

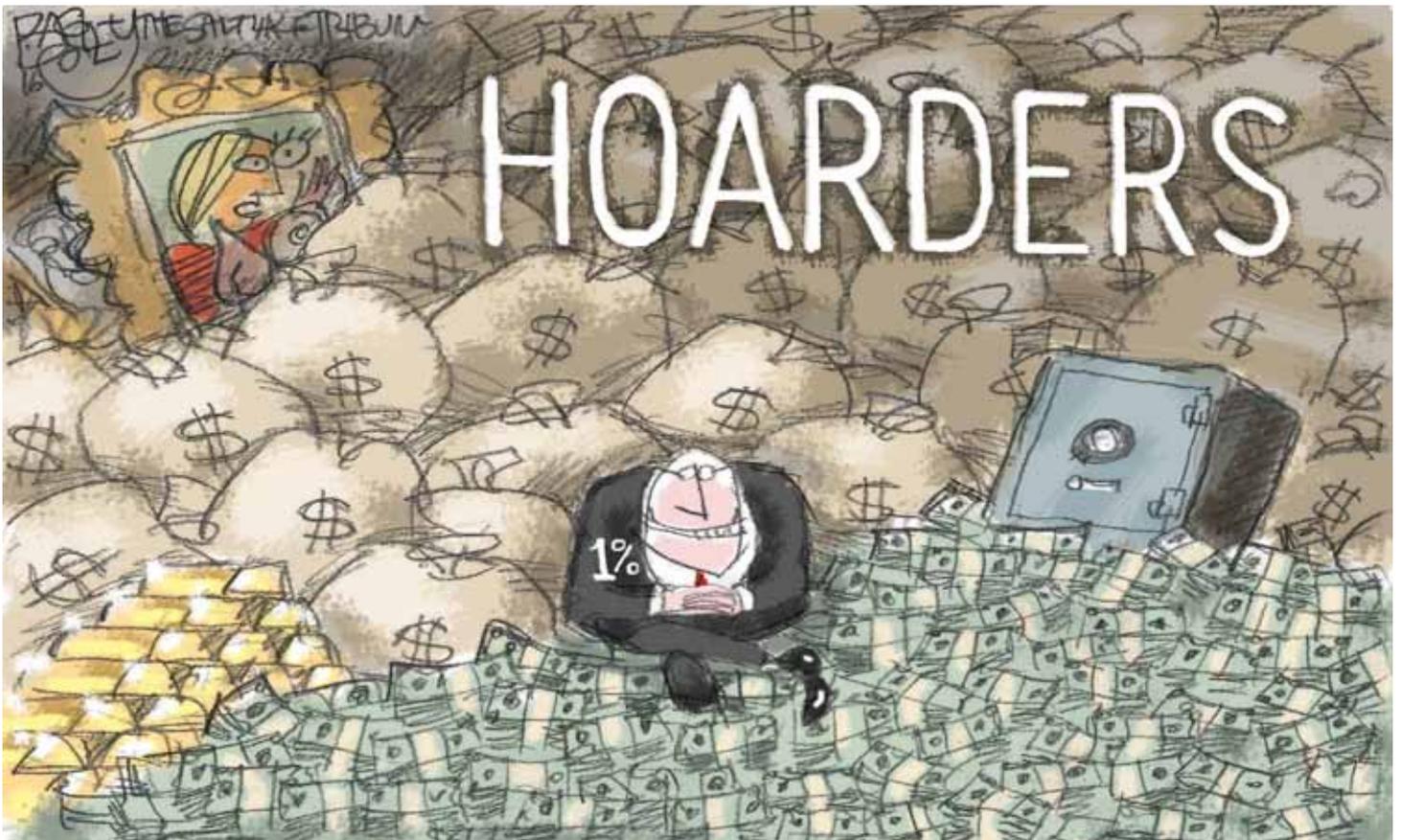
THE OKLAHOMA Observer

• AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF COMMENTARY •

OCTOBER 2019 • VOLUME 51 NUMBER 10 • \$5.00

HUNTER'S PREY

*After Challenging Big Pharma, AG Takes
Aim To Protect Oil Barons, Vouchers*



Cover Story begins on page 8



THE OKLAHOMA Observer

www.okobserver.org

VOLUME 51, NO. 10

PUBLISHER Beverly Hamilton
bhamilton@okobserver.net

EDITOR Arnold Hamilton
ahamilton@okobserver.net

ADVISORY BOARD

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

OUR MOTTO

To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

FOUNDING PUBLISHER

Helen B. Troy [1932-2007]

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy [1933-2017]

[ISSN 0030-1795]

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

POSTMASTER

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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

UPDATE ADDRESSES

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

LETTERS TO EDITOR

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

Observations

Citizen Legislating

Call it a tale of two petitions. One – a proposed veto referendum on permitless carry – failed to garner enough signatures to earn a spot on next year's ballot. The other – aimed at expanding Medicaid – remains a work in progress, needing nearly 178,000 valid signatures by Oct. 28 if voters are to have a direct say on this vital health initiative.

Though the two efforts were not directly linked, their backers seem to share the view that Oklahoma's elected leadership isn't getting the job done for anyone except well-heeled special interests.

So they did what frustrated and exasperated Sooners have for generations: They attempted to take matters into their own hands via initiative petition.

It isn't easy, of course. Rep. Jason Lowe and Moms Demand Action fell short, despite working 24/7 for nearly two weeks to collect enough signatures to block Nov. 1 implementation of the new permitless carry law.

But as Medicaid expansion supporters near the end of their petition drive, they appear cautiously optimistic enough valid signatures can be collected to force a statewide vote next year on SQ 802.

Capitol policymakers who resisted Medicaid expansion for a decade must think the effort will be successful, too. They're working overtime to change the narrative: it wasn't legislative and gubernatorial inaction that's to blame for Oklahoma's terrible health outcomes and failing rural hospitals, it was those faceless, incompetent bureaucrats who mis-spent all that money pouring into the state's health care system.

Breathtaking ignorance? Or unadulterated perfidy? Either way, the claim is pure baloney.

Here's the truth: Oklahoma's declining health can be laid at the feet of two Republican governors and a GOP-dominated Legislature that refused to accept Medicaid expansion because it was part of ObamaCare.

Yep – rural hospitals cratered under the cost of uncompensated care

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

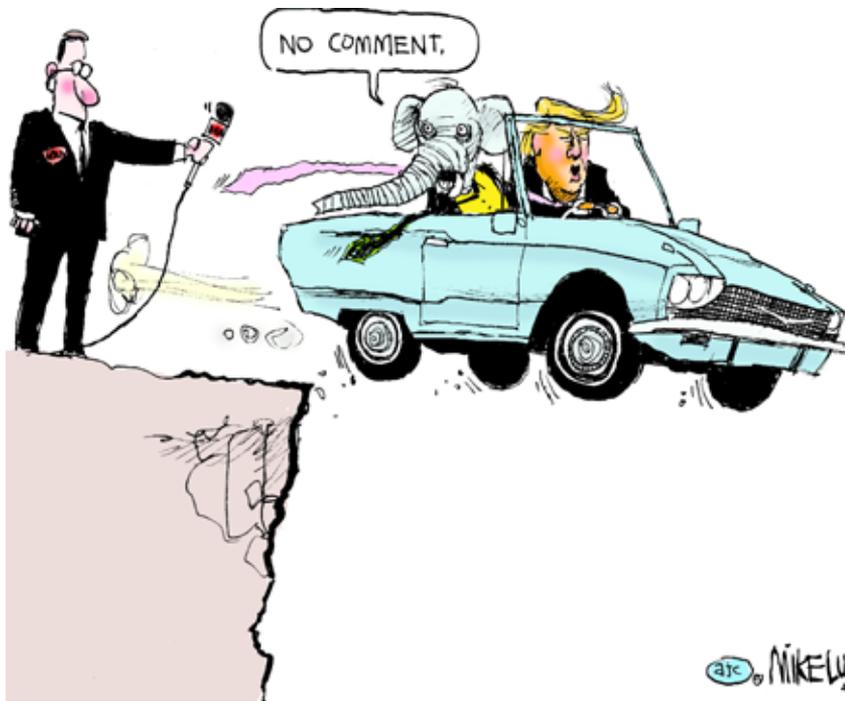
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please make checks payable to: "The Oklahoma Observer"

Clip and mail to: The Oklahoma Observer, P.O. Box 14275,
Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.



Observerscope



You won't want to miss The Observer's special event screenings of *Raise Hell: The Life and Times of Molly Ivins* – Oct. 29 in Tulsa and Nov. 5 in OKC. Early bird ticket discount expires Oct. 15. See back cover for details.

Dart: To Gov. Kevin Stitt, perpetuating the good ol' white Christian boys club. Of his 15 cabinet members, only three are women. No racial, ethnic or religious minorities or openly LGBTQ. This is 2019, not 1919.

Our Oct. 10 Observer Newsmakers at OKC's Full Circle Books features OSU journalism prof Joey Senat and Rep. Andy Fugate exploring state leaders' efforts to curtail the public's right to know. For more info, see page 25.

Laurel: To Rep. Jason Lowe and Moms Demand Action, collecting 37,057 signatures in just two weeks in an effort to block Oklahoma's inane permitless carry law. It wasn't enough to force a statewide vote, but it underscores changing Sooner mores on gun control.

Speaking of ballot initiatives, Medicaid expansion proponents have until 5 p.m. Oct. 28 to submit 178,000 valid signatures. Visit yeson802.org for details, including where to sign.

Dart: To silk-stocking U.S. Rep. Kevin Hern, opposing congressional efforts to curtail the worst effects of right-to-work [for less] measures in states like Oklahoma. Hern's working class constituents should read Ken Neal's analysis [page 15] of the freshman Republican's campaign finance shenanigans.

Anti-abortion forces believe Gov. Kevin Stitt's first Supreme Court appointee, Osage County District Judge M. John Kane, will be a rubber stamp for their cause. We shall see. His record suggests devotion to the law – not ideology.

Laurel: To the Cherokee Nation, not only increasing its minimum wage to \$11 an hour, but also donating \$200,000 to Webbers Falls to help replace a water line damaged in spring floods.

Gov. Kevin Stitt is fast becoming Oklahoma's Micromanager-in-Chief. State agencies must now get his OK before applying for fed grants in excess of \$50k. What's next? Approval to replace an empty roll of toilet paper?

Laurel: To former Southeastern President/state Sen. Sean Burrage, named OU's new VP for executive affairs. An inspired choice!

We mourn the passing of the incomparable Isabel Keith Baker, longtime educator, former OSU regent, die-hard Democrat and, yes, devoted Observer subscriber. She will be sorely missed.

Attention letters-to-the-editor writers: The Observer goes to press the first Wednesday of each month. Deadline for submissions is the Friday before. Email: letters@okobserver.net.

Chancellor Glen Johnson's December 2020 retirement is terrible news for Oklahoma. He brilliantly steered higher ed through a decade of Draconian budgets that threatened to cripple campuses.

The Center for Reproductive Rights is seeking to block the state's preposterous abortion "reversal" law, set to take effect Nov. 1. Another example of religion trumping science in the #OKLeg.

Finally, some good news: Juvenile arrest rates in Oklahoma dropped 67% since 1990, thanks to myriad intervention efforts. The decline offers hope for a corresponding future decline in adult system.

