiple tribes, even some legislators saw fit to "buy some skin in the game" for the new administration and the upcoming session.

[2] The spending side of the ledger was just as fascinating in that of the more than 10 Very Big Raised, \$8.5 million was paid to pollsters, media buyers, consultants, strategy counselors, opposition researchers and others headquartered outside of Oklahoma. Firms located in Florida, Indiana, Virginia and

even Texas were the big winners while spending in state was limited primarily on staff and expenses for donated space from the candidate himself.

By the way, money from our new leader is in the form of a loan, not a donation, and he is on record saying he does not expect to be repaid. We'll see, and I'll let you know if our newest millionaire elected official reverses course. Wouldn't be the first pol to do so.

While putting the wraps on this column, one final conundrum concerns me. If, indeed, pressure from Tea Party-types or fraidy cats in the Legislature dissuade the new administration from accepting billions of our own tax money back from Washington for desperately needed health care in Oklahoma, and doing it right here and right now, such a mistake would extend the worst politically-driven decision in the history of our state. Surely, as a fellow who started his now very profitable and growing private sector business with nothing more than \$1,000 and a computer on his kitchen table, Kevin Stitt, proud recipient of an accounting degree from Oklahoma State University, can see a good deal for his state even if his predecessor couldn't or wouldn't.

Don't blow this one, Kevin. Hundreds of thousands of uninsured children and disabled adults in Oklahoma have suffered long enough without adequate health care while similarly situated Americans in other states have benefitted.

After all, expanding Medicaid coverage will be one of the easiest decisions you'll have to make – so make it early.

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

Deborah Astley

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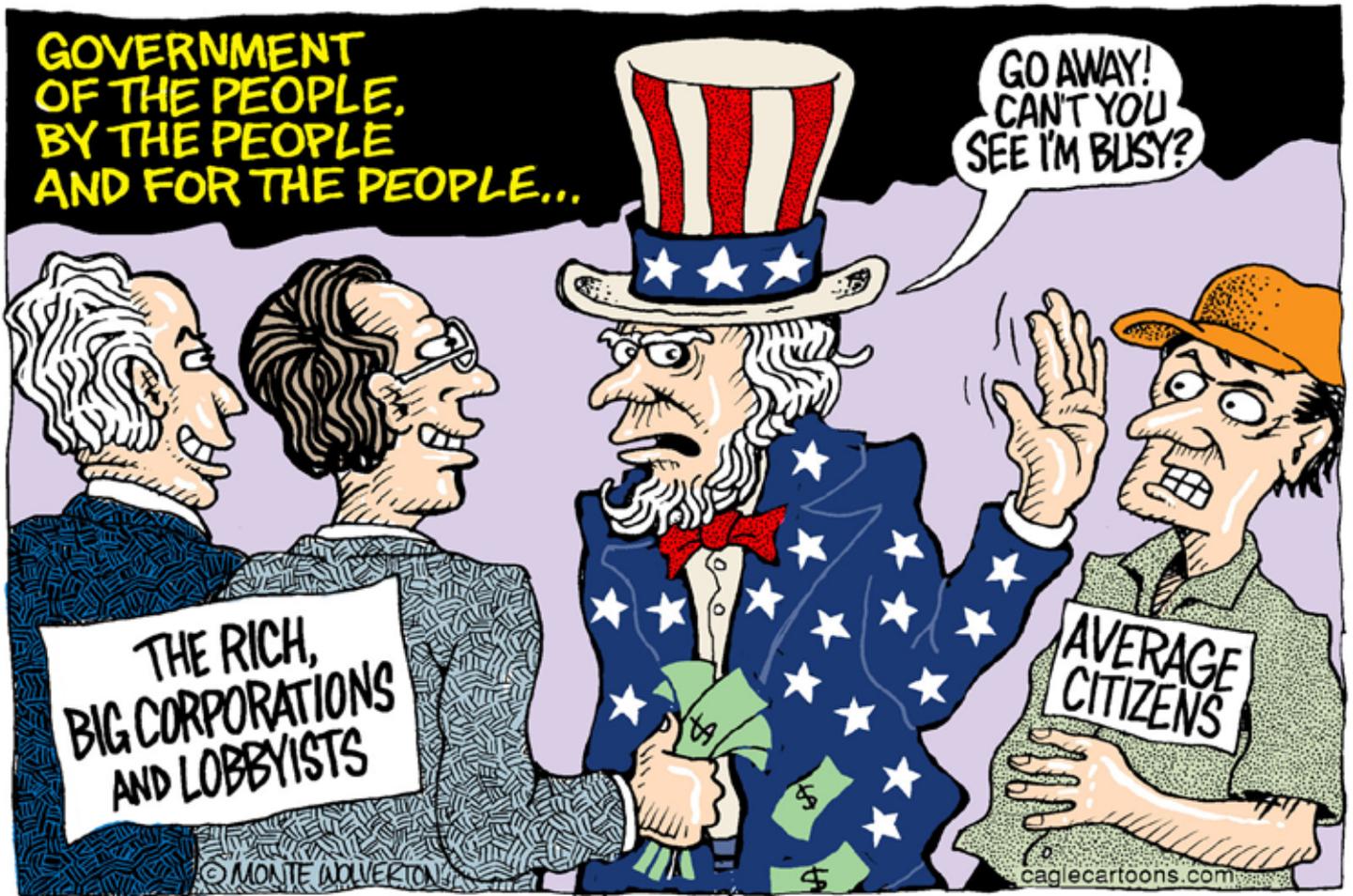
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[We Are] Citizens, Not Stakeholders

BY JOHNSON BRIDGWATER

A very disturbing trend has emerged in politics, and in light of our new governor claiming our government should be “run as a business,” I think this trend needs calling out.

I have never used the cliché of opening an article with a Webster’s Dictionary definition, but I think this is a perfectly appropriate time to do it:

Stakeholder; *noun*

1. [in gambling] an independent party with whom each of those who make a wager deposits the money or counters wagered.

2. a person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business. [my emphasis]

I want to be very clear – government agencies and elected officials were *never* intended to be representative of “stakeholders” – they were meant to represent *citizens*. But at a public meeting at a state agency recently, and in the media coverage related to this public meeting, a state employee used the word “stakeholder” to justify why an action was being taken.

Personally, I find this concept rather disturbing.

Especially after finding out the “stakeholder” was indeed nothing more than a voice for Oklahoma businesses. Businesses do not directly elect people [yes, yes, I know... please hold your Citizens United comments for now] nor do businesses tend to pursue the “greater public good,” which is what any good state agency should be pursuing.

If there is any doubt or confusion over how the term “stakeholder” emerged in modern America, I will throw you some background to support the clear fact that “stakeholder” is a business concept, NOT a civics concept.

The *stakeholder theory* was originally detailed by Ian Mitroff in his *business* book *Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind*, published in 1983 in San Francisco. So I would urge all of you who support the notion of a free and democratic government [you know who you are!] to start calling out elected officials and others who try to use this term as a way of representing the citizenry and the interests of our government – and especially to remind Gov. Kevin Stitt that he was elected by people, not corporations, despite how

much money corporations contributed to purchase influence.

The infiltration of a new grammar and lexicon is the first step in creating an entirely new and acceptable view of a government's form and function. Words matter. George Orwell's *1984* should be warning enough.

I find it rather scary that the people using the "stakeholder" language in reference to our government are very earnestly pushing for full privatization of state government. It started with Gov. Mary Fallin adding "OMES" to the state of Oklahoma, and it will very clearly continue under the new [old] governor – he added a Sonic executive [John Budd] to serve as the "chief operating officer" for the State of Oklahoma, a new position created by Kevin Stitt.

Charter schools are next on their agenda, despite the *clear* evidence that neither privatization, nor charter schools, lead to better or more efficient government [see <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2013/08/05/8-ways-privatization-has-failed-america> for details].

Business has its place, but results clearly indicate it does not work when public interest and public good are the main drivers. Education, health care, and transportation [three areas where Oklahoma is woefully failing] have *all* been shown to *fail* when linked to privatization.

"Government Privatization" is a farce intended to benefit the few at the cost of the many, and the "stakeholder" concept is simply another step towards dropping government and its original pursuit of the greater public good in exchange for being run

by Big Business.

I am not naïve – I fully understand economics is a big part of running a good government. The problem I have is when I hear a state employee tell a room full of concerned citizens that they are considering the loosening of an environmental regulation for economic reasons.

The environment needs to be protected in the face of economics, not the other way around. And if state agencies want to act on behalf of economics, then one *very* significant change needs to take place in all of their efforts – *environmental* and *health* costs need to be added to the "BCA," or benefit cost analyses they perform when making certain decisions.

Currently, almost *no* public state or U.S. government entity includes health and environment in benefit cost analysis, and it has been proven over and over, study after study, that including health and human impacts, as well as traditional "environmental" costs and benefits, actually leads to much stronger economic results long-term.

As one legal advocate, attorney Katherine Trent, puts it: "We must value the people from whom we derive profit more than simply hoodwinking them for short term gain and long term loss, or face the consequence of short term thinking for too long."

Sadly, climate change is proof that stakeholders, not citizens, have held sway for far too long, and it is time for *civics* and *citizens* to be returned to their rightful place of honor in our democracy.

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

A Fowl Attack On Green Country

BY BOB JACKMAN

The stretch from Siloam Springs to Springdale, AR, is the home and corporate capital of the world's poultry industry.

One member of the powerful poultry federation, Simmons Foods, invaded – legally! – northeastern Oklahoma's rolling, semi-wooded prairie lands in 2018 with 200 poultry barns.

Driving Highway 412 from Tulsa to Siloam Springs, you can see their clusters of new, white poultry barns in groups of six, each barn two football fields long and as wide as Wal-Mart semi-trucks are long, with a holding capacity of 36,000 or more growing chickens.

All pooping, some dying, their bad-bacteria litter emits the strong, pungent, unforgettable odor of ammonia vapors.

The school children and residents of rural Delaware and Adair counties are in harm's way, their property right to peaceful enjoyment now violated.

One indisputable definition of Creating and Maintaining a Public Nuisance is waking up to tons of

fresh chicken litter from poultry producers' barns in your Green Country home's front and back yard!

Examples: An elderly widow with chronic bronchitis can't leave open the windows in her country home and a pre-teen girl had to cancel her summer birthday pool party due to the chicken feathers and gunk-film floating on the pool thanks to a nearby poultry operation. In the summer, barefoot kids can't walk down shaded country roads due to, uh, fowl air.

Neither the Oklahoma



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Department of Environmental Quality [ODEQ], the Oklahoma Water Resources Board [OWRB], or the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Farms & Forest [ODFF] objected to or apparently thought about the collective impacts in approving 200 poultry barn permits [\$10 each] in the northeastern Oklahoma counties, including \$80-\$250 permits for their new, free water supply wells.

Clearly, Oklahoma government failed the state's Green Country residents. Moreover, their local state representative [who?] received \$8,700 in campaign donations from Simmons family members for whom he works!

MANURE FACTS

According to the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission's Official Chicken Litter Spread Sheet, the top four of Arkansas' 56 poultry producing counties are in northwest Arkansas – Benton, Washington, Carroll and Madison – just across the line from Oklahoma's Adair, Delaware and Cherokee counties.

Those four Arkansas counties generate annually 529,000 tons of litter from 3,387 poultry barns producing 76.1 million birds.

A majority of the litter sold was transmitted elsewhere; however, 12% or 68,000 tons of generated litter was applied to farmland in those four counties – which are underlain by the Rubidoux [Ruby-Do] Aquifer shared with four Oklahoma counties: Adair, Delaware, Ottawa and Cherokee!

Missing from the government oversight is the high-tech evaluation available by mass-spectrometry water quality testing, which – coupled with hydrological modeling – could determine whether Oklahoman's public health is being harmed by Arkansas chicken litter polluting our shared Rubidoux Aquifer.

Its waters migrate below the surface westward and downward to where it outcrops from Tahlequah north to Miami area. These outcrops often have flowing springs that along with rainfall feed Green Country's Grand Lake, Illinois River, Flint Creek, Barron Fork, Spring Creek and others.

But until the major in-progress OWRB and USGS Northeastern Oklahoma Rubidoux Study Project is completed, a key question remains unanswered: Is northeast Oklahoma's shared aquifer ground-water flow and availability being captured – and polluted – by Arkansas' poultry industry.

The OWRB, ODEQ and ODAFF have failed to carry out their duties by not investigating the probability of such pollution, including failing to test surface and ground waters for multi-bacteria counts and for numerous unregulated toxic chemicals and carcinogenic compounds – the norm where public health may be at risk.

Additionally, it's worth considering whether northwest Arkansas' mega poultry barns' water wells may be draining and lowering northeast Oklahoma's residential water-wells and springs.

Again, we must wait on the aforementioned study for answers. That study could be one of most impor-

tant in Oklahoma history.

Therefore, an independent oversight committee of nationally recognized, geo-scientist professionals on surface and ground waters is a must. Moreover, it is imperative that the Rubidoux Aquifer classified and protected as a sensitive, sole source ground water aquifer – in other words, a major water supply for northeast Oklahoma.

MISSING GOVERNMENT STEWARDSHIP

1. The Flint Creek power plant at Gentry, AR is only three miles east of Oklahoma and a proven contributor to air and ground water pollution in northeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas. Gentry's coal-burning emissions – including airborne mercury – are identified as the “Worst Coal Fly-Ash Manager in U.S.” Its 43-acre fly-ash [coal ashes] storage pond leaks into Flint Creek Lake – seeping into the Rubidoux Aquifer. [For details, see AshTracker.org; In-HarmsWay.org; and Google Earth: Flint Creek Power Plant]

2. Super-sized corporate poultry needs strict rules to protect citizens' quality-of-life, including safe setback distances from schools, churches, and residents – set-backs approved by residents not poultry industry. [See Nov. 13, 2016 Journal of Environmental & Public Health's Toxicity of Odorous Compounds of Ammonium and Scottish EPA-SEPA's Ammonia Mitigation for more information.]

3. Also a must: strict rules requiring air quality biochemistry tests for airborne carcinogenic micro-bacteria originating from new and old poultry houses with their huge ventilator blowers.

4. Stilwell, OK, whose residents have the nation's lowest life expectancy, sits at ground zero for one of America's worst concentrations of airborne mercury rain, originating from coal power plants smoke stacks' toxic particles – Gentry is only 35 miles away by air. Isn't Stilwell's municipal water supply also fed by the Rubidoux Aquifer? [See The Oklahoma Observer, October 2018, “The Tragedy Of Stilwell, OK,” and Stilwell's mercury map at https://nadp.slh.wisc.edu/maplib/pdf/mdn/hg_dep_2017.pdf.]

WILL THEY CHICKEN OUT?