Age discrimination? More than a third of U.S. population is 50-plus, but the group appears in only 15% of marketing images, according to AARP study.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Letters



ments have been equally obtuse!
 Frank Silovsky
 Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:
 Putin's U.S. troika:
 Trump The Terrible
 Moscow Mitch
 Leningrad Lindsey

Marvin Kroeker
 Reedley, CA

Editor, The Observer:

Something about the unrest in Hong Kong reminds me of the way another city served as a catalyst of change when the fall of the Berlin Wall led to East Germany's collapse.

But first, remember who actually made China prosper:

In 1842 the British planted the seeds of free markets and free ideas in Hong Kong, starting a boom China had not seen on such a scale before, waiting to spread like the revolution that once started in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia where the old order got a bit too intolerant, made mistakes, and found that prosperity without the Consent of the Governed was not good enough in the long run.

Next, President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger offered China access to American markets and jobs to entice China away from the Soviet Union in 1972, which collapsed less than a generation later along with communist governments in most other countries – or became klepto-tyrannies like North Korea.

But China's access to our jobs outlived its usefulness and President Trump is trying to reverse the acts of his Republican predecessors even if it's hard to put the genie back in the bottle with trade tariffs that cause inflation.

What Trump finds difficult, Hong Kong protesters may accomplish in their own way using the Berlin template.

China has to be careful here be-

Editor, The Observer:

There is a minor inaccuracy in Cal Hobson's insightful commentary concerning Donald Trump in the September issue of The Observer: Beetle Bailey was not the comics character who often opined, "What? Me Worry?" That character was Alfred E. Neuman of Mad Magazine, which, sadly, recently ceased publication

May Alfred E. Neuman RIP – but not be forgotten!

Ron Amos
 Oklahoma City

Editor's Note: It's certainly true Alfred E. Neuman was most famous for that statement, though it's worth noting that Neuman once made a cameo in a Beetle Bailey strip. Thanks for keeping us on our toes! Meanwhile, Cal himself alerted us to the fact he used "billion" rather than "trillion" when discussing the national debt. Clearly, The Observer editor needs to sharpen his proof-reading skills!

Editor, The Observer:

Our country does not have a pact to defend Saudi Arabia if they are

attacked. The Saudis have purchased many billions of dollars worth of the most sophisticated weapons from the U.S. Why don't they defend themselves? We are not the world police.

Ironically, and on the other hand, we had every right to attack Saudi Arabia in the wake of 9/11. Saudis comprised 15 of the 19 terrorists involved in the World Trade Center debacle, ditto the attack on our Pentagon. Osama bin Laden was a Saudi. President George W. Bush had a close relationship with the Saudi government as exhibited by his immediate [surprising] order to transport all Saudis back to Arabia during the time all other airliners were grounded as a safety measure-response to 9/11!

How many Americans are aware that the word "militia" was used in composing the 2nd Amendment [right to bear arms] specifically because our Founders ardently wished to avoid "standing armies" like the British had at the time, fighting wars all over the world building their "colonial" empire.

Our Founders were remarkably prescient while our recent govern-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



Stitt's Tribal Blunder Won't Soon Be Forgotten

No matter how it plays out, Gov. Kevin Stitt will come to regret the unnecessary fight he picked with Oklahoma's tribes over gaming compacts.

Even if he manages to secure a few million dollars more for the state treasury – far from a sure thing – the political costs for the first-year governor are enormous.

It's doubtful Oklahoma's sovereign nations will soon forget the sting of disrespect when Stitt publicly demanded a better deal ... without first notifying tribes.

The governor, of course, insists he did send letters to tribal leaders. They just didn't arrive before his plans were revealed in a Tulsa World column.

When you own a private mortgage company, you get to decide when and how to announce and implement changes. When you're an elected governor, with limited state powers, needing the cooperation of 34 sovereign nations, you don't bark orders.

You quietly reach out to individual tribal leaders to assess the appetite for renegotiating current compacts. If one exists, you then explore possible changes that could yield a win-win for the state and tribes.

The consequences of Stitt's blunder were immediate. The tribes, increasingly powerful economically and politically, pushed back – hard. They launched a media blitz emphasizing their commitment to “mutual respect, shared strength and productive partnerships that benefit every Oklahoman.”

At least initially, the governor appeared undeterred. He publicly pressed for negotiations to begin in early September, given that current compacts expire at year's end. The response?

In an Aug. 29 letter to Stitt, the 34 gaming tribes expressed a willingness to negotiate ... but only if the governor conceded that current compacts mandate automatic renew in January for another 15 years – unless renegotiated.

“We continue to look forward to a substantive proposal from the state regarding that part of the compact which may be renegotiated,” the letter stated. “We will consider such a proposal, however, only when the state of Oklahoma affirms the automatic

renewal of the compact.”

Stitt rejects the notion of an auto-renewal. And he hasn't wavered publicly in his belief Oklahoma tribes are underpaying for exclusive gaming rights.

These issues eventually could be sorted out in court, of course. But at what cost to state taxpayers? Fighting a long legal battle, in an attempt to “fix” something that isn't broken, is a fool's errand.

Oklahoma's deal – according to a 2015 federal Government Accountability Office study – is in line with other state-tribal compacts. Since approving Class III gaming 15 years ago, the state has reaped \$1.28 billion in tribal gaming fees.

What's next? Well, it's difficult to imagine that major changes could be negotiated in just over three months. Not saying it can't happen ... but the tribes appear to hold most of the cards, no pun intended.

But they could, if they so choose, help Stitt save face, politically. By agreeing to some cosmetic changes – perhaps even larger gaming payments to state coffers – tribes could improve their bargaining position on other key issues. Can you spell w-a-t-e-r?

The governor was wise to hand off the compact renegotiations issue to Attorney General Mike Hunter, a savvy veteran of the state's political wars. If nothing else, it helps get the governor off the hot seat – all questions now are referred to the AG.

For his part, Hunter retained the services of Dykema Gossett, a Michigan law firm with expertise in tribal negotiations, at a maximum cost to taxpayers of \$250,000. That modest fee suggests nothing much is likely to happen between now and year's end.

If so, the dust-up over tribal gaming fees won't live long in the public consciousness. But you can bet it won't be forgotten anytime soon by Oklahoma's tribal nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arnold".



BREAKING NEWS!

Gov. Stitt Wants To Raise Taxes

BY CAL HOBSON

“Cal you’ve got to be kidding me!”

No, I’m not and following is an outline of Gov. Kevin Stitt’s proposal directed at a major industry already in Oklahoma and growing.

First, although this organization has shown success every year since creation in 2004, Gov. Stitt wants to increase taxes on it – yes, *increase* taxes. Second, instead of asking for, or receiving incentives to locate and expand in our state, this popular business specialty has *contributed* mightily with voluntary investments in roads, bridges, health care, education and other core state services. Third, non-profits, cities, counties, hospitals, churches and even non-governmental entities are the beneficiaries of this outfit’s generosity on a daily basis. Fourth, why would small government, low tax, business friendly Stitt pick out this unique segment of Oklahoma for a monetary hit especially when our own Rainy Day Fund already has over \$1 billion of tax money sitting in it ... unused?

Makes one wonder if our new CEO really is a closet tax-and-spend Democrat who just wants to grow his governmental empire regardless of campaign promises to do just the opposite. Reasonable observers could come to that conclusion based on tax increases he proposes on one of our most successful, generous and growing segments of the Okie economy – that being tribal gaming outlets as envisioned by the compacts that govern them.

Before getting into the politics behind this Stitt misadventure, let us first examine a few facts that can be helpful when dealing with a complex, public policy issue as exists here:

1 Voters approved Class III, casino wagering in 2004, a form of gambling which is similar to that found in Las Vegas. Not identical, but close. Since that plebiscite 143 separate locations have opened, several being among the largest in the world, attracting stellar entertainment and pro-

viding wonderful dining and hotel amenities beneficially scattered throughout our state.

2 Tribes have paid nearly \$1.5 billion dollars in exclusivity fees since 2004 with 88% of it earmarked for and spent in our public schools. Stitt argues tribes haven't paid enough even though current assessments are in the mid range nationally. Of the nation's 276 compacts 107 – or 39% – charge 0, nada, zilch, nothing. Some, like Nevada, indeed charge more but comparing that state's mature industry with our fledgling one makes no economic sense unless the goal is to stifle what has been an Oklahoma success story from day one.

3 Fortunately, many casinos have been built in rural Oklahoma with some of the most notable near bordering states and their millions of gaming enthusiasts. For example, Winstar, across I-35 from Thackerville, is the anchor in the Chickasaw gaming galaxy. Not only is it the largest anywhere in the world – including Macaw, Hong Kong or Europe – it draws 95% of its players from Texas. The Grand, owned by the Choctaws of Durant, is similarly situated as well as the Cherokee Hard Rock Casino in Northeastern Oklahoma. All their customers pay the same exclusivity fees into our state's revenue streams as well as hotel, sales, food and gasoline assessments. If only other industries in the Sooner state could attract out of state business like the tribes do, our economy – rather than usually lagging nationally – would explode similarly to fireworks on the Fourth of July. So the age-old question must be asked: If it ain't broke why fix it?

4 Since every politician's favorite activity is cutting ribbons on "new stuff," creating new jobs Gov. Top Ten should be giving plaques and plaudits to tribal chiefs rather than headaches and heartburn. Yes, casinos have been wildly successful since approved by mostly Democratic lawmakers and voters 15 years ago and Oklahoma is the only state that has enjoyed an increase in gaming dollars every one of those 15. However, contrary to popular belief, gambling ventures can go broke – just ask America's self appointed smartest businessman Donald J Trump – and many have, even in gaming meccas such as Vegas or Atlantic City. Again, without beating a dead horse, the rest of America looks on with envy at our tribal leaders and their impressive accomplishments not only as gaming goliaths but articulate visionaries who can see past just their next quarterly financial report. Since legislative budgeteers have recently created two back-to-back billion-dollar deficits, perhaps a pow-wow to smoke the peace pipe with our First Americans rather than expressing support for Johnny Come Lately Stitt's proposed tax hikes makes dollars and cents as well as common sense. We'll see.

With all that said, why would our God-fearing, family-focused, former mortgage magnate take on the tribes while holding a losing hand of Ace High versus Full House which the casinos almost always

have? Here's why. He spoke before knowing what he was talking about because the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act [IGRA] of 1988 gives the advantage to First Nations in compact negotiations. They *may* renegotiate such agreements when they expire [which Oklahoma's do on Jan. 1, 2020] but they do *not have* to. If a redo is not agreed to within 180 days past the current January 2020 they will simply continue in their current form, no ifs, ands, buts or maybes. It is the law.

However, to his credit, following his damaging gaff this past July in the Tulsa World our governor has turned to Attorney General Mike Hunter to lead the discussions with the 35 tribes, out of our 39, that have compacts. That's wise. Hunter has extracted nearly a billion dollars from the pharmaceutical companies in the opioid crisis and may generate even more depending upon national suits and other court decisions. He is, however, like Stitt, a Republican and their party has historically taken stances in our state contrary to federal and tribal law as well as ignoring long-signed treaties such as Dancing Rabbit Creek negotiated in 1831. Yes, treaties still matter.

So, as deadlines approach and pressure builds, what might we expect if both sides negotiate in good faith, sincerely and with competence? General Hunter has hired a Michigan firm, Dykema, paying it an initial fee of \$250,000, to lead his efforts while the tribes, frankly, can afford to hire whomever they want. Maybe even Jones/Day, the DC-based mega firm that already has pocketed \$1.5 million from OU regents in the Boren sexual harassment investigation. Literally billions of dollars of gaming dollars are at stake as well as over 100,000 casino jobs since only huge California enjoys greater gaming revenue and activity than in the Sooner state. Hard to believe, but true. And it will remain that way as long as surrounding states, especially Texas, do not take steps to legalize Class III wagering.

However, should Gov. Stitt return to his "my way or the highway" approach initially proclaimed in his July press release, an economic nightmare will befall our state, especially in rural towns, cities and counties that can least afford it. The days of viewing our Native American neighbors as second-class citizens, or not even citizens at all, is long past and well known to even the most casual observers except, perhaps, for one very well-known citizen to all the rest of us.

Gov. Stitt has long proven his business acumen and is rightly proud of it. You know the story ... started with a \$1,000 dollars, a home computer and the kitchen table. Less apparent is his knowledge of and support for one of the most important economic drivers in Oklahoma. Between now and before Christmas would be a good time for him to return to the mansion's kitchen table and learn all about it ... our combined Native American Indian tribes.

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

BACK TO HIS ROOTS

Hunter's Defense Of Big Oil And Education Vouchers Reflect His GOP Uber-Conservatism

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

It didn't take Attorney General Mike Hunter long to make a splash.

Just four months after he was appointed to replace Scott Pruitt, Hunter filed suit against four of the nation's leading manufacturers of opioid pain medication, alleging they deceived Oklahomans into believing long-term use of the narcotics was safe.

"These companies have waged a fraudulent, decade-long marketing campaign to profit from the anguish of thousands of Oklahomans," Hunter said in a prepared statement, announcing the nuisance suit. "These companies have made in excess of \$10 billion a year, while our friends, family members, neighbors and loved ones have become addicts, gone to prison or died because of the opioid epidemic.

"Today, we begin a fight to hold these companies accountable, slow the crisis and build a healthier state. One death or one addiction related to opioids is too many."

For a state that embraces the Republican talking point "business is good, government is bad," the lawsuit didn't evoke much outrage – except from those targeted. Perhaps the muted response simply reflected the fact 388 Oklahoma deaths in 2017 were blamed on opioids. Or perhaps it signaled a political pendulum swing was underway in Oklahoma.

Either way, Hunter's brief tenure suggested he was en route to becoming the most proactive attorney general since Democrat Drew Edmondson fought – and won – against big tobacco in 1998.

Hunter, of course, won election to a full four-year term in 2018, settled with Purdue Pharma for \$270 million in March and won a \$572 million judgment in state court against Johnson & Johnson in August.

But Hunter's early persona – slaying the pharmaceutical giants on behalf of the state's great unwashed – may serve to give cover to a more GOP-like activism that elevates the concerns of corporatists and religious zealots over rank-and-file Oklahomans.

For example, Hunter recently joined the fight against a new Washington law that oil producers claim will make it more expensive to transport crude across that state by rail.

"This law targets the energy industry and places significant burdens on energy-producing states, like Oklahoma," Hunter argued. "By creating a new clas-

sification for crude oil below a certain vapor pressure, this law gradually implements a ban on facilities in the state that load or unload the oil and creates an economic burden on companies.

"Additionally, the law violates federal law. Regulating the rail transportation of hazardous materials is the job of the federal government, not the states."

The Washington law requires Bakken crude shipped by rail through the state to have a lower vapor pressure limit. Wait ... who's one of the biggest, if not the biggest, players in Bakken? Oh, yes, Oklahoma's Harold Hamm.

Hamm is a big financial supporter of President Trump. He is credited by many with getting former Oklahoma AG Scott Pruitt appointed Environmental Protection Agency administrator. And, of course, he's a big Republican donor.

As the politically ambitious Hunter well knows.

So Hunter will take on Big Pharma, but skills for Big Oil? How about mounting a nuisance claim against gun manufacturers? Don't hold your breath.

Hunter's also pandering to those working around-the-clock to divert public dollars to private education – think: Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

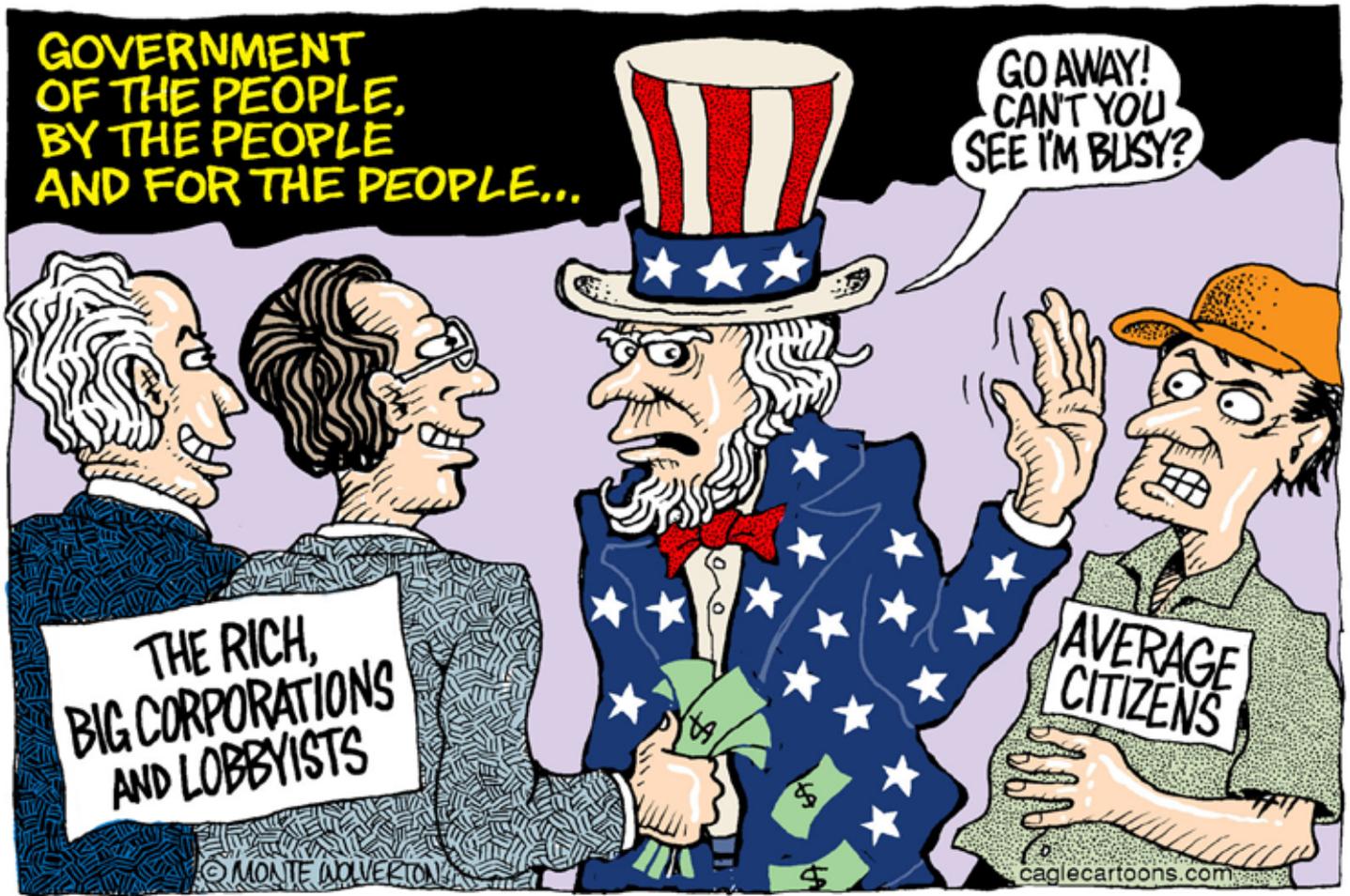
The attorney general recently joined a U.S. Supreme Court battle aimed at reversing a Montana ruling that blocked parochial school students from receiving state tax credit scholarship funds.

Hunter clearly is not defending the rights of the vast majority of Oklahomans who in a 2016 statewide vote expressed strong support for the state Constitution's ban on spending public dollars for religious purposes.

Nor is he acknowledging the will of Oklahomans who in 2018 demanded higher taxes to bolster education funding, supported a two-week teacher walkout, and then booted 12 incumbent lawmakers deemed insufficiently supportive of public ed.

Instead, Hunter is deploying the taxpayer-funded resources of his office to carry water for a small, but well-organized group dedicated to monetizing education – in effect, exploiting the great American common good for profit.

Hunter spins his role in far loftier terms, of course, depicting it as a fight against religious discrimination – one joined by 17 other state attorneys general.



“The ruling by the Montana Supreme Court discriminates against and punishes parents who choose to send their children to religious schools,” he said. “If upheld, it has far-reaching consequences that could threaten school choice programs nationwide, depriving religious, low income and disabled children of a quality education of their choice.

“My colleagues and I encourage the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse this decision for the benefit of the families across the nation who rely on these programs.”

Those working to monetize public education are worried that if the Montana ruling is upheld, it could spell trouble for two Oklahoma laws, including one that allows publicly funded scholarships to underwrite private education for students with disabilities.

“Scholarships” sound so very noble. Let’s call them what they are: vouchers.

Legislators created the first voucher program in 2010 – the Lindsay Nicole Henry Scholarship, named for former Gov. Brad Henry’s late daughter. In the last five years, the state Department of Education budget for the program has jumped from \$3.5 million to \$8 million.

To be sure, that is a miniscule portion of an \$8 billion FY ‘20 education budget. But it’s what the growth represents for future public school funding that is disconcerting.

The Henry scholarship was but the first case of the

voucher camel slipping its nose under the taxpayers’ tent. One year later, the Legislature added the Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship Act – which provided tax credits [think: Montana] to individuals or corporations that donate to a so-called scholarship granting organization [SGO].