In 2004, former state senator and Tonkawa rancher Paul Muegge was presented the prestigious John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for his legislation that limited neighboring properties' exposure to concentrated animal feed lots.

Will Oklahoma's new governor Kevin Stitt and 2019 legislators show similar courage by regulating corporate poultry clusters-barns to prevent more harm to Green Country's citizens and their environment? Or will they chicken out?

Science based water management – not management solely by and for corporate profits – is necessary to achieve sustainable water and stewardship for all rural and metro citizens.

Tulsa resident Bob Jackman is an independent geologist, an oil and gas operator and an environmental activist.

Want To Improve Oklahomans' Mental Health? Expand Medicaid.

BY LAUREN TURNER

Oklahoma is in crisis.

While need for mental health care climbs, Oklahomans overwhelmingly lack access to the care needed to address these sometimes preventable, always treatable conditions.

This has serious consequences: untreated mental illness can mean increased risk for other health problems, incarceration, difficulty keeping a job and keeping up with financial responsibilities, and homelessness.

Many people experiencing a mental illness enter our criminal justice system because of their illness: in 2017, 10,000 individuals with a mental illness passed through the county jail in Tulsa alone.

Other outcomes are more tragic: our suicide rate increased 45% between 2009 and 2016. Oklahoma ranks No. 8 in the nation for incidence of suicide, according to American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Accepting federal funds for Medicaid expansion is the most practical way to address this crisis. Expanding Medicaid allows states to provide access to care to adults who earn up to 138% of the federal poverty level [\$16,753 per year for an individual].

More than 150,000 Oklahomans will gain access to health care through Medicaid expansion. This includes some of the 97,000 uninsured Oklahomans with a mental health diagnosis, roughly the entire population of Broken Arrow.

Currently Oklahoma ranks 46th in the nation in spending on mental health care. Funding for mental health services in Oklahoma has never been adequate, but cuts over the last four years were particularly devastating.

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse [ODMHSAS], the primary provider for low-income, uninsured adults, lost \$52.6 million in state funding between 2014 and 2018, resulting in a loss of \$80.4 million in matching funds from the federal government and deep cuts in services and provider rates. As a result, ODMHSAS will receive an \$11 million increase in 2019, but this increase is only the beginning of restoring what was cut.

Without investment in health care, it is difficult – and at times impossible – for people with a mental illness to get treatment. Only one in three Oklahomans who experience any form of mental illness get the care they need.

People with less severe mental health problems are turned away and asked to come back when they are

sicker and closer to – or actually in – crisis, at a risk of harming themselves or others. By the time they finally get the help they need, it's far more resource – and time – intensive, and often less effective than early intervention.

Mental health care is improving in states that expanded Medicaid, making it easier for people who need care to get it compared to non-expansion states like Oklahoma.

Fewer people with depression are uninsured after Medicaid expansion, and those individuals also report fewer delays in care and fewer barriers to getting medication after getting coverage.

Compared to non-expansion states, expansion states cut the number of mental health hospital stays nearly in half.

Medicaid expansion also reduces deaths due to suicide and substance abuse, which commonly co-occur with a mental health diagnosis.

Every year, Oklahoma accepts federal funding for transportation, education, food assistance, and health care. In 2015, federal funds comprised nearly 40% of the state's budget.

Oklahomans' federal tax dollars are being used to improve and expand healthcare in other states while Oklahomans are turned away from the care they need. It is time to accept federal dollars for Medicaid expansion and invest in the health and wellness of our own communities.

Lauren Turner is a mental health policy analyst with Oklahoma Policy Institute; okpolicy.org.



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

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Angels In The Out Fields

BY DAVID PERRYMAN

The 1994 film *Angels in the Outfield* featured Danny Glover, Tony Danza and Christopher Lloyd in a family sports fantasy that provided the answer to a young boy's prayer and along the way engaged the services of a group of angels who helped the California Angels win a pennant and gave him the family that he had so desperately longed for.

I was reminded of that storyline this weekend during a Super Bowl commercial. The ad was for a wireless phone company but it was centered around San Diego Chargers coach Anthony Lynn who had been asked to give a motivational talk to a group of First Responders. As he spoke to the police officers, paramedics and firefighters who had been gathered, he confessed to them that 14 years earlier he had nearly died when he was hit by a speeding car as he walked across a street.

Unknown to Coach Lynn, several of the men and women who had responded to his 2005 accident had been assembled in the group to which he was speaking. For the first time since he was injured, he and those who had rendered aid to him were reunited. The emotional coach told the First Responders that he had been told that angels had helped him survive. He surmised through tears that these men and women were indeed those angels.

Across Oklahoma's 77 counties there are a lot of "out fields." We call them rural communities and long stretches of highways that at a moment's notice may need first responders, paramedics and other emergency personnel. The people who need those "angels" are not just the citizens of rural Oklahoma.

Visitors to rural Oklahoma hail from all corners of the state and nation as they engage in recreational activities, enjoy nature and attend hundreds of festivals, fairs and other events that represent the true history and heritage of our great state.

While there has been much news coverage about hospitals and emergency rooms closing across the state, the rate of insolvency and closure of Oklahoma's ambulance services exceeds that of Oklahoma hospitals. More than 50 rural Oklahoma ambulance services shut down between 2003 and 2015 and the rate of closure has not slowed.

When an ambulance service closes, that simply means that the territory becomes absorbed in the next closest service. Consequently, distances between ambulance services increase.



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When Oklahoma ambulance services suffer, so do the people who need them. It is no wonder that life expectancies in some rural communities are as much as 20 years shorter than life expectancies in more urban areas.

A May 11, 2018 policy brief by the National Rural Health Association provided the most concise illustration on the challenges facing EMS Services in rural America: 1) The cost per transport is higher in rural areas because the base costs of "maintaining readiness" are sunk costs. 2) With lower volumes there is less of a funding stream to offset costs. 3) Reimbursement rates by Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance are often based on call volume and, therefore, in a vicious cycle, studies have shown that over 60% of rural EMS providers rely on volunteers for EMT-Intermediate or EMT-Paramedic staffing and over 70% report having difficulty in recruiting volunteers.

The statistic that is most injurious to rural emergency medical services is the demographic of rural Oklahoma. Oklahoma's rural population is older, poorer and less healthy than urban Oklahoma. Therefore, when an ambulance call is made in rural Oklahoma, it is less likely that the patient is privately insured or can afford to pay for the services rendered. That "uncompensated care" is often the straw that breaks the back of a rural ambulance service.

There is a solution. If Gov. Kevin Stitt, in some form or fashion, would accept federal Medicaid funds, \$2.3 million per day would go to Oklahoma hospitals and ambulance services, thus preventing hundreds of Oklahoma EMTs, nurses and medical personnel from losing their jobs. It would not only sustain medical care in rural areas but also roll those dollars many times over through Oklahoma's economy.

Rural Oklahoma is important to our state and residents and visitors there need "angels" just as urgently as do urban areas.

Chickasha Democrat David Perryman represents District 56 in the Oklahoma House and serves as minority floor leader.

What's New With The Eastern Flyer?

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

It's been a little more than two months and now we have an organization consisting of seven communities and probably two or three more soon. In two meetings we have determined who we are and the prospect of a next step: how we can best help make the Eastern Flyer passenger rail a reality in our everyday lives.

The most important observation thus far is the enthusiasm in our communities to have passenger rail available once again after decades of seeing only long freight trains rolling through our towns and cities. As we begin to make substantial progress, we realize that public support is vital to our efforts.

Sapulpa, Kellyville, Depew, Bristow, Stroud, Wellston, Luther and Oklahoma City are the communities we have enlisted so far. The coalition still needs to have the participation of Tulsa, Chandler and perhaps a couple of towns that lie on the far eastern side of OKC. The involvement of others like the five Indian tribes that exist within the service area is also being considered.

One need only look at the ridership potential to realize how successful this passenger rail, once established, can be in our state. Nearly two-thirds of the state's population lies within a 25-mile radius of this rail route. That's surely a big enough passenger base to keep this public transit mode rolling through our communities for the long haul.

Another potential expansion has the Heartland Flyer running north from Oklahoma City through towns like Guthrie and Ponca City to Wichita and then 20 miles north to Newton, KS, where riders can then access the Southwest Chief that runs daily between Chicago and Los Angeles.

Then, we in Oklahoma would have both a regional

and a national passenger rail service available to us.

It's happening all over the country. Excellent passenger rail service exists in the eastern half of the country as most of us realize, but it is also a presence in the central and western parts of the country.

Albuquerque has passenger rail within its boundaries, as well as daily train service to the state Capitol in Santa Fe, 80 miles away. Denver has excellent light rail throughout the city, as do Tucson and Phoenix.

The Dallas-Ft. Worth area is a great experience if you want to spend several days riding their excellent passenger rail service. You need only board the Heartland Flyer in OKC early in the morning and enjoy the scenic route through south central Oklahoma, arrive in Ft. Worth just after noon, disembark at their excellent transit facility that runs trains every 20-30 minutes to Dallas. Once there you can have light rail service that runs throughout that city all day and well into the night.

The Eastern Flyer will provide access to those of us who reside in the eastern segment of the state.

Right now Oklahoma is lagging behind many cities around us that are building all types of public transit services that make the daily commute so much easier. Stress is less and the daily grind more palatable, thus bringing more productive workers to their jobs and happier parents at home. Fewer cars on the road means fewer accidents and much less pollution from vehicles powered by fossil fuels and usually occupied by only one person.

On Dec. 14 OKC launched its downtown/midtown streetcar service. Maria and I made a special trip there to enjoy the state's newest public transit service. It was indeed a thrill and we were fortunate in getting seats before it became standing room only.

In January Tulsa broke ground at Sixth and Peoria for its new station for a bus rapid route along the street from north to south. The hope now is that Tulsa will soon join the Eastern Flyer Coalition for a return of passenger rail service. Public transit is a vital part of economic development in the 21st century for everybody, including millenials.

Oologah resident Bob Rounsavell serves as chairman of the Eastern Flyer Coalition. He has been involved with the Eastern Flyer project for more than 10 years and served on the Eastern Flyer legislative task force in 2012.

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Give 'Em Hell – But Subscribe!

BY KEN NEAL

In January, Observer Editor Arnold Hamilton assessed the ownership change at the state capital's beleaguered daily newspaper, the Oklahoman. This month, Ken Neal, the Tulsa World's longtime editorial page editor, analyzes the World – and reminds us why print journalism is so important in the social media age.

The Tulsa World I knew has been gone for years.

This is more lament than criticism of the World, the newspaper for which I worked for more than 50 years.

That was the Tulsa World of the Eugene Lorton family and newspaper/publishers of the genre of William Allen White, the famous crusading Emporia, KS publisher who used the editorial format of his newspaper to share his views on topics of the time. His fiery editorial, "What's the Matter with Kansas?," published in 1896, attacked the Populist movement for its negative influence on the state and gained national attention.

Lorton and many other owners of that era believed that newspapers should take unpopular positions they deemed good for their communities [and their newspapers]. Lorton, for example, crusaded against the Ku Klux Klan at the height of that racist organization's popularity nationally and in Tulsa when sadly, many, if not most, white citizens sympathized with the Klan.

Lorton's editorializing prompted Tulsa to bring pure Spavinaw Creek water to the city over heavy opposition from many leading citizens. That crusade is the most important civic project in Tulsa history. It made the city what it is today.

Newspapers once relied on circulation that brought advertising that brought the income that allowed them to be independent. Even readers who disagreed with their often unpopular stands bought the newspaper, if only to write nasty letters to the editor. Frankly, a strong advertising base made for a profitable newspaper. Lorton could ignore a com-

plaining advertiser.

In a small way, I got in on the heyday of that newspaper model at the Tulsa World. Let's be clear: We were not William Allen Whites; we just admired him.

The Oklahoma Observer's founder, Frosty Troy, and the current editor, Arnold Hamilton, are in that mold. Follow the facts, speak the truth, damn the torpedoes! Makes you unpopular, but a dandy publisher!

Berkshire Hathaway Group, current owners of the World, did not kill this model of the newspaper. In fact, I would argue that Robert Lorton, grandson of Gene Lorton, sold the newspaper to BH News because the advertising model no longer worked.

The Lorton era business began changing years ago. Veterans will argue about exactly when, but we all remember the competition of television, the shrinking of local advertising in favor of national advertising, and finally the gradual loss of nearly all advertising to the internet.

I am out of depth in discussing the business side of the newspaper, having been, as one of my old colleagues described, "an ink-stained wretch of the newsroom" most of my working days.

My friends still hold me responsible for the newspaper, despite the fact that I have been gone from the newsroom 10 years. They are free with their criticism. They think they compliment me by downgrading the paper.

They look at me blankly when I try to explain that the newspaper is very good considering the situation. To stay afloat, management has cut everywhere possible, including substantial reductions in the newsroom. Reporters and editors are doing double, even triple duty.

Without reporters, some areas of the city are not covered in detail. Tulsa and her citizens will suffer ultimately. Reporters are the bird dogs of public life and no matter how public officials complain, it helps the quality of government to have a reporter looking over governmental shoulders.

I frankly admire and like officeholders, judges, lawyers and other folks in and around government. But human nature being what it is, the corners of government need light.

Editorially, the new BH publisher hit town denouncing the World as "too liberal," promising to "reflect the views" of our readers. That's impossible, of course, resulting editorials that say everything, but nothing. Actually, it was an excuse for a dramatic turn to the right, per the bias of the publisher and admittedly the majority of readers.

As the guilty "liberal," I admit to advocating for schools, higher taxes for adequate public services, fairness in taxation and equal treatment for women and "different" people of color and religious views.

Who fought for open public meetings? The newspapers. Who hates a secret meeting most? The newspaper. What happens when there is no newspaper? Who really represents the people at all phases

of government out of the reach of most people? The newspaper.

Television stations can't or don't support newsrooms adequately and the internet so far will not support a newsroom the size needed to cover a city the size of Tulsa.

Newspapers are struggling all over the country. I have not seen the latest figures, but they are greatly reduced or out of business in many cities and towns.

Back to the World. The BH owners apparently want to side, at least editorially, with the greatest number of their readers. Thus like a politician, the game is to sense which way the wind blows, not ascertain the facts and take a stand.

Now mea culpa. We were not nearly as good as we should have been or wanted to be, but I don't ever remember putting a finger in the air to determine an editorial stand in the 30 years I wrote them. Our positions probably irritated readers more than pleased them, thus, thousands of letters, most arguing with us. We worked hard over the years to devote more space to letters.

An editor friend once suggested replacing editorials with letters from readers. If editorials are only to reflect the majority opinion, that might be a good idea.

I believe the writing in the World is very good and much more entertaining than the who, what, why and sometimes how that we perhaps were too stuck in.