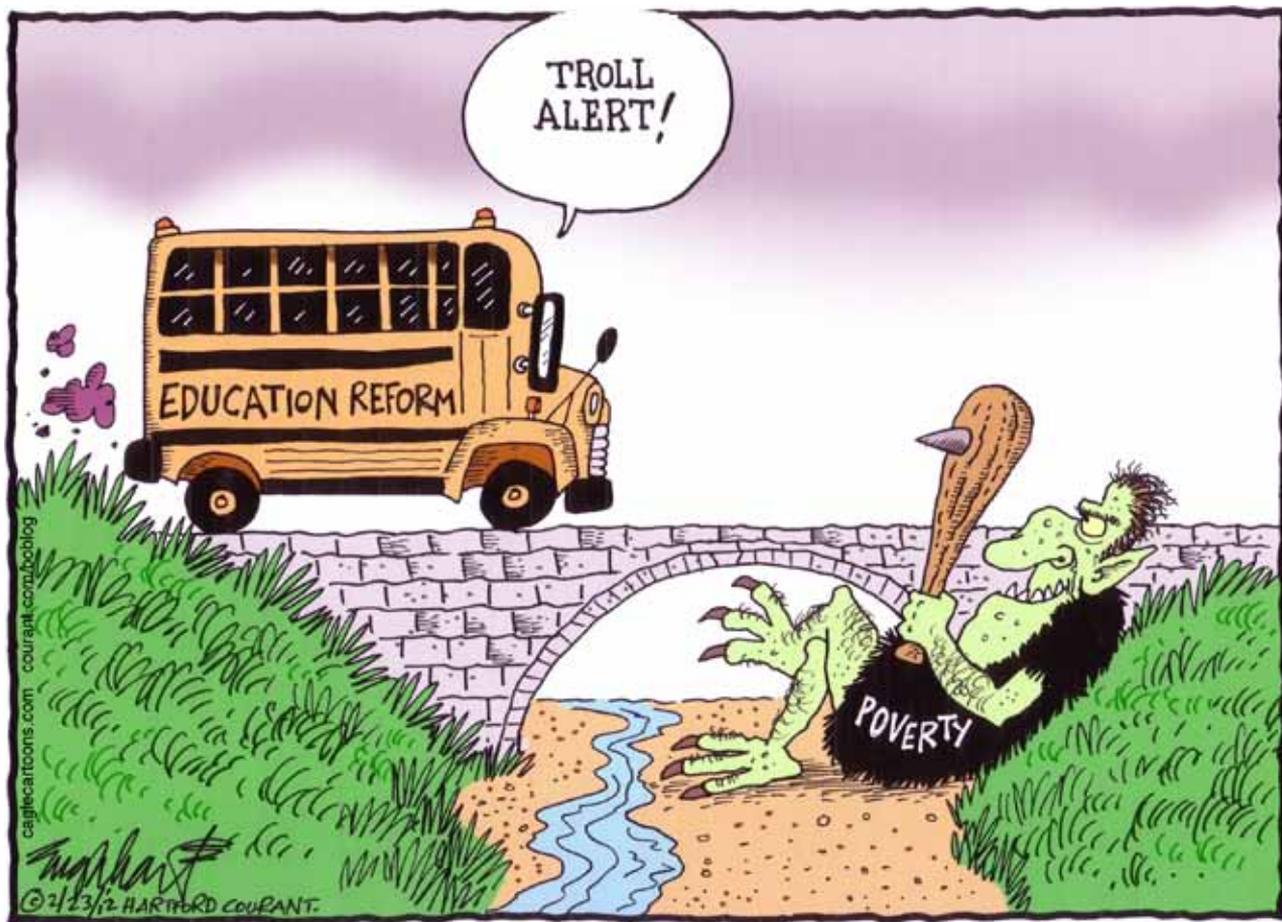
According to the Oklahoma Policy Institute, three SGOs emerged: the Opportunity Scholarship Fund [closely affiliated with OCPA], which primarily grants scholarships to students attending Christian schools; the Catholic Schools Opportunity Scholarship Fund; and the Islamic School Foundation.

How does it affect public school funding when SGO donations are steered into private education? Simple. Donors can collect a generous tax credit – which reduces tax dollars available to spend on Oklahoma’s K-12 schools.

The Legislature threatened to make matters worse last spring, but public ed proponents derailed efforts to hike the tax credits from a \$5 million per fiscal year max to between \$20 million and \$60 million.

Don’t be fooled by Hunter’s opioid lawsuit – remember, one of his key political confidantes, former Senate President Glen Coffee, cashed in on the Purdue Pharma settlement, his law firm collecting \$5.6 million in fees.

Hunter is what he’s always been: a rightwing corporatist whose support of Big Oil and vouchers reflects the state’s ruling class, not its working class.



A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

Douglass, KIPP Comparison Reveals Folly Of Reformers' Achievement Theories

BY JOHN THOMPSON

From 2009-16, students attended two very different middle schools – the 97% low-income Douglass Middle School and 79% low-income KIPP Reach College Preparatory charter school, less than a mile from each other in Oklahoma City.

The neighborhood school, Douglass, had an Academic Performance Index [API] that was less than half of the charter's [and its API was likely to have been inflated in a sad effort to meet No Child Left Behind targets.] KIPP served less than one-third as many special education students [and it didn't have to deal with disabilities that were nearly as serious.]

Douglass has consistently received low "Fs" on state Report Cards, while KIPP received "A's." But how much of student learning is attributable to schools? We know that most learning is attributable

to the socio-economic backgrounds of the parents, and about 10% to 15% is attributable to teachers, according to numerous studies. [see Hanushek et al. 1998; Rockoff 2003; Goldhaber et al. 1999; Rowan et al. 2002; Nye et al. 2004].

Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project, led by Sean Reardon, provides the best possible estimates of how much of student performance is produced by schools. Reardon, Ericka S. Weathers, Erin M. Fahle, Heewon Jang, and Demetra Kalogrides controlled for economic disadvantage and "analyzed 350 million test scores from 2009 to 2016, representing about 50 million students as they attended public schools from third to eighth grades. To compare apples to apples, scores from different state tests were converted to a single national yardstick."

The Stanford study concludes that Douglass stu-

dents scored 3.23 grade levels below the U.S. average, while KIPP students scored 1.85 grade levels above the national average. At first glance, it also appeared that KIPP did a better job of overcoming deficits due to poverty. Douglass scores were 1.2 grade levels lower than schools with similar free/reduced-price lunch percentage, while KIPP scores were 2.93 grade levels higher than schools with similar free/reduced-price lunch percentage.

But were those differences due to recruiting and retaining higher-performing kids who also had more family and social supports? How much “value” did the two schools add to student performance? Twice as many KIPP teachers were inexperienced; were they producing miracles or does the “No Excuses” model push out higher-challenge students?

During those years, Douglass students “improved by 0.14 grade levels [per year] more than schools with similar free/reduced-price lunch percentage.” KIPP scores “improved by 0.07 grade levels [per year] more than schools with similar free/reduced-price lunch percentage.”

For what it’s worth, Douglass was one of the lowest-performing schools in the neighborhood where three of the 20 schools ranked as the lowest-performing in the nation were located, and OKC’s KIPP has been seen as one of the nation’s top KIPP schools. So, what does it mean when Douglass student performance increases by twice the rate of OKC’s KIPP?

And that doesn’t include the learning that came from their participation in sports and other extracurricular activities that the charter didn’t offer.

When traditional [and usually useless] accountability metrics are combined with Reardon’s data, as well as other sources, such as ProPublica’s “Miseducation” database, KIPP’s tax records and data from the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, a fuller picture emerges.

KIPP spent up to \$10,000 per student, which is around \$1,400 more than Oklahoma City Public Schools [OKCPS] spent. That didn’t count its subsidized rent, or the savings it accrued by not providing transportation, sports, or support services for nearly as many high-challenge students.

During this period, KIPP’s four-year attrition rates for low-income and special education students were about 70%. And its extreme suspension rates for 2011-12 were documented by the Office of Civil Rights. KIPP suspended 41% of its students without disabilities once, while suspending 22.5% more than once. It suspended 74% of students with disabilities once. KIPP suspended 52% of disabled students more than once. That was nearly four times of the OKCPS’ multiple suspension rate.

By the way, the Stanford data does more than punch holes in the spin of supposedly “high performing” charters; it allows us to compare the outcomes of the more challenged OKCPS with those of the edu-philanthropists’ darling, the Tulsa Public School [TPS]. Edu-philanthropists bestowed millions of dollars of test-driven, choice-driven reform on the TPS. Tul-

sa’s outcomes indicate they would have been better off had they paid students to dig holes and bury the grant money.

OKCPS students scored 1.62 grade levels below the U.S. average. Its average scores were .68 grade levels lower than districts with similar socioeconomic status, but they improved at almost the same rate. Tulsa’s average scores were .81 grade levels lower than districts with similar socioeconomic status; its racial and economic achievement gaps were worse; and poor students declined further in comparison to districts with similar economic characteristics.

The Stanford data also provides a reality check in terms of the nation’s school improvement strategies. Corporate reform was propelled by the myth of “90 90 90” schools, schools that were supposedly 90% low-income, 90% minority, and in the top 10% in student achievement. This propaganda by rightwing and leftwing reformers convinced the “Billionaires Boys Club” and too many legislatures that “high expectations” and “No Excuses,” along with improved teacher quality, could close the Achievement Gap.

Partially because non-educators’ believed KIPP’s claim it serves the “same” students, corporate school reform was organized around a dubious theory.

They said, correctly, that poor children of color shouldn’t have to wait for society to address economic inequities and racial segregation. But these reformers hypothesized that data, accountability, and competition could rapidly produce shortcuts. They set out to social-engineer a “better teacher,” reward supposedly successful schools such as “No Excuses” charters, and micromanage and/or close failing schools like Douglass.

Reardon provides more evidence that the dominant school improvement model of the last generation was doomed to fail. He concludes that test score patterns are the result of “two phenomena – racial segregation and economic inequality – [that] are intertwined because students of color are concentrated in high-poverty schools.”

Moreover, “There’s a common argument these days

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Looking for extra copies of *The Observer* to share with friends or loved ones? They're available from our OKC partners:

	
Full Circle Books 1900 NW Expressway 405.842.2900	Commonplace Books 1325 N Walker Ave #138 405.534.4540



CRUEL SNAP

8,618 Sooner Households In Jeopardy Of Losing Their Food Stamps Under Trump Plan

BY ADAM PYKE

President Donald Trump's latest attack on working families will hit especially hard in the states that voted for him: More than half of the people who are set to lose access to food stamps under regulations proposed this summer live in states that went for Trump in 2016.

One in every 12 people who receives food stamps nationwide will lose them under the policy – some 3.6 million people, according to new analysis by Mathematica, the private policy analysis firm the Department of Agriculture [USDA] has relied upon for the past 40 years.

In Oklahoma, the Mathematica-USDA analysis estimates 8,616 households would lose Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP] benefits under the Trump proposal.

"I was surprised by the extent of the impact in some of the southern states, such as Texas," Mathematica senior research programmer Sarah Lauffer said.

The impact was always going to be severe in states that apply the current rules in the most generous fashion, but southern states have generally not extended their eligibility lines quite as far.

Despite that, Lauffer said, her team found "34% of elderly Texans receiving benefits will lose them through this rule."

Almost 400,000 people in Texas currently receiving SNAP benefits would lose them. Another 328,000 in

Florida, 200,000 in New York, 97,000 in Georgia, and 176,000 in Washington state face cuts, to name just a few standouts.

Almost one in five Wisconsin households currently getting help with their groceries will lose the benefit, as well as 16% of such households in Oregon, Nevada, Iowa, and Delaware. Two of every 13 SNAP households in Minnesota and Texas will have to find food money elsewhere.

The administration plans to slash benefits by ending a popular, bipartisan policy known as broad-based categorical eligibility [BBCE]. That policy protects low-wage workers from a quirk of poverty-assistance law known as the “benefits cliff,” whereby earning or saving slightly too much money can trigger a low-income family’s eviction from public assistance programs.

In Oklahoma, the BBCE policy covers all households with net income at or below 100% of poverty and either [1] gross income at or below 130% of poverty or [2] any elderly individuals or individuals with disabilities.

The Mathematic-USDA analysis forecasts 3% of Oklahoma households would lose SNAP benefits under the Trump plan.

Ending the expanded eligibility system for SNAP will also boot roughly half a million kids out of free school meal programs nationwide. The administration has insisted those kids could all hop right back in by filling out application forms currently mooted by the BBCE system, but experts have warned it doesn’t necessarily work that way.

The administration forecasts a \$10 billion total draw-down in SNAP spending over the next five years once the policy is enacted. It didn’t estimate the long-term costs of making families hungrier and more desperate.

“Allowing families whose gross income is a little over the poverty level to receive food assistance helps make sure that both the kids and adults in the family are able to eat,” said Lisa Davis, Senior Vice President at the poverty policy center No Kid Hungry. “Children that don’t get the nutrition that they need end up with worse health-care outcomes, worse physical and cognitive development, they have poorer outcomes in school, they find it harder to concentrate, they don’t do as well on tests, there are more behavioral issues.”

The administration has always known it would be yanking food assistance away from millions. Department of Agriculture [USDA] officials said as much when they announced the new regulations in August.

“It doesn’t make any sense to us,” Food Research Action Center’s Ellen Vollinger said. “Taking food away from people is just going to make their food security situation worse, make them hungrier. It will have a negative effect on the economy at a time when some economists are warning us we would be in for another downturn.”

Non-profit groups across the country are dutifully

filing public comments criticizing the rule and pointing out all the ways the USDA appears to have ignored evidence, congressional intent, and practical facts in issuing its proposal. The 60-day window for such comments closes later in the fall, and the administration will likely face legal challenges if it attempts to handle the objections with a pro-forma sweep of the hand.

But USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue has been determined to kill BBCE for months, ever since Congress decided to retain the policy in last year’s Farm Bill. There’s a strong chance the cut – in some form – will have kicked in by this time next year.

These families earn a little more than the statutory maximum income for SNAP eligibility. But that doesn’t mean they can afford to see even the modest food assistance they currently receive disappear from their monthly budgets.

“They’re making trade-offs between what bills to pay. Do they pay the rent, or get a car fixed so they



CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
COMMUNITY
ACUPUNCTURE

An Affordable Good Health Practice

Karen Wilson, M.Ac.

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

CentralOklahomaAcupuncture.com



can keep going to work, or keep the lights on?” Davis said. “We see those families cut back on food first. [BBCE] helps make sure that both the kids and adults in the family are able to eat.”

BARELY-RED STATES HARDEST HIT

As state-level figures suggest, the categorical eligibility smackdown is going to hit especially hard in four states where very narrow Trump wins in 2016 tilted the electoral college irrevocably in his favor.

Trump won Wisconsin by less than 23,000 votes last time. He'll have dumped 118,000 Wisconsin residents off of food stamps by Election Day if the rule goes through as planned.

One in every nine people currently benefiting from SNAP in Michigan will be booted under the rule – roughly 165,000 men, women, and children in total. Trump won the state by just 10,704 votes last go round.

In Pennsylvania, which Trump carried by just under 47,000 votes, his food stamps cut will dump more than five times that many people off the food-aid rolls.

The potential economic and electoral self-sabotage is particularly striking given that bipartisan majorities in Congress have repeatedly rejected this precise policy, as recently as last year. The right-wing crusade against broad-based categorical eligibility has never won a majority of Republican hearts and minds. Like the vast majority of voters who oppose cutting food stamps, the rump of GOP elected understand that BBCE is an effective investment in children's long-term futures, local economies' short-term health, and working families' progress up the income ladder.

“For the most part the attacks on SNAP in recent years have not been successful. Congress has decided not to weaken snap in the 2018 farm bill, rejected multiple crazy assaults on it,” Vollinger said.

“We're hopeful that there will be enough comment and insight brought to bear during this comment period that the administration would reconsider.”

HUNGER'S RIPPLE EFFECT

It's not just SNAP recipients who will feel the im-

pact: The suffering the administration plans to inflict on working-poor families will likely also be felt in higher-income households, too, in the form of a broader economic slowdown. Consumer spending drives the whole economy. Cutting SNAP benefits means consumers have less to spend.

USDA staff issued updated estimates on the economic multiplier effects of SNAP spending earlier this summer. Though the Trump administration team's official guesstimate is slightly lower than past multipliers, the report includes a variety of models. Each additional dollar of SNAP benefit paid out generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in total economic activity when the economy is struggling, their tables show.

The agency also broke the economic impacts out by sector, with some surprising results. The trade and transportation industry takes the largest hit from SNAP cuts. But across nine major industrial sectors the agency analyzed, the level of cuts to be imposed by the new eligibility restrictions stand to kill between 27,000 and 32,000 jobs per year over the next half-decade.

Forecasters who make their livings predicting what the economy will do next are already starting to worry that a nationwide recession looms.

Multiple states have experienced recessions within their own borders in the past two years, and at least two appear to be on the brink of entering new contractions based on sudden jumps in local unemployment rates.

The national economy is still growing, but at a slower pace over the past two quarters than previously. The investor class is souring on long-term U.S. government bonds, producing the dreaded yet tediously named a “yield-curve inversion” – a phenomenon that does not guarantee a recession, but which has occurred prior to every U.S. recession in the last half-century.

The country's manufacturing sector had been expanding for three straight years, but in August, it contracted – again, not a surefire sign of an overall downturn, but certainly an unhealthy indicator.

Presidents almost always get too much credit for good economies and too much blame for bad ones, as the financier and policy expert Barry Ritholtz noted in a recent column.

But Trump is doing more to actively poke the markets in the eye than your average president. And while the economist and investor classes grow alarmed about the sorts of sophisticated technical indicators that make the business pages, the administration is also planning to jab the working poor with a sharp stick.

Whether the SNAP cuts Trump seeks would help tip the country into a recession or not, they are certain to make life harder for people ill-positioned to absorb such a pinch. Presidents seeking re-election generally rise or fall with the health of the economy they're credited – fairly or unfairly – with creating.

© ThinkProgress

The American
Dream Starts
@your library

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER

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

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

Call 405.478.8700 for details.

Fat-Cat Hern Straight Out Of GOP Central Casting

BY KEN NEAL

I did not pay a great deal of attention to the 2018 Congressional race in Tulsa mostly because it is cut and dried that a Republican bleating the usual GOP inanities would win.

I was right about that. A recent article by the Oklahoman's Chris Casteel snapped me awake when he reported that winner Kevin Hern had loaned himself \$500,000 and "borrowed" another \$600,000 from a bank that he helped create.

Hern, according to his own report to the clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, has assets between \$38.7 million and \$92.9 million. Due to the fuzzy way Congress has allowed itself to be questioned on such matters, we can't get an exact figure like might be required by Hern's bank.

By any measure, he's rich. According to Casteel, Hern is by far the wealthiest member of Oklahoma's delegation and possibly the richest ever.

Gee, we finally have something to brag about!

Hern is not the first to buy a public office, but boy, did he do it up brown.

Hern, remember, finished second in the GOP primary to Tim Harris, who served 16 years as Tulsa's district attorney before he decided not to run in 2014.

Harris, a graduate of the short-lived Oral Roberts University law school, was a rock-ribbed conservative himself, but he was no match for Hern's money in the runoff.

I happened to see my old friend and sparring partner after he beat Hern in the primary and remarked, "Looks like you are headed for Washington."

He shook his head: "No, he's got too much money. I won't beat him."

Harris, an honest man with impeccable GOP credentials, was right. Hern beat him in the runoff primary. The reporting to the Federal Election Commission tells the story. Hern spent \$2,940,362 to Harris' \$487,812.

The redoubtable Democrat Tim Gilpin lost to Hern in the general election despite an enthusiastic, well-run campaign. Hern outspent Gilpin as heavily as he did Harris.

Voters didn't know how lopsided the spending was on Election Day, of course, because such accounting is required only after the vote. Only now is the FEC asking why Hern is not repaying the bank loan, which is said to be "renegotiated."

Under the sloppy rules about money, a candidate can borrow money from a bank only if the terms are no more favorable to other borrowers of comparable

creditworthiness and repayment is assured.

Hern, unlike most other borrowers, did not have to pledge anything as collateral for the massive loan. Just like everybody else!

In all fairness, Hern, wealthy as he is, will no doubt pay the bank back, but it is a small example of how wealth dominates our politics these days.

And while mentioning fairness, the country has been blessed to have many wealthy men and women who have contributed greatly to the country.

Money has always dominated U.S. politics, but there has never been such domination before the U.S. Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in 2010 that lets corporations and other organizations contribute to political campaigns with virtually no accounting.

To counter the big gifts, candidates virtually beg via the social media on the internet for contributions, injecting huge amounts into the process. The many small gifts help candidates match huge corporate contributions.

In short, we are awash in money; money spent on dubious advertising, campaign consultants, polling, travel and lobbyists to see that Congress takes no action to stop the spending merry go round.

Like so many before him, Hern seems to think he can go to Washington and immediately lead the Congress. Perhaps that can be crossed off to naiveté. Maybe Hern will set about to learn about Congress and the government and ultimately do great things there. We can only hope.

Judging from his campaign rhetoric, it doesn't look promising:

"Kevin will always fight to defend and protect our conservative principles" that seem to be:

1. Family values, i.e., anti-abortion, anti-gay.
2. Repeal "Obamacare" [on what, the 50th try?]
3. Secure the border, at a time when illegal crossings from Mexico are at a 50-year low.
4. Secure gun rights for everyone.
5. Fight regulation of business.
6. A "simplified" tax system.

If you think you have heard such promises before, you have.

It is right out of the Republican playbook, which as we know, has brought us to the present precipice in Washington.

Oh yeah, he thinks he can run government like a business.

Hern will fit right in.

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

Restoring Earned Income Tax Credit Necessary And Overdue

BY PAUL SHINN

When the Legislature ended Oklahoma's Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC] refundability in 2016, they reduced an essential tax benefit for over 200,000 Oklahoma families. Prior to that change, if the amount a family received from the EITC was larger than the amount of state income tax they owed, that family got the difference as a refund.

Now, families can claim the credit only up to the amount they owe in state income taxes. Families use these refunds to meet basic needs like food and housing, and to pay off traffic tickets, court costs, and other debts.

By ending refundability, we've raised taxes – as much as \$279 – on those who can least afford it, low-income parents raising children.

It is time for Oklahoma to restore our EITC in the next legislative session. After that important first step, we can begin plans to increase the amount of the Oklahoma EITC.

LESS EITC BENEFIT THAN MOST STATES

Of the 42 states with income taxes, two-thirds [29] have EITCs. The federal government created the first EITC. As states added their own credits, most states

made them a fixed percentage of the federal one. Oklahoma's EITC is 5% of the federal credit. Only Montana has a lower credit than Oklahoma.

We are one of just four states where the credit is not refundable, and the other three of those states have credits that are four to six times larger than Oklahoma's.

Simply raising Oklahoma's EITC to the typical national level would return an additional \$433 to a married couple with a child making just under \$20,000, and about \$300 to other families with children.

Oklahoma's low-income families face the same struggles as those in other states. They deserve the same generosity here that they would get in South Carolina, Illinois, or any of the 23 other states that have more valuable credits than Oklahoma.

This year, six more states expanded their EITCs. All but one of these states had a credit larger than Oklahoma's before this round of increases.