Finally, to the critics of the World, I suggest you subscribe. Increased readership will result in a bigger and better newspaper. You want a better paper? Support it.

Write the editor; give them the same hell you gave me but subscribe to it.

It is still the best game in town.

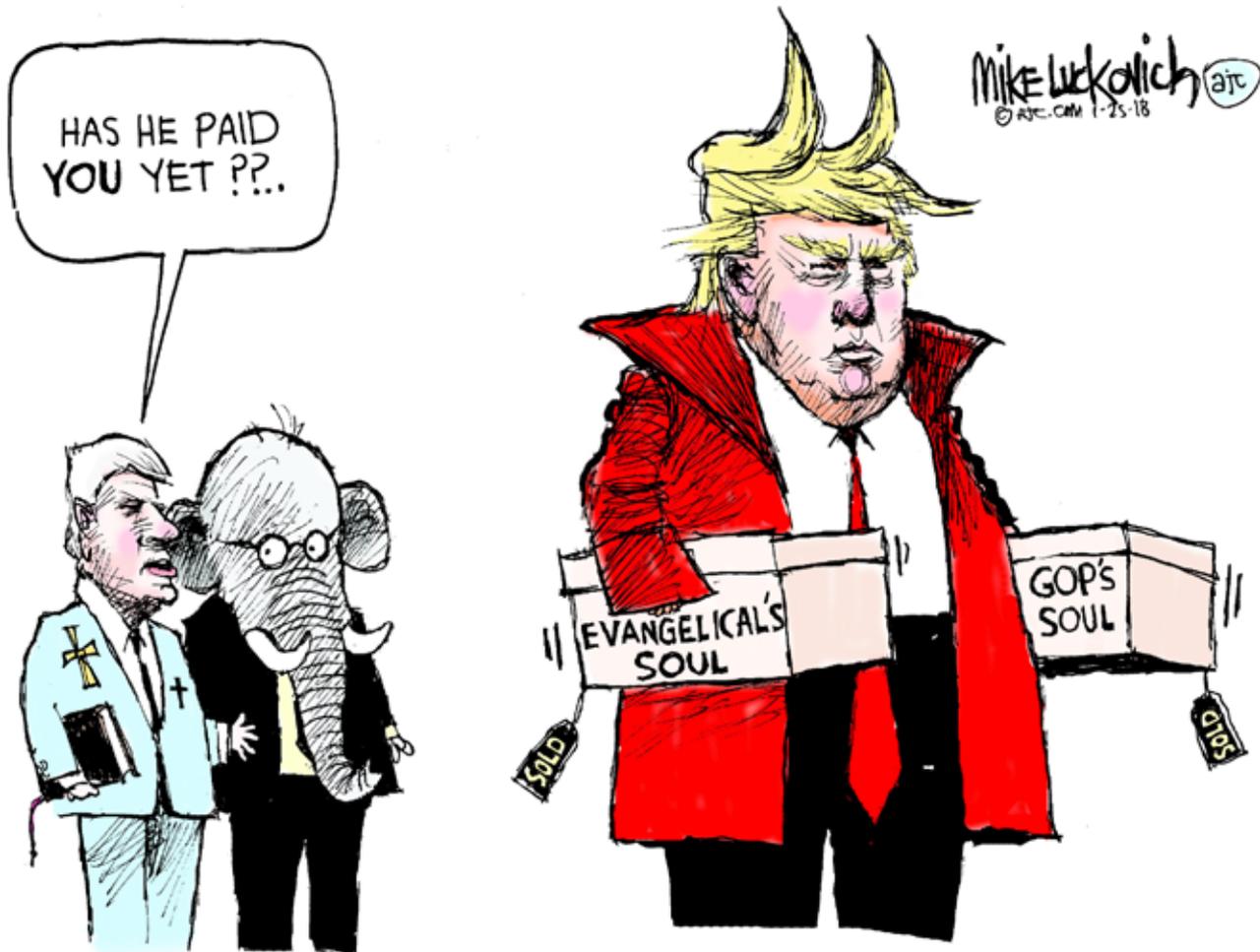
Ken Neal is former editorial page editor of the Tulsa World.

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Resisting The Evangelical Patriarchy

BY JANE HICKS

I left crying the last time I tried attending a service at the Southern Baptist Church where I have been a member for 50 years. The luminous teachings of Jesus that I learned in Sunday School there will be with me always. But New Testament teachings of love and compassion seem lost on today's Baptist leaders.

Evangelicals have been preaching for decades that government should be led by Godly men [and they DO mean men] and that good character trumps other qualifications. Yet now they tell their congregants to vote for and support Donald Trump, a man whose close associates are now in jail or indicted, who lies without apology, and whose attitude toward the poor, sick, and disabled is, well, un-Christ-like to say the least.

Yet a prominent evangelical, Jerry Falwell Jr., when recently asked if there were anything Trump

could do that would cause him or the evangelicals to withdraw their support, answered with one word, "No." I find this unquestioned conformity terrifying. I also find it inexplicable.

I do not know Falwell Jr., but I know so many like him. What could possibly cause my longtime friends and people I respect and love to fall into this mindset? Apparently, the real reasons for this kind of blind support are disguised behind talk of patriotism and the good of the nation.

So what could be the underlying reasons for Trump's unshakable support from evangelicals?

One thing I know for certain about my otherwise beloved church is that the Southern Baptists are adamant about preserving a male patriarchy, preferably a white male patriarchy. I watched my mother and her lady church friends hold dinners, raise funds, and write reports for the church deacons.

PUBLIC FORUM

When I asked her why women couldn't be deacons, my mom replied, "Don't be silly, honey. Who then would do all the work?"

I laughed at the time, but now I think all Baptist women should find this answer itself to be silly.

Looking back, I realize the only time a woman stood behind the church microphone was to sing, never to speak, pray, or preach. Southern Baptists still maintain their doctrine that God's will is for men alone to lead families, churches and nations.

If the evangelicals' underlying goal is to keep men in control, this explains a lot. I believe the evangelical support for Trump solidified when he declared that women should be punished for abortion. Evangelicals will openly condemn women who cannot or will not bring a fetus to term, but they also, in large part, hold racist views against non-whites. They have the grace to be ashamed of vocalizing racism in the unashamed way they do against equality for women, but they secretly support Trump's hateful rhetoric against non-white immigrants.

In short, I believe the underlying reason for the unshakable evangelical support for Trump is that they believe the means justify the end. The end they seek is to maintain [preferably white] men's control over the public sphere and the lives of women. Without male patriarchy, much of their worldview crumbles or is threatened. This understanding at least makes sense of their behavior.

Of course, I could be wrong about why evangelicals completely reversed their long-time position of electing men of good character to rule. In any case, I call on my Baptist sisters to resist. Women are not morally inferior to men. Jesus never treated women as inferior or implied that we are not morally responsible for our own choices.

In our species, only women are responsible for childbirth, but we have rarely had any authority over the process or the children. Without such authority, we have no control over our bodies and therefore no control over our lives. We are just "hosts," as one Oklahoma legislator recently referred to us, harking back to the days when men believed they planted a complete homunculus in the host woman whose purpose was to bear children for them.

Women may differ from men, but we are not, as Aristotle said, simply deformed and therefore inferior. Women are fully human and must not abandon reproductive rights to the church or the state. Women are morally responsible for choosing if, when, and with whom to bear children.

Every woman faces different moral circumstances for every pregnancy. No blanket law can possibly account for a myriad of situations in which abortion may be the *only* moral choice. This is why women have resorted to abortion throughout time and why they always will, legal and safe, or illegal and treach-

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The Not So Free Market

BY CHADWICK COX

The free market is touted as a good thing. The free term is misleading. If free is meant that one is not directly charged a fee to use the market that is true, but that does not mean one is paying the full price of any item because there are hidden charges to be paid. Humanity is sharing in these hidden costs, unevenly and often in ways detrimental to its health.

The free market as a means of deciding how assets are distributed is better than having a governing body make all those decisions but less so depending on how much manipulation there is of the market. Our market is heavily manipulated by capitalists so that it is not the great decider touted by conservative wonks.

It is the government's responsibility to regulate the capitalists, which is primarily corporations, to prevent them from manipulating the market but, unfortunately, the government is also heavily manipulated by the corporations and increasingly so. We the people need to battle back.

The typical problem with capitalism, as actually practiced, is that products are priced below their

true price and that is especially true for raw materials. The difference between their true price and what they are sold for is capitalism's hidden charge. That charge is carried along into other derivative products, for example, those products made from the raw materials.

The purpose of the following discussion is to elucidate how capitalism manipulates the free market so that it is neither free nor fair, making capitalism the responsible agent for the charge associated with the lack of a proper price. A truly free market would be one of the best regulators of capitalism rather than, as true now, where capitalism manages the market.

What went wrong with this procedure associated with mining in general? The price that the raw materials were sold for did not include the cost to render the mine back to a state that would leave the area safe for useful services. This has been the process from the beginning of mining here in the U.S. and the government now owns the liabilities for all those abandoned mines of varying sizes and severities,

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some rising to a Superfund Site status. Mining on public lands is very profitable and still governed by the Mining Law of 1872, with inadequate revisions, which is very beneficent to mining companies. The liabilities can vary greatly depending on the raw materials mined since everything from sand to radioactive minerals is mined.

In more recent times the mining industry has been required to pay into a fund that can be used for remediation work but is inadequate to actually address all the liabilities of the mines in progress, much less the liabilities of all those other older mines.

The mining industry is a powerful economy and prevents a full funding for reclamation from being enacted. That is, this industry prevents the true pricing of their wares so the market is neither free nor fair. The products that are made from those raw materials share in that market manipulation. The people buying those goods are making their decisions not based on the true price as should be if the market were truly free.

Capitalism's debt is not paid by the people involved in the trade but is passed on to the governments to be paid by taxpayers, most of which never profited from that trade.

All forms of mining are good examples of where the market is manipulated but are not the only examples. The use of coal is another good example principally when used for electricity generation. The burning coal supplies the heat to make the steam which drives the turbines that produce electricity. Any source of heat can be used but coal has been cheaper than other energy sources.

From the beginning of using coal for producing electricity, the exhaust gases were released directly into the air for many years but the pollution caused by toxins in the exhaust was so bad that gradually the electrical companies were required, in a series of steps, to clean the exhaust of various pollutants. The price of the electricity never included the price of the harm caused by the pollutants but the removal of each pollutant did produce a truer price to a healthy use of coal. Both the coal and electrical

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companies fought the requirements. Capitalists recently caused the EPA to lessen the mercury reductions in coal powered electrical production.

Burning the coal leaves a residue in the combustion chamber called bottom coal ash and another form of coal ash, fly ash that is now electrostatically filtered out of the exhaust. The combined coal ash is produced in large amounts and stored in coal ash dumpsites or coal ash pits. Some of the ash, especially the fly ash, can be used in other products but not in quantities to make even a dent in the accumulation at the dumpsites. These dumpsites are often a source of water contamination and of various severities; they also can be Superfund Sites.

Only recently the dumpsites were required to be lined to reduce the likelihood of pollution. The liners are not a permanent solution and currently there is no permanent solution.

Coal ash dumpsites number in the thousands and some have been abandoned; those have become the liability of some government entity just like the mines have been. The cost of a permanent solution to the dumpsites has never been added to the price of the electricity as was true of the mine reclamations. Further, Scott Pruitt, when he served as director of the Environmental Protection Agency, canceled the regulations on coal ash of the Obama era. Pruitt essentially was a lackey of master capitalist Charles Koch.

The worst of these capitalists' debts arises from there being no cost of burning fossil fuels added to the price of the fuels. That cost is related to the added excess carbon dioxide [CO₂] in the atmosphere, the concentration of CO₂ is essentially the same across the world. Capitalism's mine and coal ash debts are universal in distribution but are primarily national and local burdens. The CO₂ must be globally regulated because the buildup of CO₂ is increasing the global temperature to dangerous level.

The production of CO₂ by humans was not a problem when the increased release of CO₂ was still below the rate of consumption of CO₂ by photosynthesizing organisms. Humans, by the burning of the stored carbon in fossil fuels, have for some time exceeded that consumption rate of CO₂ by the photosynthesis systems of the world. Consequentially, the rate of consumption of fossil fuels must be reduced to restore a level of CO₂ that is compatible for sustainable human life.

A truly free and fair market can effect that change. The true price for consuming fossil fuels should include the cost to remove the CO₂ created since no more CO₂ should be released to increase the already excessive amount present in the atmosphere. If that was imposed globally, the price of renewably produced energy would be extremely competitive with fossil fuels. So much so, that renewable energy

would rapidly replace much of the uses of fossil fuels.

Although the truth that humans need to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels is generally recognized, the fossil fuel industry is a very powerful group and has paid heavily to maintain a doubt of the science related to global warming and also to prevent most efforts to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, particularly any to bring the price of their products in line with the true price based on the harm created by the excessive level of in the atmosphere.

While capitalists have delayed meaningful reductions in even the acceleration of CO₂ into the atmosphere and prevented an added surcharge onto the fossil fuels, another way to exact penalty for the release would be through the courts. For example, the producers should have to compensate the owners whose land is inundated by the rise in the ocean levels. Their CO₂ should be held responsible for that part of the damage of storms, fires and other calamities attributed to the added severity caused by global warming.

The following examples explain how the price is manipulated are not the only forms of commerce that pass along a debt that is not covered in the market price: The nuclear industry is passing along the liability of their long-lived radioactive waste products and failed reactors to our government. Pesticides were sold as benevolent cures until Rachel Carson pointed out that some were harming our health and that of nature. That has not stopped capitalists from producing and selling more. The importation of exotic species does not include a price that could pay for the removal of a species that proves invasive; invasive species are a debt left to the general population to endure. These are just some more of the many examples of underpriced commodities that leave behind capitalism's debts.

A free and fair market is what we should aspire to. Capitalism alone will never supply that. Instead, capitalism needs to be regulated to prevent it from manipulating the market prices. Government should accomplish this regulation. Unfortunately, capitalism too often manipulates the government to prevent this required regulation of capitalism.

It is up to the voters to elect our government officials to resist the capitalists and provide the regulation needed. In fact, the fairer the market is, the better is the regulation of our capitalism. The better that regulation is, the better off humanity will be.

A true free and fair market could supply what is suggested in the comments of our capitalists but what we have is not our market but is theirs. We the people need to step up our battle because we are losing right now.

Chadwick Cox lives in Norman.



Political Profanity And The Ethics Of Speech

BY RANDOLPH M. FEEZELL

A recent notorious example of political profanity produced another opportunity for reflection. Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian-American woman in Congress, said about President Trump what many of us have either wanted to say – in more polite terms – or are hoping will take place: “... we’re gonna impeach the motherf****r!”