NOT LOW TAX STATE IF INCOME LOW

Oklahoma has the fifth highest taxes for the lowest 20% of earners, according to the Institute for Tax and Economic Policy [ITEP]. The average low-income household in this group [earning \$12,000 or less], pays 13.2% of their income, or \$1,584 per year, in state and local taxes. Those in the highest 20% by income, on the other hand, pay just 8.2% of their income in state and local taxes.

This makes our tax system among the most regressive in the nation, meaning that low-income taxpayers pay a higher share of income in taxes than their higher-income neighbors. EITCs help states cushion the regressive nature of state taxes.

RESTORING EITC NECESSARY FIRST STEP

The EITC has enjoyed strong bipartisan support at both the national and state levels. Many factors help explain this support, including the fact that the credit encourages work and reduces poverty. Further, the EITC improves mothers' and children's health.

Efforts to restore refundability failed in the 2018 and 2019 sessions, even though the cost – under \$30 million – was dwarfed by the \$1.8 billion in general revenue growth in the last two years.

Oklahoma can afford to restore refundability in 2020 and is overdue in doing so. Once we take that important first step, it will be time to follow the lead of other states by increasing the state Earned Income Tax Credit.

Paul Shinn is Budget and Tax Senior Policy Analyst at Oklahoma Policy Institute; okpolicy.org.

Deborah Astley

Summersgaze
Cdastley@aol.com

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

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

BadVoter.org

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

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

Flu Shots Offered Across State Oct. 8-11

The Oklahoma State Department of Health will be offering flu shots at no out-of-pocket expense in October as part of a statewide full-scale disaster exercise with local county health departments and the regional medical response system.

According to OSDH, the flu vaccination component is designed to test the state's ability to respond and provide mass immunizations to communities in the event of a public health emergency such as an infectious disease outbreak or bio-hazardous threat.

To fully test this capability in a real-world event, the participating county health departments – including the OKC-County Health Department and Tulsa Health Department – will incorporate members of the public who will elect to receive a flu shot to protect them during the current flu season.

“This is an opportunity for us to practice working with our local, state and federal partners to respond as we would in the event of an emergency or disaster,” said Scott Sproat, director of the OSDH Emergency Preparedness and Response Service. “We are testing all of our jurisdictional regions as they activate point of dispensing [POD] sites at various locations. Being able to provide flu shots to the public is an added bonus.”

Flu vaccination is recommended each year for everyone six months of age and older. It is especially important for young children, pregnant women, older adults and people with chronic conditions who may be severely impacted by symptoms. When more people are vaccinated against the flu, there is less opportunity for flu to spread in families, schools and

Schools

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

that maybe we should stop worrying about segregation and just create high-quality schools everywhere,” said Reardon. Since he could not find a single district where the economic and racial achievement gap was closed, “This study shows that it doesn't seem to be possible.”

Reardon couldn't find a district whose outcomes support the idea that accountability-driven, competition-driven reform could close the achievement gap. But he participated in a study of 54 California schools where children of color performed better than the norm, and learned that “districts that have been able to find and keep fully prepared teachers,” and not rely on emergency certification, have lower achievement gaps.

We should heed Reardon's finding, “It doesn't seem that we have any knowledge about how to create high-quality schools at scale under conditions of concentrated poverty.” So ... “And if we can't do that, then we have to do something about segregation.”

communities.

Twenty-one locations will provide flu shots as part of the statewide disaster exercise that begins Oct. 7:

OCTOBER 8

Alva Recreation Complex
Bristow High School
Cotton County Expo Building
Hugo Agriplex [OSU Extension Office]
Jackson County Expo Center
Kiamichi Technology Center
Laverne School [Shackelford Hall]
Oklahoma State Fair Park [OKC]
Oral Roberts University Mabee Center [Tulsa]
Pontotoc Technology Center
Tillman County Health Department

OCTOBER 9

Claremore Expo Center
Elk City Convention Center

OCTOBER 10

Beaver County Fairgrounds
Cleveland County Health Department [Norman]
Craig County Fairgrounds
Meridian Technology Center [Stillwater Campus]
Redlands Community College [El Reno]
William Ray Memorial Park [Madill]

OCTOBER 11

Pittsburg County Health Department
Seminole State College

Following the exercise, all county health departments will offer regular flu clinics for the public. Contact a local county health department for clinic times and insurance information.

The levels of economic and racial segregation we have in Oklahoma won't be going away anytime soon. So, we need to reject the failed reforms that were imposed on our schools. Then we should respect the cognitive and social science which explains why shortcuts, such as the “teacher quality” fad and school closures, won't work, and seek equity in the entire community, not just in school buildings.

It makes no sense to use the stress of testing and competition to overcome the stress of poverty and segregation. To provide equity, we must bring the full array of adults from our community into our schools, and bring our students out into the full diversity of Oklahoma City.

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



My Journey From NRA Member To Supporter Of Resonable Gun Control

BY LARRY KINCHELOE

These ponderings are not an attempt to change anyone's beliefs about guns or gun control. It is just the journey of one person.

I like guns.

I was raised with guns and was taught to respect them from an early age. When I was 10 years old, my job was to take a five-shot .22 rifle and patrol my grandmother's chicken coop and garden. She lived in Choctaw and, at that time, people would drop off their cats thinking that they would find a good home in the country. But these cats became feral and would attack my grandmother's chickens and this was the main source of her food protein.

So every morning and every evening, I patrolled the chicken coop and garden and shot any stray cats or rabbits that dared to venture onto my grandmother's farm.

Today, if you saw 10-year-old boy walking by himself with a loaded gun, I am sure that DHS would be called in a heartbeat. Of course, those were different times and maybe we were just more responsible.

My first gun was a Christmas gift at age 12 and it was an automatic .410 shotgun. My first loan I arranged with from a bank was to purchase a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun at age 16. I chose the Mossberg because it was one of the few shotguns that

PUBLIC FORUM

had the safety on the top, which made it easy for me to shoot as I shoot all long guns left-handed.

At age 18, I joined my father as a member of the NRA. At that time the NRA was an organization that focused on hunting, marksmanship and sporting activities. It wasn't until the mid-'70s that the NRA became more politicized. But for the average NRA supporter, the political leanings of the NRA had little impact.

Then Neal Knox came to power in the NRA. He wanted to roll back gun laws, even the ones that restricted the sale of machine guns to the public. He believed that gun-control laws threatened basic American freedoms and that there were malignant forces that sought nothing less than total disarmament.

Again, for the average citizen at the time, the internal struggles with the NRA had little bearing. All of my male relatives owned guns but none of them were looking to own a machine gun, a .50 caliber AMR or an AR-15 with 100-round magazine.

But in 2012, things changed when 12 people were killed and 58 were wounded by gunfire at a movie theater in Aurora, CO. Since then, AR-15 rifles have been used to commit almost every major mass shooting in the United States.

One of the problems with collecting statistics is that there is no agreed-upon definition for what is a "mass shooting." The definitions range from any action where more than three-five people are killed or wounded in a single event.

Because of this, if there is a drive-by shooting between two rival gangs and four people are killed or injured, then that is considered a mass shooting. This skews the data towards the argument that most mass shooting incidents are caused by handguns.

At this point, the common argument that was made by the NRA was that "guns don't kill people, people kill people." And for several years, I believed this argument to be true and valid.

But now I'm having to re-think that argument.

When Connor Betts can kill nine people and wound another 27 people in 32 seconds in Dayton, then I think it has to be considered that there is an issue related to the gun itself.

If you Google the top-selling deer hunting rifles, none of them carry a magazine that allows for more than five rounds of ammunition. Shotguns used for duck hunting have to have a plug in them so they can carry no more than three rounds. Why? Because at one time the duck populations were being decimated by high-capacity shotguns and so to give the ducks a "sporting chance" the federal rules about plugging shotguns were passed.

It seems that if we are worried about giving ducks a sporting chance then maybe we should give that same consideration to human beings.

Obviously, any type of restrictions on "assault type" rifles and large capacity magazines will not stop mass shootings. But it would most likely decrease the number of deaths. With a five-shot deer rifle, you have to take the time to aim; shoot and then reload, which would significantly have decreased the amount of deaths in Dayton, OH or any other mass shooting.

There is an invalid assumption that any limitation on any firearms will lead to the eventual disarming of the citizenship of the United States. When people need to use such extreme arguments, it only signals the weakness of their original premise.

From 1994-2004, there was a ban on assault type rifles. During that time, my life did not change and no one came knocking on my door to collect my trusted Mossberg shotgun.

Again, not trying to change anyone's mind on these issues. Just tracing my journey from NRA member to a supporter of reasonable gun control restriction.

Proud owner of reasonable guns ...
Dr. Larry Kincheloe lives in Oklahoma City.

Why The Interest In Assault Rifles?

BY BOB DARCY

Millions of versions of the assault rifle now circulate among American civilians. While civilian versions are semi-automatic, the military versions have three modes: semi-automatic, fully automatic, and burst. The civilian versions give the consumer the feel and look of an assault weapon. With some effort they can quietly be adapted to military mode. Why the interest in something that looks and feels like an assault rifle?

The assault rifle has many ancestors but the most immediate is the World War I German Empire's MP 18. Trench warfare led to a stalemate in which massive advances were stopped with machine guns and artillery. The German Empire realized massive infantry waves alone could not break the trench stalemate.

They created a new type of unit: the *Sturmtruppen*. Small units of highly trained storm or shock troops would infiltrate enemy weak spots enabling a breakthrough for the following infantry. Shock troop combat would be at close quarters, in enemy trenches, buildings, pill boxes and the like.

These storm troops needed a new weapon. Firing accuracy was not relevant, rapid, relatively indis-

criminate, fire was. Face to face with the enemy they needed a reliable weapon spouting lethal bullets in the enemy's general direction.

Close fighting in confined quarters required a short barrel. The MP 18 was such a rifle. The 49.2-inch standard infantry rifle, the Empire's G98, could fire 15 rounds per minute; the 32.8-inch MP 18, 350 to 500 rounds per minute. The assault rifle evolved through various wars to become today's AK 47 and the ArmaLite AR 15 in their many variants.

What use may a civilian make of such a weapon? The motives for purchasing a rifle include collecting, hunting, sport and home protection. A collector prizes a pristine object in the original box. A serious collector would rarely, if ever fire the weapon. Further, for a collector, the possibility of converting to military mode is sufficient. Actually doing so, like firing it, will diminish the rifle's value. Why would a collector want something held by millions of others, available everywhere, anyway?

The ideal hunting rifle is long-barreled with an accurate but slow rate of fire, typically bolt action, or a specialized shotgun. The sort of damage the assault rifle does spoils the meat or trophy. Sport shooting demands rapid, accurate fire.

In the Olympic Biathlon a favorite is the AN-SCHÜTZ bolt-action 22-caliber rimfire. For Home Protection a double-barrel sawed-off shotgun is best. The reduced length facilitates use in close quarters like hallways. Shotgun pellets can penetrate drywall yet be lethal to an intruder behind the wall. In Oklahoma the shotgun barrel must be at least 18 inches.

A civilian-use assault rifle is useful for quickly producing human casualties in relatively small spaces; a movie theater, a party, a club, a concert, classrooms. In these situations rapid, sustained, deadly fire need not be accurate. A lone gunman wielding a semi-automatic assault rifle has been shown to quickly achieve the desired casualties.

Attacking a strong point in your neighborhood, a police station, a UN troop convoy coming to confiscate your guns, or a nearby enemy bivouac is not for the lone gunman. At least five or six like-minded and similarly armed neighbors are needed.

A car bomb can give a few valuable seconds advantage by destroying defenses and disorienting defenders. An assault rifle attack can then follow. A stolen local police vehicle strategically left at the target will not attract too much attention. It makes an ideal car bomb. The driver may even be able to walk away and join the assault.

Even without such local targets or assault weapon armed associates, a man can sit in his recliner, beer in one hand, assault rifle on his lap, ammo boxes scattered on the floor, and fantasize.

Dr. Bob Darcy is a retired Oklahoma State University political science professor.

The NRA-Ruled America Of The Future

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

Freedom is arguably America's most cherished right and most of us enjoy a modicum on any given day. But is there such a thing as having too much freedom? Of course there is. The danger is abusing that freedom at the expense of others' freedom, maybe even their lives in a nation seemingly ruled by the NRA.

Today's gun culture in America is far different from yesterday's. Back in the day when I was growing up my family had guns. My maternal grandfather owned a World War I .45 pistol; he also had a 30-30 rifle he used for hunting in his younger years. When he died, both guns eventually went to a cousin in Ohio whose main hobby was muskets.

I had readily given my permission for Cousin Gail to inherit them. I knew they would be well cared for, used with respect and never harm another human. My cousin added them to his small collection.

When Dad returned from World War II, he had a bird dog named Sport. They were inseparable and I loved him almost as much as Dad did. I don't remember ever hunting with the two of them.

Somehow Sport fell ill and it soon became obvious he was suffering and dying. I can't recall what gun Dad used to put him out of his misery. He made me watch how one puts down a pet who's loved as family. We both cried as we dug a grave for ol' Sport and gently put him in it.

Thus was I introduced pretty early in life to death and guns.

In my teens living with Dad and my new stepmom, he was the proud owner of a 12-gauge shotgun, a pump action Winchester. I inherited it when my father passed away but I have not used it. My grandson is now taking good care of it.

I still remember the day Dad taught me how to shoot. He warned me to stand firm and to use my upper torso, not just my shoulder, to absorb the kickback when I squeezed the trigger. I do remember both the noise and the pain of that first shot with that gun.

Dad made me get right back up and shoot several more times. I avoided landing back on the ground.

PUBLIC FORUM



In basic training I remembered that first time when we trained to use our 30-caliber rifles to launch hand grenades. It was even a bigger shock to me but I did stay standing.

In visits to my paternal grandparents, there was the ever-present pistol of Granddad's. Dressed and with his hat on, he'd go over to the big bureau on one side of the dining room. He'd open the top drawer, carefully pull out the holster holding the loaded pistol and put it on his belt. He was then ready for the day's work as the undersheriff at the Lincoln County jail in downtown Chandler.

Yes, most of our generation were familiar with guns in a way that did not portend violence and my family knew Granddad one day might have to use his in apprehending someone.

One night the police chief brought in the town drunk for his usual weekend stay of free lodging and three squares a day. He forgot to remove his pistol from its holster and put it in a safe place. When Granddad as jailer and the two reached the first landing on the stairs to the jail, the drunken prisoner lurched toward the chief, grabbed the holstered gun and fired it.

The bullet struck my grandfather's lower leg. It gave him fits the rest of his life.

I probably got a little better education in gun use than did most. Guns were fairly common because many I knew hunted and did target shooting. Our guns went home in a safe place after we cleaned

them.

Today many own guns for a much different purpose of self-defense. We'll probably never know how many guns there are in America, but I feel certain it is way more than the 300 million-plus of us.

Unfortunately we have far too many problems that many try to solve by using guns, chief among them are differences of beliefs, skin color and language.

Before whites came here there were Indians and Mexicans. Although we now dominate the color line, whites believe in resolving these differences with violence, including use of guns by untrained, permitless gun users.

Hence, Deep South lynchings, Tulsa race massacre, Sandy Hook, Ferguson, Parkland, Las Vegas, to cite a few.

When the new census count comes out in the next decade, whites may well be in the minority. Certainly that will occur before 2030 and we will be in dire need of peaceful ways to resolve our differences.

There should be no question that Americans need to get along with others before the population begins to shrink due to gun violence. Despite what the NRA and gun manufacturers might desire, there is such a thing as too much. That's correct, too many guns will not a better society make.

Oologah resident Bob D. Rounsavell currently serves as chair of the Eastern Flyer Coalition of communities between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. His wife Maria serves as his editor.



My Generation Deserves To Feel Uncomfortable About Climate Crisis

BY MARK Y.A. DAVIES

For all the people of my generation who want to blame Greta Thunberg for creating eco-anxiety in young people, the real reason young people have eco-anxiety is because of the climate crisis and mass extinction event being caused by the inaction of our generation.

I am 53 years old. My generation was coming of age right as the general public was learning of the reality of climate change. James Hansen of NASA testified before Congress when I was in college, and a scientific consensus rapidly formed during my young adult years that anthropogenic climate change was a reality.

Yet my generation has spent most of our adult lives squandering the opportunity to address climate change before it became a full-blown crisis.

And now some of us feel “uncomfortable” when

Greta and other young people call us out for our inaction.

We don't want Greta to “catastrophize” what is happening by talking about the end of human civilization like it really is the end of human civilization or by talking about the sixth great extinction that has already begun like it really is an extinction. Apparently, we want to keep on living in denial and not change much of anything or make the sacrifices that the reality of our situation calls for.

We sure as hell better feel uncomfortable when we hear Greta and the other young people whose futures we have stolen because our generation blew it. We spent 30 years listening to climate scientist after climate scientist warn us of the climate chaos to come, and year and year we just kept increasing emissions of greenhouse gases.

PUBLIC FORUM

If we don't want to be made to feel uncomfortable, we had better take what's left of our generation's time to make up for our pathetic inaction in the face of the clear scientific consensus that climate change is real and that it is primarily caused by human activity.

We have ignored our moral responsibility to act ur-

gently to preserve a livable climate far too long. We deserve to be uncomfortable. We deserve to be much more than uncomfortable.

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

The Game's Afoot

BY BOB BEARDEN

The impeachment inquiry is on! The investigation into the president and his many, many, many lies, his many, questionable tweets and his general conduct is finally going to happen. It is as Nancy Pelosi said in her announcement a sad day for our nation and its citizens.

But we must curb the overreach of this man and his attempts to subvert our democratic republic into an arm of Trump holdings. We must learn if he has colluded [there's his favorite word again] with a foreign power to subvert our democracy. We must find out just how much he has damaged our nation. That he openly flouts the law of the land there can be no question.

But does what he is doing rise to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors, that is the question? Since he and his cabal of toadies will not allow the normal business of our Congress to be conducted leaves open the questions that need to be answered as to whether he has violated the law.

In so many ways it appears that he has, and he has essentially left the House of Representatives no other choice but to proceed with an impeachment inquiry.

Many critics are saying that the American public is against impeachment, but that was even more so

the case during the early stages of the Watergate hearings on the impeachment of Nixon. Polls during that time showed only 19% of the public favored impeaching Nixon. Current polls say 39% favor impeachment now. It is obvious that a larger segment of our citizens favor impeachment than did in the Watergate years!

Polling can't be the driving factor behind an impeachment inquiry; the truth must be what motivates!

But there isn't much choice left but the road to impeachment since the president and his henchpeople continue to refuse to follow the rule of law. How it will turn out no one knows. But it is what it is, and public opinion will rise, or fall based on what the House inquiry finds.

And it is a sad day for our nation, but it is inevitable given what this man has done and how he has openly flouted the law and openly encouraged those around him to do likewise! Whether you are Republican or Democrat you should want the rule of law to apply equally to every citizen of this nation regardless whether it be the president or anyone else!
Bob Bearden is chair of the Board of Trustees of the Central Labor Federation and a member of Mayflower Congregational Church, UCC, in OKC.

RIP, A True American Hero

BY WALLACE COLLINS

I am writing to make sure you are aware of the passing of a true American hero, Zee Howell. He was the absolute embodiment of The Greatest Generation!

Zee served in the Navy, trained as a diver during World War II. He related to me how he walked the hull of the battleship Oklahoma after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Zee was among those scrambling to save as many sailors as possible from those sunken ships. He re-

called hearing the poor souls trapped inside, tapping to let rescuers know that there were survivors still inside. He showed me pictures of the arrangement of multiple large cranes attempting to right the capsized USS Oklahoma, but it was all in vain.

A proud sailor, Zee survived having two ships blown out from under him – the first was a barge of some kind, the second was the USS Indianapolis, the heavy cruiser that delivered vital parts to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



PARADISE LOST

An Autobiography Of A Frustrated Activist

BY CHRISTIAAN MITCHELL

In March 2013, as a part of a classmate's law school project, I took my first step into the Hawaii Legislature to testify at a hearing. What started as a favor turned into a life-changing experience.

I saw, for the first time in my life, that I could actually affect the world of politics; that my words and actions could, in their own small way, change at least part of the world.

Like many Millennials, I was hiding in school from a wrecked economy and the spiritual wasteland of American life, straining for a sense of myself and my place in the world.

And then, here it was: I could make the world a better place ... there was sustenance to be found in our civic religion.

It was the day that I changed from being a denizen to being a citizen. And I threw myself headlong into it: by the time the 2014 legislative session rolled

around, there were no less than 12 bills I had drafted that were introduced on the floor of the Legislature.

I say that not to brag, but to illustrate just how quickly the transformation from disengagement to meaningful participation in the political process can be under the right circumstance.

Part of the reason that I was able to get involved so quickly was because Hawaii had made it so easy to do.

In Hawaii, the Legislature is completely open. There are no metal detectors; there are no security guards other than a few state troopers wandering about the building; there aren't even doors to get into the building. But the physical openness of the building is merely a metaphor for the legislative process.

Legislative committee hearings are widely publicized and open to the public. Anyone can appear as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



NEWSMAKERS SERIES

HOSTED BY THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER

10.10.19 | 6-7 PM
FULL CIRCLE BOOKS



JOIN OBSERVER EDITOR ARNOLD HAMILTON,
STATE REP. ANDY FUGATE AND OSU
JOURNALISM PROFESSOR JOEY SENAT
FOR A FREE, ONE- HOUR DISCUSSION OF
HOW STATE LEADERS' ACTIONS ARE
IMPACTING THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW.



Paradise Lost

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

a witness to testify on any bill before any legislative committee.

Of course, committee chairs have control over the length and amount of testimony, but the norm is that if you show up, you get to speak.

All of this community engagement is facilitated by a very user-friendly and comprehensive web-based system for finding information about bills and hearings. You can submit written testimony online, and can sign up for alerts to notify you when a bill is about to be heard, has been modified, is going to be voted on, etc.

In short, Hawaii provides basically every tool imaginable to make it easy for citizens to engage with the process.

After graduating, I returned to my home state of Oklahoma, fresh off finding my identity as a citizen, and ready to put the lessons I learned to work making Oklahoma a better place.