Another example of the decline of western civilization or something else?

Some responses focused on the political aspect of her exclamation and whether it’s good strategy for Democrats to say what we’re thinking, despite the fact that it might rile up and further motivate Trump’s base. [Is that really possible?]

Others couldn’t ignore her use of one of the more shocking expletives available in our linguistic tool

kit. Trump said her comments were “disgraceful” – this from a man who has talked about grabbing women by the “p***y,” “s***hole” countries, and who has repeatedly insulted his political adversaries with ridicule and demeaning names.

Of course, we don’t expect any wisdom about the ethics of speech from someone whose self-absorption “allows himself to enjoy special advantages in interpersonal relations out of an entrenched sense of entitlement that immunizes him against the complaints of other people.” That’s philosopher Aaron James’s definition of an asshole.

Calling Trump a “bullshitter” and an “asshole,” as I have in these pages, raises some similar issues about what’s going on when we use so-called dirty language, whatever we call it: foul language, swearing, cussing,

profanity, vulgarity, obscenity, epithets, expletives, blasphemous language, or offensive slang. When, if ever, is it right or wrong? Is it appropriate to use this kind of language? Ought we to refrain from swearing?

For such a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon, there's actually not as much empirical research on swearing as one might expect. While the descriptive analysis of dirty language has ethical implications, linguists and social scientists are hesitant to make value judgments. Yet there seems to be an undercurrent of acceptance in their work. It's prevalent and common. Therefore, it is ethically permissible.

Their attitude may be an expression of cultural relativism: an act is morally right if it is permitted by the conventions of the culture within which the act is performed. This form of relativism has obvious problems, because cultures have permitted all sorts of morally repugnant actions: slavery, genocide, various forms of injustice, and so forth. We should look elsewhere for ethical enlightenment about swearing.

Various arguments against cussing are widespread, some more serious than others. There's much to say here, enough to fill a scholarly article with thousands of words and scores of end notes, as I did a few years ago. What I will attempt to do in this limited space is to sketch a brief framework within which interested people might think for themselves about the ethics of speech.

First, consider the words. It's difficult to proceed without mentioning some of the offenders. Readers should keep in mind the important distinction between mentioning a word and actually using it. For example, in claiming that "shit" is a useful word – one writer lists 70 common uses of the word! – I am not using it, so I would be immune to ethical censure, unless even mentioning it is somehow wrong. [Imagine we are social scientists.]

Suppose we have identified an uncontroversial list of vulgar words [and a phrase or two]. Some of them have to do with bodily functions or processes, in particular those having to do with sex [including the F-bomb and Rep. Tlaib's aggressive epithet] or bodily products. Some have to do with bodily parts, probably associated with sexual functions or bodily processes. Others, interestingly, have to do with religion. A couple of outliers, "bitch" and "bastard," may be hybrids.

George Carlin's famous monologue on seven words you cannot say on television included obscenities of a sexual nature, vulgar scatological references, and unmentionable female body parts.

With respect to our list of dirty words, two things are noteworthy. They typically involve three areas of human experience: sex, the body, and religion. This fact would be important if we wanted to understand why these words offend [and whether they should offend]. For now, we should focus on the fact that they do offend. They are offensive to at least some people.

Cussing is controversial because of the taboo associated with such words and phrases. We can speak of the taboo of a word to refer to the inhibitory influ-

ences [cultural norms] that work to lessen or reduce the use of a word or phrase. Such words have shock value.

Linguists have measured the effect of certain types of cussing in terms of the concept of "taboo-loading," the level of offensiveness or shock value associated with instances of cussing. A clear indication that the taboo of a word has been lowered, if not eliminated, is the extent to which it becomes acceptable to print it in popular forms of media or say it in polite company. A television show is titled *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*. A coach may be reported as saying, "We played liked crap." Or, "We got our butts kicked." The *Oklahoma Observer* publishes pieces that call Trump a "bullshitter" and an "asshole." [I'm shocked, shocked that there's cussing going on here.]

On the other hand, Tlaib's comment produces a more difficult editorial decision, because the level of offensiveness of her chosen expletive is so high. Printed reports of her swearing included asterisks, hyphens, and letter omissions, despite the fact that all of us knew exactly what she had said – a curious but understandable respect for the taboos in play.

[As amateur anthropologists we might attempt to locate the most vile words in our culture: the C word, the F-bomb, and Tlaib's word – or a close relative of it?]

Since these words are symbols of what is prohibited, their use constitutes at least one kind of rejection of cultural authority. Why do people swear? What's going on when they reject the taboos and use crude language?

Within both social science and philosophy it is almost a truism to stress that the meaning of words and phrases is intimately related to usage. The great 20th century philosopher of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein, is associated with the slogan, "Meaning is use." Other scholars of language speak of the "pragmatics" of linguistic behavior.



Philosophers of language refer to “speech acts” and have taught us to attend carefully to what people do when they talk. The meaning of our words must be related to context, the specific uses to which we put words to work. The concept of “speech acts” stresses the notion that we must be aware of actions, not simply words, when we understand meaning, which may be non-literal. [Note: This approach has important implications for the ethics of swearing.]

Why do we swear? The Australian linguist Ruth Wajnryb claims there are three broad contexts in which we swear, three reasons people cuss, or what she calls “three broad domains of achievement – catharsis, aggression, and social connection.”

She offers the example of using “bastard” when you stub your toe, snarl at the driver who just sneaked into your parking place, or greet a friend you haven’t seen for awhile [as in “you old bastard.”] For some people the term “son of a bitch” might be used in these three different contexts – and none have to do with “sons” or “bitches.”

With a nod to Wajnryb, I have developed a more extensive set of categories, a taxonomy of usage, better to acknowledge the wide range of contexts within which we swear. I generated this list, in part, by thinking about the use of dirty language in sports. I will simply list the categories without much explanation, then give some political examples. Most of these types of usage are self-explanatory. [I don’t claim this list is exhaustive.]

- Cathartic: the “stub your toe” usage – venting emotions.
- Intensifying: emotion intensifiers, exclamations, interjections.
- Expressive: a catchall term for the expression of a wide variety of feelings or emotions: discouragement, frustration, resignation, surprise, disbelief.
- Abusive: insults, ridicule, expressing contempt.
- Disparaging: using swear words to express a negative evaluation of some state of affairs – broader than abusive.
- Commendatory: using swear words to commend.
- Lubricating: reinforcing social connections – in the bar, at a party.
- Comedic: self-explanatory.
- Subversive: the cursing of those who want to subvert authority.
- Self-definitional: an attempt to define oneself as a certain kind of person. I’m rustic, earthy – not high-brow, snooty, or elitist.

Tlaib’s speech became part of a distinguished lineage of profane politicians. Lyndon Johnson’s language was famously coarse. Nixon’s swearing was recorded on the White House tapes. Truman called MacArthur a “dumb son of a bitch.”

Dick Cheney said to Patrick Leahy, “Go f*** yourself.” Joe Biden leans over to Obama at the signing of the health care bill and says, “This is a big f***ing deal!” Obama calls Romney a “bullshitter.” JFK re-

fers to an event as a “f***-up.” Bill Clinton says he shouldn’t take “shit” from anyone.

Of course, the fact that these distinguished political figures used foul language doesn’t make the behavior right. It does, however, accentuate the usefulness of cussing. Biden’s comment is an excellent example of the intensifying use of the F-bomb. Cheney’s use of the word expresses some other negative emotion or attitude.

Tlaib’s usage seems to be a pointed expression of anger and disdain, an oblique and indeterminant way to refer to a person with enormous character flaws. [Is the usage abusive?]

It suggests something about her background. Perhaps it also had a lubricating function with many of her supporters. Plus, it was certainly subversive. Later she said, “I will always speak truth to power.”

Now we are in a better position to think ethically about swearing. These words are quite useful, yet they can’t be useful unless they are taboo, or they are useful precisely because their meaning is essentially related to their functioning as symbols and marks of being linguistic delinquents.

Their edginess is at once a kind of rejection of niceness and politeness. To the extent that the usage of crude language becomes common and widely acceptable, the words lose their power. If they become no more than immature and repetitive verbal tics [e.g. the words “like” and “you know” in so much contemporary speech] the language becomes empty and tedious.

If the words retain a wide spectrum of taboo-loading, from naughtiness to a deeper level of offensiveness, they perform their function better.

On the other hand, good functioning doesn’t equal ethical permissibility. Abusive language is problematic. Language may both harm and offend. The old adage – “sticks and stones” – is far too simple.

In another installment, I look forward to evaluating various arguments against swearing. An advice columnist says this: “Usually, anything said with the F-word could be better said without it. More than anything, it’s lazy.” I would say that the first part of her comment is false and the second part is question-begging. My claims require both explanation and defense.

Her comment is one among a number of different popular criticisms of swearing: it’s lazy, immature, uneducated, and unnecessary. The more serious arguments appeal to religion, self-interest, harm or offensiveness, social factors, virtue, and aesthetic concerns. All of these arguments deserve serious attention.

Was Tlaib’s comment a pernicious, inappropriate liberal contribution to the decline of civility in the Age of Trump, or an entirely appropriate response to the mother*****r?

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MIKE LUCKOVICH  8-2-18



Trump's 'Negative' Press No Mystery

BY KEN NEAL

A Trump apologist writing in the Tulsa World has complained that the media has done far more negative than positive stories about the president.

Well, duh! Machine Gun Kelly and Al Capone had the same problem: Negative stories.

Excuse the flippancy. It is hard not to make fun of an attempt to blame the media for the endless mis-statements and outrageous behavior of our president.

A Pew Research Center poll found that media coverage of Trump has been only 5% positive but 42% positive for Barak Obama and 22% positive for George W. Bush.

There is little doubt that the coverage of Trump has been negative simply because the media have reported what the president says and twitters constantly.

How could it report what Trump says positively and maintain accuracy?

How could it report what his own cabinet has said about him and make it "positive?" Remember, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Trump "is a f--ing moron" and his former Chief of Staff John

Kelly said Trump is an idiot. Former Defense Secretary James Mattis used less colorful language to say roughly the same thing.

Trump gained notoriety by claiming President Obama was not born in the United States, a ridiculous charge that Trump finally admitted was not true. Was it negative of the media to point out an untruth so blatant that Trump had to know it?

Trump took office claiming his inauguration attendance was the biggest in history, even as photographic and other evidence showed that to be untrue. Were the comparative photos of his and Obama's mall crowds negative?

How would you make "positive" his claim that his was the biggest electoral victory in history, only to be told by a reporter that Obama's win was bigger?

He made the absurd claim that the three million more votes Hillary Clinton got than Trump were cast by illegal aliens. How do you make that positive?

A judge ordered the Trump Foundation shut down, finding that it was merely a slush fund for the president? Should the media have ignored that on the ba-

sis it was negative to Trump?

Trump, unlike modern presidents, consistently refuses to release his tax returns, claiming the bogus excuse that he is under audit by the IRS. If the media reports that, is it negative?

It is difficult to put his consistent rough language and mistreatment of protesters and the media at his rallies in a positive light.

Or maybe someone could positively report his bombastic denunciation of the black football players who kneeled during the national anthem? Remember: “get the sonofabitch out of here?”

Worst of all is his refusal to condemn Russian Dictator Vladimir Putin for interfering in the 2016 election. Let’s hear that reported “positively.”

Similarly, his failure to condemn the Saudi Arabian dictator for the murder and dismemberment of a journalist living in the United States similarly is pretty tough to cast in a positive light.

This could go on endlessly because fact checkers from several organizations have logged thousands of Trump misstatements of fact. One reported more

than 7,000 inaccurate utterances by Trump.

The New York Times, labeled by Trump as “failing,” has devoted sections to his missteps and errors of fact.

Not mentioned are the dozen separate investigations into suspicious Trump activity, nor the resignations of a record number of his appointees, pleas of guilty by several of his close associates or his payoffs to a porn star and his playboy mistress. We’ve lost count on how many outrageous comments he has made about women and their genitalia. How could one make these positive?

Compilations of his missteps appear regularly, include one by the highly respected Atlantic magazine which is starting a series of 50 outrageous Trump actions.

The glaring fact of the voluminous reportage on the Trump presidency is that the media simply has been doing its job, despite the squeals from Trump about “fake news” and “witch hunts.”

Ken Neal is former editorial page editor of the Tulsa World.

The Dangers Of A Liar-In-Chief

BY DON HOLLADAY

There he was, the president of our nation, at a televised news conference in early January, talking about the imperative for a border wall.

To bolster his argument, he declared, “This should have been done by the White House occupants who preceded me, and they all know it. Some of them have told me that we should have done it.”

In normal times, the implications of such a statement would have been huge. News headlines would have blared out: “President Discloses Former Presidents Support Wall Efforts.” In normal times, the assertion that at least two of Trump’s predecessors – from a short list of five names – agreed with him on the need to build a wall would have moved his demand for \$5.7 billion close to the finish line. In normal times, all of us – even those of us who see this presidency as a disaster – would have paused and reevaluated our thinking, once we heard that some combination of Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and George H.W. Bush supported Trump’s position.

But these are not normal times for our country. Those hearing the assertion – both Trump’s supporters and opponents – knew the remark was not credible.

After the news conference, the president’s new chief of staff deflected inquiry, saying he had no idea which former presidents were being referenced. During the rest of the day, some of the major news outlets went through the motions of contacting former presidents to confirm what everyone already knew: it was just another presidential mistruth. We

collectively shrugged and focused instead on the real chaos looming from the government shutdown. Within 24 hours, the outlandish fabrication was largely forgotten.

The president’s habit of factually stiffing listeners has been described by one critic, columnist Roger Cohen, as something Trump has practiced all his adult life. The columnist says the technique consists of keeping “reality at a distance through hyperactive fakery.” According to Cohen, “It’s a compulsion [Trump] cannot help ... It’s his nature, you see.”

Other explanations have been offered. During the first year of the new presidency, White House advisor Kelly Anne Conway introduced us to the Trump technique of presenting and relying on “alternative facts.” Former President Jimmy Carter has warned the public that we have a president now well-known for being “very careless with the truth.”

Whatever explanation we choose, America feels strange right now. We are led by someone who has desensitized the nation to presidential truthfulness.

Trump can stand at the door of Air Force One, tell reporters that he knows nothing about a hush payment made on his behalf, deny it with sincerely furrowed brows, and then weeks later, with a shrug of his shoulders, admit he authorized the payment. A low public expectation of truthfulness has produced a corresponding high comfort level for shading the truth, on almost any topic. Manufactured disinformation about border security and the need for a “wall” has been just the latest.

The consequence of factual fakery – particularly

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by an elected official on important domestic and national issues – paralyzes legitimate public discussion. To support Trump’s \$5.7 billion demand for a border wall, careless factual mistruths about the number of arriving “terrorists,” about whether illegal entrants crossing the border are the ones primarily responsible for smuggling illegal drugs, and about the backgrounds of the majority of immigrants arriving at the border have kept “reality at a distance.” The border wall conversation has now been factually muddled beyond repair. Legitimate discourse has been abandoned.

When truth is shaded, particularly by one who occupies the nation’s highest office, more is at stake than worrying about incorrect information for public debate. Some suggest Trump’s mistruths are the result of just getting caught up in the energy of the moment. No harm, no foul, they say. Such a nonsensical argument ignores more serious concerns.

There are two obvious potential reasons for the president’s tendency to fabricate.

First, Trump may actually believe what he says when he says it. Such a detachment from factual reality, standing alone, should be enough to get everyone’s attention, particularly when there is evidence to additionally conclude that Trump’s suspiciousness of those around him is escalating rather than going away; and further add to the mix his

propensity to dismiss those who defy his wishes – most recently Defense Secretary Mattis and Chief of Staff Kelly – seems clearly on the upswing. And then there are the mind-numbing, in all caps, Twitter announcements! And so, when the president says he has talked to former presidents who agree with his position on the border wall, all citizens, no matter what their politics, should be worried.

The other choice for explaining Trump’s compulsion to tell the American public anything he wants, regardless of truth, is that he knows what he is doing – openly using the highest office in the land to factually deceive the American public. If correct, then such misconduct, whether done to cover-up misdeeds or to wrongly inform citizens on matters of public concern – constitutes abusing the powers of his office. It threatens democratic values essential to our form of governance. Most important, it goes to the heart of a person’s fitness for office.

The nation cannot afford to shrug its shoulders when our highest elected leader gives out false information. Disrespect for truth erodes the power to govern.

Accountability is an inherent, essential requirement for holding the office of president. We are no longer dealing with laughable hyperbole about the size of Trump’s inauguration crowd.

Attorney Don Holladay lives in Norman.



Why Trump's INF Withdrawal Is So Dangerous

BY BRUCE AMUNDSON

Having lived through the terrifying Cold War, when threats of mutual annihilation were the norm, and conversely having experienced the power of citizen diplomacy with physician colleagues in Russia, I recall the immense relief we all felt when diplomacy finally prevailed.

In December 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the landmark Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. On Oct. 20, 2018, President Donald Trump announced that the United States intended to withdraw from the agreement. This represents one of President Trump's most dangerous moves yet.

It's important to briefly review the history of the agreement. Beginning in 1979, the Soviet Union deployed SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe and NATO

prepared to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe. This accelerating nuclear arms race put European cities in the crosshairs, introducing the unacceptable risk of nuclear weapons unleashed on cities minutes away.

The response from citizens was unprecedented. Massive protest marches occurred all across Western Europe, the biggest in postwar European history. In the U.S., the nuclear-freeze movement spread rapidly, with hundreds of towns and cities calling for a halt to this deployment. In June 1982, close to a million people converged on New York's Central Park for "The Rally to Reverse the Arms Race," the largest peace rally in U.S. history.

Back-and-forth negotiations were stalled by nuclear hawks in the U.S., and the aging Kremlin bosses

clung to their missiles. People in the streets, in both the U.S. and Europe, refused to go away, with public calls for a “zero option,” no short-range missiles on either side. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and declared his support for nuclear disarmament internationally. During their 1986 summit at Reykjavik, Iceland, both leaders agreed to the zero option, details were worked out, and the INF Treaty was signed in 1987.

The INF Treaty contributed to the end of the Cold War and played a significant role in reducing the global nuclear-arms race. It also opened the door for other historic nuclear-disarmament treaties that led to major reductions in the number of nuclear weapons by both countries.

There is evidence that Russia is violating the treaty, but President Trump’s precipitous decision to withdraw from it contradicts ongoing efforts to hold Russia accountable while attempting to preserve the treaty. Sophisticated diplomacy, for an issue of such importance, calls for a concerted effort to fix, not abandon, it. The chorus of objections to his plans has been massive — from European leaders, foreign-policy experts, national leaders and certainly nuclear activists.

As Washington Rep. Adam Smith, incoming House Armed Services Committee chairman, stated in a letter last fall to the secretaries of Defense and State, “the Administration is opting for a dangerous approach that threatens a nuclear arms race and abandons effective diplomacy to preserve a vital arms-control agreement. As you know, the INF Treaty, alongside the New START Treaty, forms the basis for our strategic relationship with Russia. These treaties have been crucial tools to help preserve U.S. and European security and reduce the risk of nuclear war with Russia.”

A new nuclear arms race, threatened by this president, is the height of irresponsibility, given the monstrous humanitarian risks from these weapons.

It was outrage on the part of citizenry across the world that demanded and got this treaty into effect; we need the same today. The quest for freedom from these weapons of terror requires that we think of ourselves not as tribes or nations, but as common inhabitants of a shared globe.

It must surely be true, as Pope Francis remarked in April 2016, that the abolition of war [and nuclear weapons] remains “the ultimate and most deeply worthy goal of human beings.”

There have been prominent politicians around the world who understand this. We need many of them, including Washington members of Congress, to speak out now.

Former OKC resident Bruce Amundson is vice president of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility and was co-founder of the Hanford-Chelyabinsk [Russia] Movement, established to confront the environmental and health legacies of nuclear arms production.

What About The Human Cost Of Continued War And Militarism?

BY JEREMY KUZMAROV

On Jan. 26, the New York Times published a short article detailing how two American air strikes had killed 29 people in Southern Helmand Province in Afghanistan.

The first bomb struck the home of a civilian named Noor Mohammed, killing four women and 10 children. When the male relatives of the victims gathered for the funeral the next day, the poor souls were hit by another American air strike, which killed 13 men.

Mohammed Hashim Alokozai, a member of the Afghan parliament from Helmand, stated that “we don’t know what is going on. We don’t know what happened to NATO that they are targeting civilians.”

These comments ring with irony given that the entire Democratic Party Congressional delegation, including the supposedly radical Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, voted in favor of the NATO Support Act at the same time the deadly strikes were being carried out.

Equally disturbing was that the New York Times, in the same Saturday edition with the article about the air strikes, ran an op-ed by Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institute calling for an extension of America’s longest war. O’Hanlon has a long record of supporting war, going back to his cheerleading for the Iraq War.

Holding teaching positions at Columbia, Princeton and John Hopkins, he is the epitome of what the late sociologist C. Wright Mills called “crackpot realists” who have helped shape American foreign policy in the Cold War and Global War on Terror.

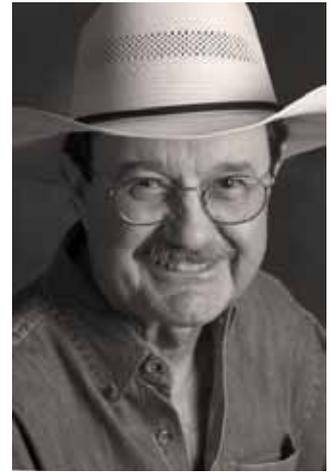
While fashioning themselves as pragmatic realists, their vision is, in reality, so limited, and human empathy so absent, according to Mills, they know of no other solutions to the problems of the Middle East and other regions than war.

In his op-ed, “Our Longest War is Still important,” O’Hanlon displays zero concern for the human costs of 17 years of war for the Afghan people. Trump’s decision to withdraw half of the 14,000 U.S. troops is misguided because of the growth of an ISIS offshoot, which O’Hanlon neglects to say is a product of the American-led war.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Jim Hightower

What's The Cost Of High Living?



The rich aren't merely different from you and me. ... They're ridiculous!

I mean the uber-rich, the billionaire barons of Wall Street who literally live above the real world and are clueless about the gross inequality their financial schemes are creating.

Take Kenneth Griffin, a hedge fund tycoon who's the latest gold medal champion of conspicuous consumption. He just paid an obscene \$238 million for a sprawling 24,000-square-foot New York City penthouse located 79 stories above street level at Central Park South – a strip nicknamed “Billionaire Row.” Griffin's splurge on three floors of the luxury building is the most expensive residential purchase in U.S. history, exceeding the excesses of robber barons in the Gilded Age.

Adding to the overindulgence, he will live in his mansion in the sky only occasionally, for he also has a little \$60 million penthouse in Miami, a back-up \$122 million mansion in London and posh crash pads elsewhere. Griffin is the poster child for that disgraceful Trump-GOP tax cut for the superrich, which they passed by claiming that beneficiaries like Griffin would put their windfall into jobs and wage increases for the working class.

Interestingly, his exclusive new skyscraper residence replaces a modest, 20-story building of affordable, rent-controlled apartments where dozens of middle-class tenants lived. All of them were evicted by the corporate developers to provide opulent digs for a few house-hopping billionaires. That ought to be illegal, but instead a state law specifically empowers high-dollar landlords to toss out middle-class and low-income tenants, demolish their apartments and put up a swanky new building.

If you wonder where inequality and America's affordable-housing crisis comes from ... there it is.

Yet, Griffin is so out of touch with reality that he has complained that rich elites like him have “insufficient influence” in politics. Really, Ken? Who had the political clout to eject dozens of families from their homes?

Once upon a time, there was a place where the prevailing ethic of the very richest people was that

monetary self-indulgence was tacky, and they had an awareness that wealth was a matter of good fortune, carrying with it an obligation to the Common Good.

Believe it or not, that place was the USA! Where did it go?

The prevailing ethic of today's billionaires club is one of entitlement, superiority and grandiosity – including flaunting their wealth like the robber barons of old. They've contrived a new Gilded Age of plutocratic privilege, with the same sort of excesses as the old one, erecting ostentatiously enormous residences. For example, a ludicrously large “house” is now under construction in Florida for one of our modern-day barons, boasting 11 kitchens, five swimming pools, and a 30-car garage. A monument to garish greed.

Worse, the billionaire class is asserting its sense of plutocratic privilege by weaponizing their huge fortunes to get more for themselves at the expense of the rest of us. They've been spending massively [and often secretly] to build a culture of inequality across our land, using such ploys as the Republicans' deplorable trillion-dollar tax giveaway to the rich.

To their dismay, however, America's workaday majority is rebelling, with newly elected democratic populists like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez proposing a top tax rate of 70% on incomes above \$10 million. “Oh, the horror!” shrieked billionaires like computer magnate Michael Dell: “Name a country where that's worked,” he demanded dismissively.

OK, Michael: How about the United States?

Yes, between the end of World War II in 1945 and Ronald Reagan's start of coddle-the-rich government in 1981, the top tax rate never fell below 70% – and that was a period of unparalleled growth and prosperity for America's middle class.

Dell, who lives in a sprawling 33,000-square-foot house with all the charm of a shopping mall, confuses value with money and has no grasp of the essential richness of American egalitarianism. We should not be listening to people like him [much less be governed by them] just because they are rich.

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The Wall We Need To Build

A fitting epitaph for the tombstone of our current president would be, “Here Lies Donald Trump ... Still Lying.”

Never has one president hurled so many big lies with such force at so many in such short time. From fibs to whoppers, he’s No. 1, as documented by a daily Trump Tracker maintained by The Washington Post to document his record of achievement.

It shows that in his first 732 days in office, our champion of presidential prevarication uttered 8,158 untrue statements – an astonishing average of more than 11 a day! Here are just a few of his linguistic twists and turns on his favorite topic: “the wall.”

Trump frequently screeches that the U.S. is under an “invasion” by dangerous “aliens” crossing the Mexican border illegally and creating a national security “crisis.” FACTS: Illegal immigration across the border is at a 50-year low. Far from dangerous, the migrants now crossing are mostly Central American women and children fleeing abuse, repression and abject poverty back home, and they’re *legally* seeking asylum here.

Still, Trump recently flew to the border city of McAllen, TX, to dramatize the need for “a big beautiful wall” to cut the crime rate and “stop heroin” from entering the U.S. FACTS: Today’s crime rate in McAllen is the lowest in 34 years, and Trump’s own drug agency reports that nearly all heroin enters by smuggling it in trucks, trains, etc. that go right through inspection stations, so a multibillion-dollar wall would be useless to stop it.

Price is no barrier, declared the dealmaker, because “Mexico is going to pay for the wall.” FACT: There was not a prayer of that happening. So, The Donald now claims, “obviously I never said this, and I never meant they’re going to write out a check.” FACT: He did say just that, many times, promising Mexico would “make a one-time payment of \$5-10 billion.”

So, he’s lately been trying a double backflip lie, claiming that his new North American free trade agreement deal with Mexico requires the country to pay up. FACT: No such language exists. And if it did, why would he still be demanding that we – us, you and I – shell out \$5.7 billion for his boondoggle?

It’s not simply that Trump lies, but that his presidency is a lie, dependent on his self-deceptions and his pitiful attempts to deceive us.

It’s time for a pop quiz on Trump’s humongous wall that he wants us taxpayers to build as a monument to his raging megalomania.

Question 1. How much will it cost us? Trump and

company say the price tag is \$5.7 billion. That’s a lot, but – *pssssst* – that only buys a starter wall of 230 miles, covering barely a tenth of our 2,000-mile Mexican border. The dirty little secret is that the full barricade Trump wants will cost us at least \$25 billion – for something that isn’t needed and won’t work.

Question 2. By shutting down the government of the United States in a petulant attempt to make Congress pony up his wall money, isn’t he hurting families who come to tour the capital city, hoping to visit the Smithsonian, the National Zoo, the Air and Space Museum and other iconic national treasures? Yes, but – *pssssst* – there is one exception. The clock tower of the historic 1899 Old Post Office got a special reprieve from the National Park Service to remain open to tourists throughout the presidential shutdown. Why this one exception? Because the president is Donald Trump. In 2014, he converted the Old Post Office into one of his luxury hotels, and closing the clock tower would be ... well, bad for business. Indeed, even the tower’s souvenir shop remains open, so tourists can stock up on Trump chocolates, hoodies and other merchandise.

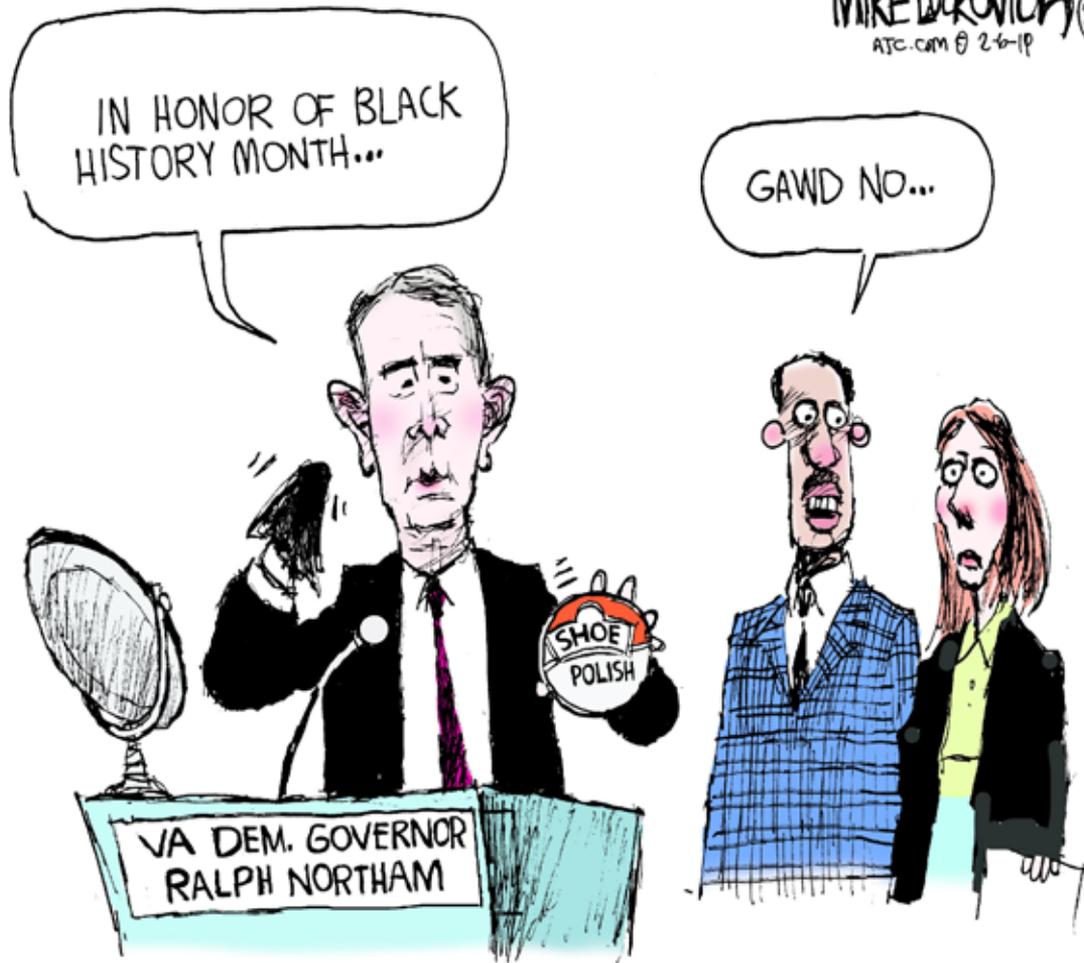
Question 3. Where is this president’s empathy for our federal workers? Trump has said that he empathizes with the hundreds of thousands of government workers whose paychecks he suspended, because he has suffered, too. But – *pssssst* – before consoling the poor president, note that his pain differs from the financial squeeze other federal employees have endured. He tweeted on Christmas Eve, “I’m all alone [poor me] in the White House waiting on the Democrats to come back and make a deal.” He later tweeted of the furloughed workers, “I don’t care that most of the workers not getting paid are Democrats.”

This guy is a public menace, so let’s move him permanently to his Mar-a-Largo golf resort in Florida – and build a beautiful impenetrable wall around it. –
Jim Hightower



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POINT: *What Centrism, Moderation Hath Wrought*

BY MICHAEL MOORE

In Virginia's 2017 Democratic primary for governor, Democratic voters were convinced to vote for the "moderate" Democrat, Ralph Northam – because, as a "moderate," he could "pick up Republican votes."

Democratic voters were told to reject the progressive candidate, Tom Perriello, a fearless Dem congressman backed by Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders.

Now Virginia Democrats have learned what centrism and moderation got them. A hood and some shoe polish.

Progressives win. Women win. Moderates lose [or, are simply losers]. Believing you need an older, middle-of-the-road white guy to win elections is what you think if you are a Republican – or are stuck in the 20th century.

Democrats in Virginia brought this on themselves.

The only sane one in the room at that bizarre press conference was the woman standing beside Northam at the podium – his wife.

When he admitted to doing just "a little" blackface at a Michael Jackson dance contest which he won *after* he graduated medical school at the age of 26, a reporter in the room asked him if he could still "moondance." He paused for a moment with a look on his face that signaled he was considering the request to bust a move for those gathered – only to have his wife gently grab his arm and tell him that would be "inappropriate."

The only move Northam can make now to save his career is to switch parties. Declare himself a Virginian Republican – the party that would not pass the bill recognizing the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday unless the weekend also officially honored Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Which it now does.

Each year in Virginia the King weekend in January begins on Friday with a day off [and with ceremonies that Gov. Northam attended two weeks ago] praising Lee, the Confederacy and the genocidal Gen. Stonewall Jackson.

That in the Age of Trump Ralph Northam believes he can get away with blatantly telling everyone, “That’s not *me* in the picture! On *my* yearbook page! With *my* quote underneath the photo! And I have no idea why *my* nickname in school was ‘Coon-Man’! And you should not mix up this photo of ‘someone’ in blackface with *me* in blackface a few months later at a dance contest – which *my* new black friend Seth now tells me is racist and I’m sorry ... ” – Northam’s belief that the Big Lie can work for him because it works for Trump is further proof that Democrats who try to be Republican-lite will always fail miserably.

To be Trump, to get away with it, you have to lie 30 times a day, a nonstop barrage of falsehoods that spray the electorate with so many rounds of bullshit that the lesser-formed brains just give in and buy

the whole package.

Northam’s lame 43 minutes of alternate facts was all any of us needed to remind ourselves we need to get progressive candidates running NOW [including primarying these useless “moderate” Dems] for 2020 – women, young people, people of color who are the *real deal* and who will win because 60%-plus of the American people now take the progressive position on everything from health care to climate change to taxing the rich.

Every community has an AOC [or 10 AOCs!], and whoever she is where you live, you should be encouraging her to run. There’s no better project to start on Super Bowl Sunday than this one.

Call up the women [and a few decent guys] you know, meet somewhere while the dudes are watching the game [two out of every three white guys who voted, voted for Trump], and keep this progressive revolution speeding forward!

No. More. Northams. Moderation kills. *Michael Moore published this essay on his Facebook page on Super Bowl Sunday.*

COUNTERPOINT: *Dirty Tricks*

BY SHARON MARTIN

The columns I wrote in high school for a local newspaper are proof I’m not the same person now that I was then. I was as arrogant as a know-it-all teenager could be, and sometimes I was just plain wrong.

The same is probably true for Ralph Northam. Maybe we should find out before we jump on this particular political bandwagon.

Start by taking a close look at Northam’s policies. It is his policies and his party affiliation that compelled someone to dig up that awful yearbook photo.

Yes, this is Virginia’s business, but it has wider implications. The same person who posted the Northam photo also seeks to destroy the man who is next in line to the governorship. This isn’t about condemning racism; this is about who controls Virginia’s executive branch. And it’s a good example of the power of dirty tricks.

It’s early in the Democrat’s term, but we know where Northam stands on two issues: a woman’s right to choose and a public utility’s environmental responsibility.

If you believe any abortion is a sin, you probably want him gone. If you believe he bungled his explanation of late-term abortions, you might think twice about his statesmanship. But if you believe in a woman’s right to choose, think before you call for his resignation.

Here are a couple of facts: 1. Late-term and partial-birth abortion are names made up to get an emotional response. 2. They are rare.

There are procedures that deliver a baby early to save a woman’s life, to save a child’s life, and in some heartbreaking cases, to remove a child who can’t live outside the womb or whose heart has already stopped beating. This has been politicized to manipulate voters.

Manipulation is a useful item in a bag of dirty tricks. Don’t let yourself be manipulated.

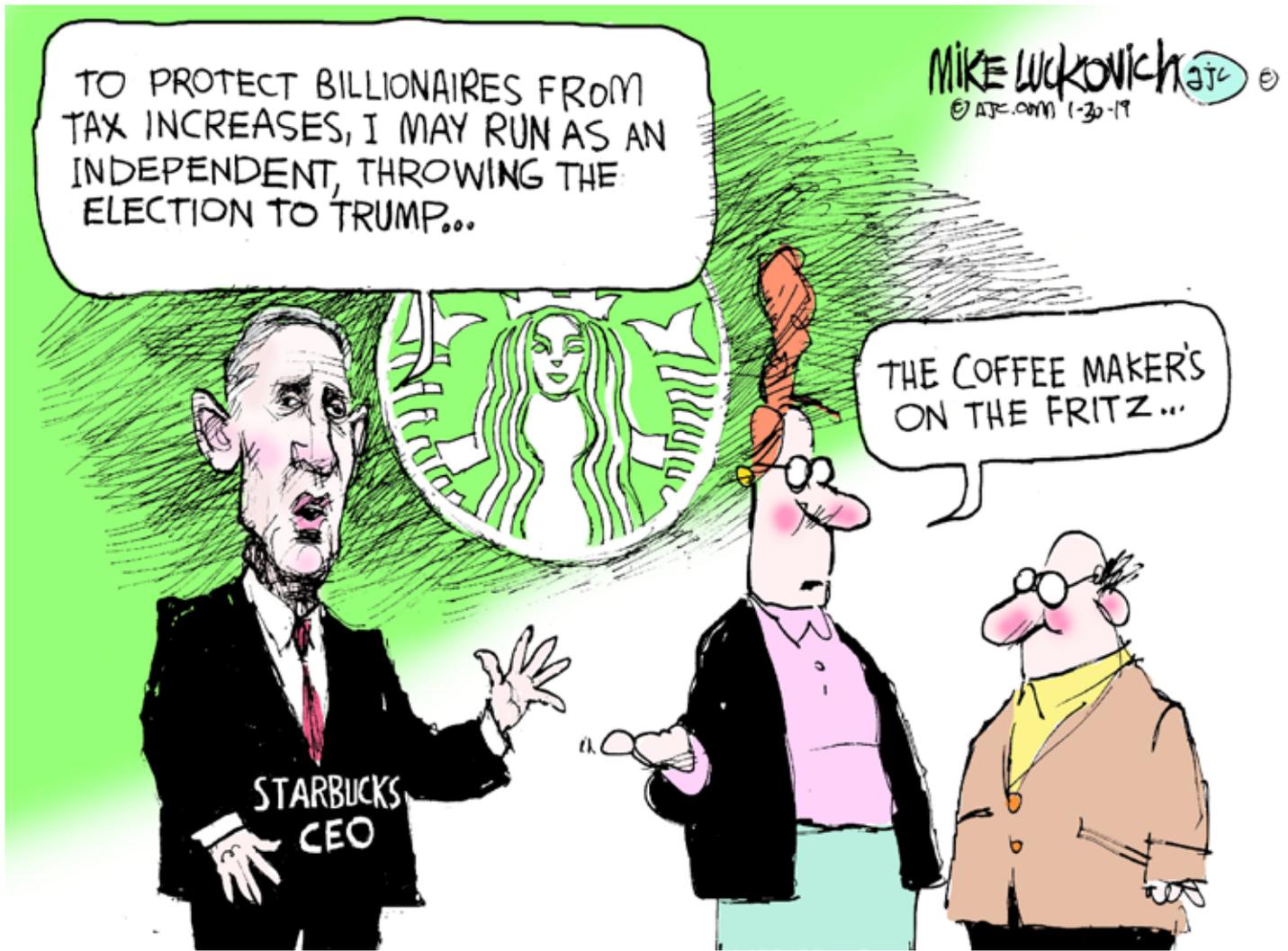
Northam saw through a bipartisan bill that would require an energy company to clean up and recycle coal ash. Bipartisan! Isn’t that refreshing? And don’t we all believe in safe water and clean air?

I understand why political leaders must denounce the photo. It’s racist. But they need to look at the bigger political picture and not just their own political futures.

In fact, I say now would be a good time for all of us to have some serious discussions about race and racism. Let’s talk about how hot button issues are used to cover up policies that hurt voters. And let’s be honest about the roles of money and social media in politics.

In the best of all possible worlds, the dirty tricks that created the Northam/Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax crisis could be our teachable moment.

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.



My Last Cup Of Starbucks

BY JOE CONASON

The biography of Howard Schultz is the stuff of American capitalist folklore: a man who grew up in a Brooklyn housing project and amassed a fortune worth billions. Now he proposes to repay America by imposing the ruinous rule of Donald Trump for another four years.

Like so many billionaires, including President Trump, Schultz appears to believe that his success in business qualifies him for the highest office. Unlike Trump, Schultz is a legitimate business executive whose skills and drive created the Starbucks coffee empire. He even deserves some credit for having improved the quality of coffee available in the United States.

But inspiring as Schultz's story may be, putting a Starbucks in every shopping mall and vacant store-

front only goes so far in justifying his presidential bid. And beyond the rags-to-riches tale, there isn't much of a record to recommend him.

In Seattle, astute observers regard Schultz as an underachieving billionaire, especially when contrasted with such figures as Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Melinda Gates; the late Paul Allen, Microsoft co-founder; or even Amazon's Jeff Bezos. He hasn't created a legacy that can match the Gates Foundation's massive support for worldwide health, not even a major museum or a crusading newspaper. The Schultz Family Foundation achieved relatively little with its founder's money until a few years ago, and its spending still represents a small share of his wealth.

So if his own neighbors were to choose the next

president, his prospects would be very dubious.

Indeed, Seattle residents still despise Schultz for selling off the beloved SuperSonics basketball franchise in 2006 to a group that moved the team to Oklahoma City, after the state legislature refused to pay for a new stadium that he could have easily financed on his own. Knowing he is still deeply unpopular in his adopted hometown, Schultz expresses regret in his new book over the Sonics debacle. But after so many years, on the eve of a presidential bid, that apology carries a distasteful whiff of public relations.

Schultz today portrays himself as a political reformer, with ambitions to “beat” the American political system and the two major parties. Yet his interest in civic affairs, beyond his desire to glom public money, seems fitful.

As the Seattle Times recently noted, Schultz didn’t bother to vote in most elections over the past 15 years. He skipped voting in nearly every state and local contest, as well as the congressional midterm elections in 2006 and 2014. Of 38 elections in which he could have cast a ballot since 2005, he has only showed up for 11.

Now that Schultz plans to participate in politics – and go straight to the top – he might be expected to tell Americans why they should elect him and what he wants to do.

Whenever he is asked to offer a rationale for his candidacy, his responses sound vacuous – as weak and lukewarm as a bad cup of brew with an unpleas-

ant hint of bitterness. If he has any fresh ideas, he isn’t pouring them.

Only one policy issue truly appears to animate Schultz: the progressive Democrats’ call for billionaires to pay higher taxes, which makes him angry. At the same time, he complains about the country’s ballooning deficits and national debt as if he doesn’t understand the math. Everyone else knows that tax cuts for the rich, imposed by Republican regimes, have depleted the Treasury and starved public services.

The most troubling aspect of Schultz’s vanity campaign is, of course, the possibility that he will spend enough money to become a spoiler, and thus, help re-elect Trump.

Evidently, a few self-serving political consultants have persuaded the rather dull Schultz that he is compelling enough to win on a third-party line. They know very well that he is far more likely to join the ranks of Ralph Nader and Jill Stein, third-party losers who drew just enough votes to elect George W. Bush and Donald Trump.

It was ominous to watch the “progressive” Stein blathering on Fox News Channel with white nationalist host Tucker Carlson, both thrilled by a candidacy that could destroy Democratic hopes. All the Trump sycophants on Fox are urging Schultz forward with their usual subtlety. Let’s hope he is smart enough to take that hint – and cancel this asinine project.

Until then, I’ve tasted my last cup of Starbucks.

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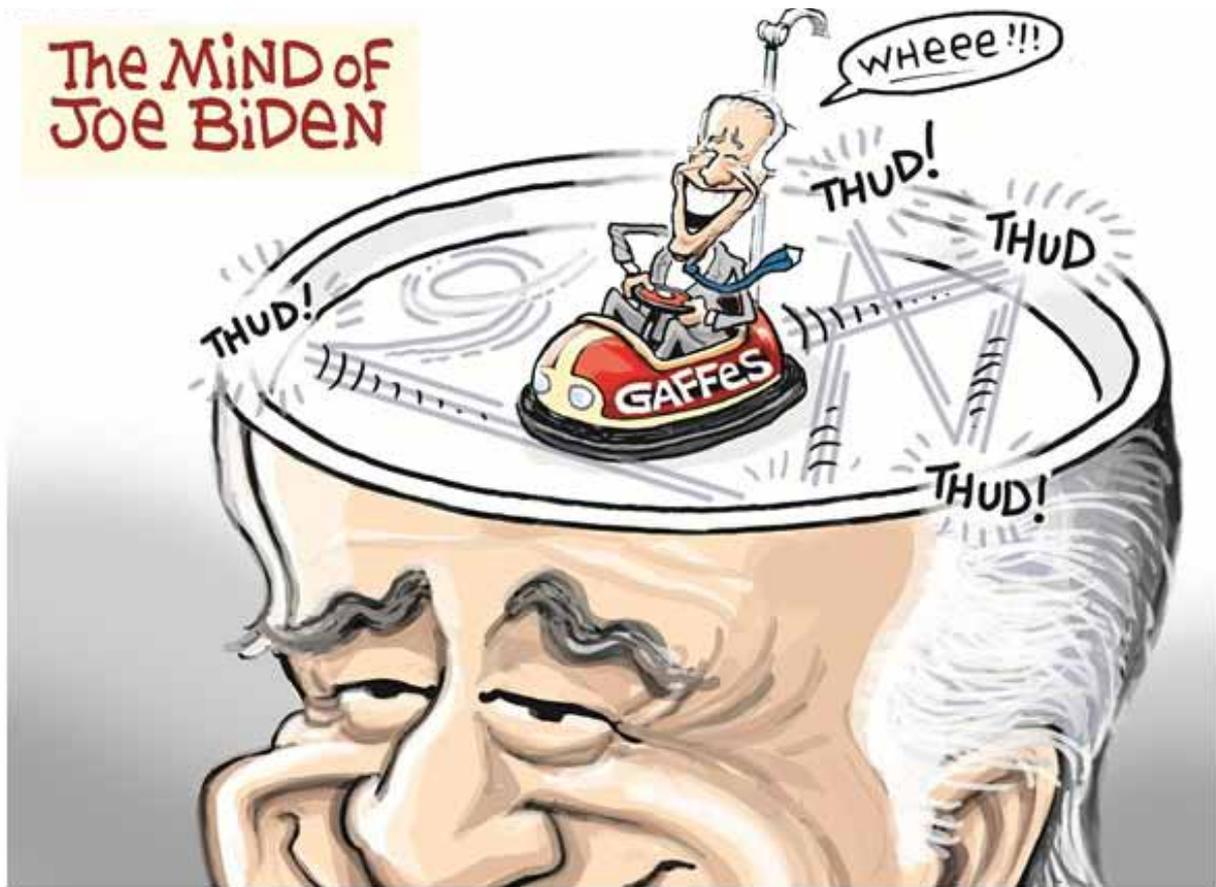


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The MIND OF JOE BIDEN



Biden's 'Bipartisanship' Promotes GOP Agenda

BY SAM KNIGHT

Joe Biden laughed off a New York Times report that described how he had praised a Republican lawmaker in a speech last year before midterm elections.

"I read in The New York Times today that one of my problems, if I ever run for president – I like Republicans. OK, well bless me father for I have sinned," the former vice president said to laughter and applause at the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington, DC.

"Where I come from, I don't know how you get anything done unless you talk to one another again," he added, praising bipartisanship for its own sake.

But the Times had not reported that Biden merely "likes Republicans," or that he had worked with them to "get things done" in the past. The paper said Biden praised Rep. Fred Upton, R-MI, in a speech to a conservative audience that personally netted him \$200,000 in speaking fees.

The speech, before the Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan, also took place just weeks before midterms. Upton ended up defeating his Democratic

opponent, Matt Longjohn, by 4.5 percentage points.

The Times noted that Republicans referenced Biden's praise when branding Upton as being able to work with Democrats, and that local Democratic officials were incensed by Biden's intervention.

Biden referenced his support for Upton while delivering his remarks to the mayors, though he didn't note the sizable fee he received while offering the words of kindness.

"He was in a race, but I praised him about the fight against cancer," Biden said, pointing to Upton's support for legislation increasing funding for cancer research. "It mattered. It saved people's lives," Biden added.

What Biden didn't mention is that Upton also voted in 2017 to repeal the Affordable Care Act. If the legislation had passed the Senate, it would have deprived 23 million people of health insurance, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. The loss of coverage would have likely led to thousands of more preventable deaths annually, according to an

analysis by The Guardian.

Biden's blithe reference to working with Republicans and "[getting] anything done" also glosses over his long history of backing extremely harmful pieces of legislation with broad support in Washington.

While he served in the Senate, Biden was instrumental in advancing draconian bipartisan initiatives to help fight the "War on Drugs." Bills championed by Biden promoted civil asset forfeiture, harsher prison sentences for drug possession, increased mandatory minimums and decreased use of parole by state correctional institutions. His tenure as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee saw the acceleration in growth of an already burgeoning U.S. prison population. Mass incarceration is one of the things Biden "got done" with conservatives.

On economic issues, Biden also reached across the aisle to "get done" reforms that hollowed out working and middle-class American families. He was a supporter of Clinton-era welfare cuts backed by both sides, and among the Democrats who joined with Republicans to champion trade deals that have depressed wages and gutted regulations around the world, in the so-called "race to the bottom."

Biden also backed bipartisan efforts to enable key business conglomerates to increase their stranglehold on America. He supported the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which relaxed limits on media ownership, leading to an increase in the corporatization

and homogenization of journalism. Biden additionally backed the bipartisan repeal of Glass-Steagall, the Depression-era law that had previously segregated investment and retail banking. The move helped create numerous banks that were "too big to fail" after the 2008 financial crisis.

Though the ex-VP eventually said he regretted voting for the Glass-Steagall repeal, he hasn't offered similar apologies for another bipartisan favor to the financial industry that he "got done": the 2005 bankruptcy bill. The legislation, advanced with great support from Biden, has increased barriers to reducing consumer debt through bankruptcy. At the time the bill was drafted, the Delaware-based credit card firm MBNA had employed Biden's son, Hunter, as a consultant.

Last, but far from least, Biden was among the Democrats who banded together with Republicans to authorize the invasion of Iraq in 2003 – yet another thing Biden helped the U.S. "get done" that irreparably damaged countless lives.

Despite having his hand in multiple quagmires, Biden has viciously mocked the idea that the legacies he helped create have caused legitimate hardship among new generations of Americans.

"The younger generation now tells me how tough things are," Biden said. "Give me a break. No, no, I have no empathy for it."

© *Truthout*

Patriarchy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

erous.

If a woman is raped and her sixth child will mean her death and leave her five children orphans, what should she do? Please don't tell me that anyone else is authorized to make this moral choice for her.

Yet Trump has implemented a "gag rule" that prevents any American-supported foreign health program from even mentioning this option to desperate women in desperately overpopulated, war-torn regions. Soon, President Trump may be able to get away with such tyrannical measures here at home.

I call on my sisters and brothers, as Christians and Baptists, to plead for the cause of women's rights both here at home and abroad. The evangelical mistrust of women seeps into government and renders our domestic and foreign policy towards women's health harsh and untenable.

I also call on my family in Christ to acknowledge that all creation is sacred. Our species has been fruitful and multiplied to the point we look like bacteria in a closed environment that multiply until they drown in their own waste.

There is no life without the life of the planet, yet our own numbers are the greatest threat. All our current global problems would lessen with fewer

people, including famine, drought, climate change, pollution, resource shortages, extinction of other species at a devastating rate, and the list goes on and on. There are simply too many of us.

If everyone if the world lived as we do in the U.S., it would take four Earths to sustain us. [This alarming statistic has been widely reported and vetted over the past six years.] It is almost too much to take in.

Experience proves that if women have authority over childbearing, they have a replacement number of children, 2.2 on average. Even this is more than the Earth can sustain unless we cut down on waste.

Women must bear the moral responsibility for childbearing; they need the authority to do so. Women are not intellectually, temperamentally, or morally inferior. Trust women to make the moral choice, even evangelical women who have been indoctrinated from the cradle that men should rule. The choice must be between a woman and her God or her moral conscience. Women in the name of faith or simple decency must rise up to support creation and each other. As Christians, we can work to preserve the world by changing our own hearts and minds. Now is the time!

Jane Hicks lives in Durant.

Signs Fascism Is Gaining In Trump's America

HOW FASCISM WORKS

The Politics Of Us And Them

By Jason Stanley

Random House Publishing Group

240 pages, \$26

BY JOHN WOOD

A bevy of media commentators have deemed Trump a downright fascist.

CNN's Wolf Blitzer, for instance, declared that Trump's comments regarding nationalism are the "kinds of words that came from people like Hitler."

Likewise, CNN's Chris Cuomo argued with his guests that Trump's use of "nationalism" can only be understood as fascist in nature. CNN and MSNBC guest expert and former Reagan domestic policy advisor Bruce Bartlett even tried to argue that even Hitler was a better person than Trump.

This media portrayal is largely fed by Trump's virulent mélange of nationalism and authoritarian rhetoric leading up to the 2018 election. His vehemence was largely centered on the caravan of several thousand migrants fleeing Central America. He likened the caravan to a foreign "invasion," and used it to justify extraordinary measures.

What's more, he ordered more than 5,000 troops to the border, costing a couple hundred million dollars. And then more of the same as the longest government shut down took place over Trump's pet project – a \$5 billion wall.

Instead of saying Trump is a fascist, author Jason Stanley contends it's actually more his technique: "I think of fascism as a method of politics. It's a rhetoric, a way of running for power. Of course, that's connected to fascist ideology, because fascist ideology centers on power. But I really see fascism as a technique to gain power."

This is certainly worrisome.

In his rather satirical 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis set up a fictional account of a Huey Long figure takeover of the country through

fascist tactics. Right after Trump's electoral win, there was a surge of interest in the novel – enough to put it on Amazon.com's best-seller list.

In 2018, former Obama White House official and legal scholar Cass Sunstein responded to Lewis' novel by authoring a book with a similar title: *Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America*. The book quotes various experts and thinkers as saying, yes, in some instances it certainly could happen here.

Sunstein depicts Trump as a cult leader over a movement that captured the GOP. Remember, Trump specifically campaigned on a platform of one-man rule.

Moreover, it was only last month that even high-profile lawyer Lanny Davis, who represented Trump's personal attorney and fixer Michael Cohen, blasted Trump's remarks concerning Cohen's family, comparing the threats to a "mafioso don" intended to "intimidate a witness."

I have a feeling we are not in Kansas anymore!

But in Stanley's thought-provoking *How Fascism Works*, we find that he is afraid the normalization of the fascist myth could lead the public to tolerate "what was once intolerable by making it seem as if this is the way things have always been. By contrast the word 'fascist' has acquired a feeling of the extreme, like crying wolf."

Take Stanley's subtitle, *The Politics of Us and Them*. He explains that dividing people is often a blunt way the most robust, fascist regimes in recent history operated. Stanley says he wants to understand whether this is merely run-of-the-mill racism or xenophobia – and alternatively a fascist blueprint.

Stanley says it's important to diagnose what really is fascism.

It's not just here. With the emergence of nationalist parties across Europe and in South America in recent years, Stanley provides examples on fascist movements worldwide, such as Greece's Golden Dawn and the German National Democratic Party. Leaders like Hungary's Viktor Orban and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro are extremist in their right-wing views, he writes, but stop short of outright fascism.

Stanley, though, places the concept of fascism in perspective. He articulates that fascism is luckily not what we have seen in America since Trump took over. Fascism is a totalitarian political system in which an all-powerful central government directs a nation's economy. Virtually no aspect of society is independent of the state, which is a one-party regime, dominated by an omniscient leader. Although heavily influenced by populist themes, fascist ideology is at once anti-democratic and collectivist.

At first blush, it seems the American variety of fascism is different. For one thing, the traditional institutions associated with government in the United States are still in place, he says. Sadly, however, the primary principles of American governance – especially limited government, federalism, individual liberty, personal responsibility, and so on – have been severely compromised.

Stanley points out that we need to face the fact that fascism is nothing new in America – whether it is the House's Special Committee on Un-American activities, the KKK's violence, Huey Long or Charles Coughlin's fiery speeches.

For Stanley, though, it wasn't the people, but what they did that mattered and how their followers responded.

For Stanley this topic is personal. Both his parents were Jewish refugees. Even his grandmother posed as a Nazi social worker to free Jewish prisoners from Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

"My family background has saddled me with difficult emotional baggage," he writes. "But it also, crucially, prepared me to write this

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book.”

Central to Stanley's book are the 10 pillars of fascism.

- First is a mythic past where white men ruled.

- Second, propaganda inverts the news – Fox is the “real” news, anything that contradicts the leader is

“fake news.”

- Third is anti-intellectualism because emotion is often more powerful than intellect in motivating voters. This resonates with me because more than half of the GOP, according to polls, doesn't support the idea of college anymore.

• Fourth, unreality where truth is smashed and replaced with conspiracy theories. Trump tweet anyone?

• Fifth, social hierarchy in which a group becomes dominant and everyone else must respect them – a feeling suggestive of a mythic past.

• Sixth is victimhood – the dominant group is victimized by out-groups such as immigrants, African Americans, women, LGBTQ, etc.

• Seventh, law and order. Not unlike Richard Nixon's campaign push, it's essentially a way to hurt minorities and the poor without making it appear they are being specifically targeted.

• Eighth, sexual anxiety. No wonder the #MeToo movement has traction.

• Ninth, Sodom and Gomorrah – the notion that real values can only come from the "heartland" because cities are dirty and decadent.

• Finally, "Arbeit Mact Frei," meaning work shall make you free. In other words, out-groups are lazy and social Darwinism is all about winning.

Any of these seem familiar?

"Publicizing false charges of corruption while engaging in corrupt practices is typical of fascist politics," Stanley writes, "and anti-corruption campaigns are frequently at the heart of fascist political movements."

Stanley's well-written book points out that fascist targets were not random. They were minorities, left-

ists, Catholics, labor unions, and anyone who is not worshipped and stands in the way of the fascist narrative that prizes masculinity, hierarchy, authority and downright hatred toward out-groups.

Even if you're not in any of those groups, Stanley notes, we have to protect them from the very beginning.

Stanley argues that while Trump is not fascist, it is easy to see that his techniques are.

Stanley said we should observe German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller's poem, emblazoned on the side of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not Jewish. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me."

At a certain point, Stanley emphasizes, it's too late for us all. In other words, we need to be awakened now. Stanley says it only takes ordinary people, creating simple acts of courage to save our democracy today and avoid the need for unbearable acts of courage tomorrow.

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.

Family History Helps Erase Monolithic, Simplistic Views Of Muslim Cultures

THE LIFE OF A KASHMIRI WOMAN

Dialectic Of Resistance And Accommodation

By Nyla Ali Khan

Palgrave MacMillan USA

139 pages, \$69.99

BY DAVID FERRARI

The author's grandfather, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was Prime Minister of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, a state historically fought over and trapped between Pakistan and India, from 1948-53. When the two countries refused to follow through on promises to allow a referendum on the fate of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad was imprisoned for advocating self-determination for the state. As Pakistan and India continued to fight over the state, the Sheikh was increasingly marginalized by both sides.

The Sheikh's wife, Akbar Jehan, supported her husband and was deeply involved in the politics of the state until her death in 2000. She represented

the state in the Indian parliament from 1977-79 and from 1984-89.

This book is a clearly written detailing of Akbar Jehan's struggle for Kashmiri self-determination. It is an impressive account of Akbar Jehan's self-actualization as an agent for change, though suppressed in her native land and, metaphorically, the author's quest to come terms with the fate of her home state as a fundamental aspect of her own identity.

The author's own mother, Akbar Jehan's daughter, has had to deal with what the author terms "unpalatable motives attributed to her parents and grotesque misinterpretations of their political, and socioeco-

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Observations

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not “higher education” issue.

There was no public acknowledgement of the critical need to reverse deep budget cuts that yielded fewer class offerings and academic resources. Or left students shouldering more of the financial load – ultimately shoving a potentially life-changing college degree beyond the reach of many Oklahomans.

The numbers don't lie. Enrollment in the state's colleges and universities has declined since the draconian budgets were imposed – down from 256,213 in 2011-12 to about 220,000 in recent years, according to the State Regents for Higher Education.

If you doubt for a moment that higher tuition and fees aren't insurmountable hurdles for many would-be students, quiz registrars and counselors at area colleges and universities. Increasingly, they hear woeful tales of students dropping out, unable to afford both school and rent. Campuses across the state have opened food pantries.

This is a crisis Oklahoma's public policymakers must address – now.

Two years ago, Gov. Mary Fallin joined with higher ed, CareerTech and business leaders to announce efforts to increase by 67% the number of post-secondary degrees and certificates earned in Oklahoma.

Why the emphasis? A higher-educated and -skilled workforce earns higher salaries and helps the state attract more corporate investment and expansion – vital to building a brighter economic future in a state historically too dependent on two boom-bust industries: energy and agriculture.

Research suggests college-degree holders in Oklahoma on average earn at least \$1.1 million more during their careers than the non-degreed – and in some cases, much, much more.

The Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program, established in 1992, recognized the importance of post-second degrees and certificates in what would become a highly competitive 21st century world economy. Best known now as Oklahoma's Promise, it covers tuition and other costs for qualifying students whose families earn no more than \$55,000 annually.

Still, far too many other working-class students face a disheartening, Hobson's Choice in 2019: amass suffocating debt in order to complete a college degree [gambling it will pay off in future earnings] or settle for lesser careers than they might otherwise have achieved.

To be sure, higher ed has its share of critics, many of whom view it through either an ideological prism – as a bastion of liberalism – or through an accountant's eye shade – focusing on the bottom-line cost, not the value. But the reality is, it remains the closest thing we have to a golden ticket.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

TOM GOODWIN

Cheyenne, OK

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



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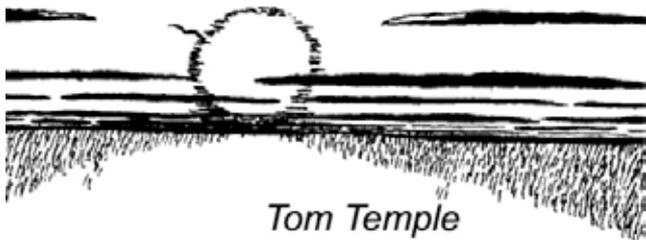
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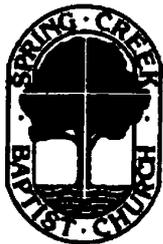


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Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Laurel: To Jack Mattingly Sr. and the Seminole Economic Development Authority, stepping in to keep the presses rolling at three Seminole County newspapers after the death of publisher Stu Phillips. The papers are a vital community asset.

Oklahoma lost a treasure recently with the death at age 85 of former Midwest City rep and longtime minister-interfaith leader Jeff Hamilton. Blessings to his wife Wanda and the family.

Laurel: To new Tulsa Rep. John Waldron, filing HB 1413 that would hold a bill's authors financially responsible for legislation a federal or state court holds unconstitutional. It's mostly symbolic, but sends a serious message: enough with using tax dollars to rile up your rightwing political base.

Former House Speaker Pro Tem-turned-lobbyist Gus Blackwell recently agreed to pay \$31,000 to settle an Ethics Commission lawsuit accusing him of misusing campaign funds. He earlier paid \$10k to the House to resolve criminal charges in the matter.

Which is the greater peril facing Oklahoma public television? Legislative wingnuts who want to de-fund what they view as liberal programming or a dust-up with the OETA foundation that purportedly sits on hundreds of millions while the network starves?

Gov. Kevin Stitt has named former longtime state Rep. Lisa Billy as his secretary of Native American Affairs. Outside the Capitol she may be best known for appearing in Chickasaw Nation TV commercials.

We note the recent passing of former state lawmaker Jim Hamilton, the Poteau Democrat perhaps best known as the architect of the state's Rainy Day Fund. He served in both chambers, rising to president pro tem in the Senate and appropriations and budget chair in the House. He was 83.

Elder Alert: AARP reports Oklahoma's nursing homes had nation's second highest rate of residents at high risk for pressure sores and was No. 1 in use of anti-psychotic medications without a psychiatric diagnosis.

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Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Along with Cagle, Oklahoma City teacher Heather Reed helped launch “Oklahoma Teachers United” that strives to gain funds for public schools.

Pulitzer Prize winning author Charles Duhigg saw merit in detailing the personal attack on Cagle for his role in instigating the walk-out and the many tough sacrifices that teachers made that gained limited results from the Republican-controlled statehouse.

Duhigg then opined: “Larry Cagle wasn’t wrong to be livid at a state government that refused to allocate funds to educate the next generation of Oklahomans; his mistake was succumbing to the view that the only way to fix the system was to destroy it.”

Despite the untoward national publicity of the walk-out, by November voters in Oklahoma had re-elected Republican dominance of the Legislature and selected for governor a Tulsa Republican millionaire who sent his six children to private schools – avoiding Edison.

Joseph H. Carter Sr.
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

Science and math should be emphasized. And so should *a lot* of other skills! That’s why we need to encourage, recruit, incentivize and reward *great teachers*! We took a baby step in Oklahoma in 2018. We desperately need sweeping *reforms* and dramatically increased *resources* or this state is doomed for mediocrity. Or worse.

Mickey Thompson
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Merle Haggard and his hillbilly troubadours put us on the map by singing “I’m proud to be an Okie from Muskogee, a place where even squares can have a ball.”

Now, a Democratic candidate for president has started touring the country, boasting of her Oklahoma roots.

In her stump speech, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren never fails to bring up her working-class Okie heritage, born and raised in Oklahoma City, graduating from OKC’s Northwest Classen High School.

The bankruptcy professor is the fourth Okie to run for president. The first three were Gov. “Alfalfa Bill”

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Murray, Sen. Bob Kerr and Sen. Fred Harris.

For the small fry, it would be hot diggity dog to have this Okie in the White House.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

Just ask yourself this: What helped propel the post-World War II U.S. economy and create the world's largest middle class? The GI bill, of course.

States that remember – and act on – this historical truth will be best positioned for success as we march toward the 22nd century.

Smart Money

In his vision to remake state government and create a Top 10 state, Gov. Kevin Stitt leaves little doubt he will not rest until every tax dollar is accounted for and squeezed to the max.

If he's serious, and everything indeed is on the table for discussion, he should promote ranked-choice voting – which could save state and local governments millions in costly runoff elections.

How does it work? Voters rank candidates on the ballot – first choice, second, third and so on. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the initial vote, the candidate with the fewest “first” votes is eliminated and their voters' second choices are added to their No. 2 candidates' totals. This process continues until a candidate secures 50%-plus-one.

Seven states already use ranked choice voting in either state, federal or local elections – New Mexico, Colorado, California, Minnesota, Maryland, Maine and Massachusetts. Five more – Oregon, Utah, Michi-

gan, Tennessee and Florida – allow it, though it hasn't yet been used. And six – Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina and Illinois – already use it for military and overseas voting.

Not only would ranked choice voting save state and local governments money by reducing the number of [often low-turnout] elections, it also likely would force candidates to appeal more broadly to voters.

If you're not someone's first choice, you surely want to be their second – just in case.

Many of the dozen hard-right Republicans that GOP leadership worked to unseat in last year's primaries and runoffs probably never would have been elected if ranked-choice voting were in place – unless they figured out ways to appeal beyond their hard-core, hard-right constituency.

The notion of saving money should appeal to Stitt's vision of a leaner, smarter government. But it may not be so simple. It's possible Stitt wouldn't be governor today if ranked-choice were in effect last year. Perhaps the on-paper, elimination rounds instead would have favored ex-OKC Mayor Mick Cornett and former Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb.

If ranked-choice were to get on Stitt's radar, he'd have a choice to make: politics or principle. But remember – officeholders rarely are keen on changing the system under which they won. Even if it requires breaking a promise to squeeze every tax dollar.

Militarism

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

America's military presence in Afghanistan, according to O'Hanlon, helps to complement the vast arsenal of bases extending from Qatar and Bahrain and Djibouti in North Africa, which “help us maintain vigilance over Yemen, Somalia, and other parts of the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden region.”

This assessment supports a blatantly imperialistic vision that does not consider whether the peoples of the Horn of Africa or Gulf of Aden want the United States watching over them.

Nor does it consider the instability and atrocities fueled by American intervention in those regions, including in Yemen, where U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirate [UAE] forces have slaughtered tens of thousands of people and created the conditions for a cholera outbreak and biblical scale famine.

Somalia has also become a mess ever since the United States backed the Ethiopian invasions of 2006 and 2011 and began carrying out drone strikes that fueled the growth of the jihadist group Al-Shabab.

The United States has armed and trained brutal warlords and Somalia's corrupt armed forces that em-

ploy child soldiers, run secret prisons, steal foreign aid donations, and view the perpetual civil war as a business opportunity.

O'Hanlon and other pundits who continuously advocate for more war should be forced to visit Afghanistan and other conflict zones to meet the families whose loved ones have been killed by U.S.-NATO airstrikes. Perhaps then even this hard-headed realist would be moved by human consideration.

O'Hanlon, though, is a well paid appendage to the U.S. military industrial complex, and the New York Times a key organ in the manufacture of public consent, as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman documented in their famous study. They continue to advocate for yet more militarism and war as such, even if the day's news would lead any halfway decent human being to draw the opposite conclusion.

Jeremy Kuzmarov is author of numerous books on U.S. foreign policy including most recently The Russians are Coming, Again: the First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce, with John Marciano [Monthly Review Press, 2018]. He is an executive with the Tulsa Peace Fellowship.



L to R: Nyla Ali Khan's maternal grandmother, Akbar Jehan Abdullah; her mother, Rani Jee; her older brother Omar Nedou [standing]; Khan's grandmother's father Michael Henry [Harry] Nedou, aka Sheikh Ahmed Hussain; George Nedou, aka Mohammad Akram [sitting on the floor]; and the baby, Harry Nedou aka Ghulam Qadir.

Kashmir

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

conomic ideologies.”

The state itself is divided between India, which controls a large part of it, Pakistan, which continues to assert that the state rightfully belongs to it, and China, which “annexed a segment of the land in 1962.”

This book combines personal biography of Akbar Jehan and history of her involvement in the constantly shifting political scene in her home state. The author shifts seamlessly between the two, making transitions clear to the reader by using her grandmother's name when discussing political history and “my grandmother” when focusing more on family connections and stories.

At the same time, the combination of the personal and the familial consistently demonstrates how inextricable the two are, as Jammu and Kashmir are clearly both beloved homeland and family origin. The former brings a response of sadness about the fate of the state but a sense of hope that a more just and satisfying result is still possible.

That hope is grounded in the citizens' ongoing struggle to improve the situation, which leads back to the personal.

Dr. Khan, an Edmond resident and frequent contributor to *The Oklahoma Observer*, writes clearly,

and seemingly without obvious bias, of the frequently changing political situations in her home state while interjecting the personal when it seems relevant. It becomes clear that the chosen subject – her grandmother's agency in the struggles of Kashmir – is deeply personal to the author despite her current geographical distance from it.

She accomplishes enlightening the reader about the post-partition history of the state, her grandmother's active involvement in those events, and how much those events matter to both the people in the state and the author herself.

For people in the U.S., many of whom tend to have a monolithically oversimplified view of predominantly Muslim cultures, this book's emphasis on the important contributions of Akbar Jehan and other Kashmiri women can serve as a means to provoke questions about those overly simple views.

It seems, for the author, to be a statement of determination to work to a better solution for her home state as an extension of her grandmother's hard work and sacrifices, despite the author's current physical separation from the state.

David Ferrari is an adjunct English instructor at Rose State College.

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