Imagine my shock at finding a state Capitol basically empty of people except those paid to be there; a legislative information system is that is unreliable and difficult to navigate; and most shocking of all, that most legislative decision-making is done without substantial public testimony.

It would be easy to write this off as a function of the partisan one-sidedness of our politics. But Hawaii's Legislature is actually more one-sided than Oklaho-

ma's. There is currently one Republican in the state Senate, and there have been times in the past decade when there were zero. The balance in the House is not any better: there are only five Republican representatives.

Perhaps it's a function of them having more resources? Based on personal observation, it's pretty clear that Hawaii is more likely to spend money on its government. That's not because they necessarily have more to work with. Hawaii's state gross domestic product is less than half that of Oklahoma, and it has roughly one-third of the population.

Maybe Oklahoma is just more corrupt than Hawaii? While that might make for an easy way out, anyone familiar with the political history of Hawaii would find it a hard pill to swallow.

But whatever the reasons, our system preserves a barrier between Oklahomans and their government. Participation in public affairs is the right, even the duty, of every person living in a democracy.

Given the profound personal and spiritual consequences that grow out of public engagement, our governments really should be doing everything they can to make it easier.

And we should take it as a mark of shame that I – a fifth-generation, life-long Oklahoman – had to travel to a distant paradise to learn that lesson.

Christiaan Mitchell is a Tulsa attorney.

Keeping Religion Out Of Government

BY KEN NEAL

Having worked in the editorial department of the Tulsa World for more than 30 years, I am intimately familiar with the letters from the subscribers.

I often wanted to write a column alternately commending or condemning the letters, but I never did. It would have been unfair for the editor to have the last word.

When I joined the department in 1976, we published a few letters a week. The last year I was editor, we received more than 8,000 letters and published about 2,500. We considered the letters more important than our editorials. Still do. It is the World's duty to provide public discourse.

A recent letter in the World irritated me. It was outstanding for its ignorance of the Constitution, the founding fathers of the country, their views on religion in government and the purposes of what I consider a good newspaper.

Specifically, the writer objected to the newspaper motto that appears on the editorial page.

Taken from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah and blazoned across the World lobby, it is:

"Publish and set up a standard; publish and conceal not."

I decided on the motto shortly after I became editor of the editorial pages in 1994 to replace the daily Bible verse that suggested the paper was linked to religion.

I also knew it was a favorite of Eugene Lorton, who built the World into a metropolitan newspaper before he died in 1949.

I admired Lorton for his withering responses to ignorant Oklahoma governors and for crusades like the battle for Spavinaw water and his struggle against the Ku Klux Klan.

The motto was a way to bring the memory of Lorton to the editorial page, which he described as "the soul of a newspaper."

The motto was also a substitute for the daily Bible verse, usually taken from the New Testament, which

I considered contrary to good newspapering.

My friend and last publisher, Robert Eugene Lorton III, great grandson to Eugene and “Bobby” to most everyone, must have agreed because the motto found its way to the walls of the entry of the newspaper.

Our letter writer claimed the newspaper does not live up to its motto. He was of course right. It is a goal not always accomplished.

I could say the same for the national press, so often reviled by a president ignorant of the fact that a free press is in fact an important part of our government, protected in the very first amendment to that document.

It is difficult to find another profession that holds itself to a higher standard of fact and truth, employing flinty-eyed editors who are the bane of every reporter, and in-house critics who search for errors and reporting misdeeds. What profession appoints watchdogs that glory in finding errors and problems in their own work and then publishes them, for goodness sake?

It is not exactly clear, but our letter writer suggests the World should be “cast in a lake of fire” to be excruciatingly punished forever.

He would have the newspaper and presumably the country be a Christian theocracy, something soundly rejected by the framers of the U.S. Constitution. The framers had had it with theocracies; after all, most of the 13 colonial governments were theocracies.

Contrary to his views and that of many Americans, the United States is not a “Christian” nation, admirable as the precepts of Jesus are.

It is one thing to follow the teachings of Jesus; it is another to require others to do so.

The writings of the Founders are replete with rejections of Christianity and all religion in government.

Thus, the First Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights insisted upon by Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Mason and others before ratifying the Constitution.

That amendment says it all:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Granted, many, if not most, of the signers of the Constitution were Christian, but when it came to a state religion, they could agree on only one thing: There should be no religion in government.

Consider:

“The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

The second president of the United States, John Adams, a religious man himself, said that!

“The day will come when the mystical generation

of Jesus by the Supreme Being in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. ... But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding ... ”

Who said that? No less than Thomas Jefferson, third president and author of the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson is more famous for the letter he wrote while president to a Baptist Association in Danbury, CT.

He wrote, “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”

Baptists of that day were very interested in freedom of religion, having suffered under the heavy hand of more “legitimate” denominations in early America.

It is more than ironic that many of today’s Baptists and other Christians struggle against Jefferson’s “wall,” instead striving to “put God back” into government.

Perhaps this jeremiad is overkill in response to one letter. Yet that letter denies the very basis of the country even as it condemns the newspaper.

Of course, the writer purports to know what God wants. “God hates mixture and compromise and thus those who write for the World are in danger.”

It is difficult to argue with a fellow who knows what God wants. Maybe I am dense, but God has not shared such with me.

Jefferson, Adams and others also had difficulty knowing what religion God wanted, so they kept it out of government. We can do no less.

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

amazon smile



You shop. Amazon gives.

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



Pelosi And The Power Of Restraint

BY FROMA HARROP

For a long time, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi held a stop sign before vocal Democrats' revving demands to get President Donald Trump's impeachment on the road. Now her sign reads, "proceed with caution." Pelosi knows what she's doing.

The speaker wouldn't launch an impeachment inquiry back then because she knows that impeachments are fraught with risks. Polls show a public tired of Trump's civic decrepitude but also weary of more political strife. Impeachment proceedings sometimes backfire on the party that launches them. And in any case, an election is planned for just over a year from now. Voting Trump out of office would be the cleanest way to get rid of him.

Trump has been stomping on our laws and norms for a long time, and some of the offenses are impeachable, legal scholars say. Trump opponents – with the never-Trump Republicans making the strongest cases – can offer a long list of them. But that's the problem. Throwing the kitchen sink against the president would create confusion. Some accusations are more serious than others. Furthermore, a per-

sonality like Trump thrives on chaos.

That was evidently Pelosi's view until Trump again invited a foreign government to help his campaign by digging up dirt on an opponent. But what made this bad behavior mind-blowing was Trump's evident willingness to compromise national security for his personal gain.

National security is something Americans unite on. It is something they understand. And it is scary big.

This is not about Trump's paying hush money to a porn actress who claims she had sex with him or his steering taxpayer dollars into his hotel properties. It's even bigger than his asking our Russian adversaries for help in the 2016 election; Trump had the excuse [not a legal one but an excuse] of being a private citizen then. And Robert Mueller's report on the matter, while in no way clearing Trump, was fuzzy enough to give Trump's defenders a foothold.

But there's nothing squishy about Trump's call to Ukraine's leader. Trump in effect threatened to withhold U.S. military aid that Ukraine needed to defend

itself against Russian aggression – if Ukraine would not help dig up dirt on his leading rival, former Vice President Joe Biden. Anyone familiar with mob linguistics understands that citing something the other party is desperate for and then saying, “I need a favor, though,” is a threat.

Trump had already put a freeze on the nearly \$400 million Congress allocated for the purpose of Ukraine’s defense. Recently, he’s been pushing the batty theory that Ukraine, rather than Russia, interfered in the 2016 election. Over the weekend, Trump’s first homeland security adviser swatted down that nonsense and asked the Trump camp to stop spreading it.

Before the Ukraine outrage, Pelosi held back the floodgates on impeachment to protect Democrats who had won in Trump-friendly districts. After it came to light, several of those representatives, most with military or intelligence backgrounds, called for

starting the inquiry. That changed the logistics.

Meanwhile, a few elected Republicans, having loosened Trump’s chains, spoke of the serious accusations. The Republican-led Senate voted unanimously to send the whistleblower complaint – a CIA officer’s urgent memo outlining what had allegedly transpired – to the intelligence committees. It had been improperly withheld.

By not launching the inquiry until this scandal broke, Pelosi has shown the power of restraint. She kept her powder dry until there was something truly appalling that the wide public would understand. And she’s keeping the charges simple.

The first step here, an inquiry, need not lead to the next step, articles of impeachment. We’re gathering the facts right now. Impeachment still makes me nervous but less so knowing that Pelosi controls the signals.

© *Creators.com*

The Voice Of A Gangster

BY JOE CONASON

To anyone familiar with the life and times of Donald Trump, there was nothing surprising in the tone of his July 25 conversation with the new president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump spoke in the oblique yet perfectly clear language of a Mafia don who knows what he wants and how to enforce his will.

The dialogue between the two presidents, as seen in a transcript released this week, sounds like a scene from *The Godfather* or a wiretap of the office of Trump’s late attorney Roy M. Cohn, who represented the infamous mob bosses Carmine Galante, Anthony “Fat Tony” Salerno and John Gotti. [For details, see the excellent new film *Where’s My Roy Cohn?* whose title is a Trump quote.]

The transcript opens with Zelensky flattering Trump obsequiously and at great length – as every head of state is now instructed to do – before hinting that he is “almost ready” to receive new Javelin missiles to defend his country from Russian invaders.

Trump responds by reminding Zelensky of how much his little country owes the United States: “I will say that we do a lot for Ukraine. We spend a lot of effort and a lot of time. Much more than the European countries are doing and they should be helping you more than they are. ... I think it’s something you want to look at but the United States has been very good to Ukraine. I wouldn’t say that it’s reciprocal necessarily because things are happening that are not good but the United States has been very good to Ukraine.”

Knowing that Zelensky badly needs something, Trump tells him how to make the relationship more reciprocal: “I would like you to do us a favor though

because our country has been through a lot and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say CrowdStrike,” a reference to the cybersecurity firm whose work for the Democrats in 2016 figures in many right-wing conspiracy theories about the “deep state” and the appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller.

Then Trump states his demand: “I would like to have the Attorney General call you or your people and I would like you to get to the bottom of it.” Even now it is startling to see him draw Attorney General William Barr into these self-serving and partisan machinations, which he describes to Zelensky as “very important.”

The American president had another favor to demand from the cringing Zelensky, who mentions that he and his staff have already sought to help “Mr. Giuliani,” Trump’s personal lawyer who has spent months attempting to fabricate evidence of wrongdoing in Ukraine against Democrats, especially former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden, who had been on the board of a Ukrainian energy company.

“Mr. Giuliani is a highly respected man ... and I would like him to call you,” replies Trump. “I will ask him to call you along with the Attorney General.” Here is the president of the United States pairing the nation’s chief law enforcement officer with his personal attorney in a tawdry partisan plot to smear American citizens – who happen to be his political rivals.

“Rudy very much knows what’s happening and he is a very capable guy,” boasts Trump. “If you could

... speak with him that would be great. ... The other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do with the Attorney General would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it ... it sounds horrible to me." By the way, that remark about Biden is an appalling lie, but you probably know that.

Zelensky quickly assures Trump that he will deliver exactly as instructed. "I also want to ensure you that we will be very serious about the case and will work on the investigation." Trump replies, "Good. Well, thank you very much and I appreciate that. I will tell Rudy and Attorney General Barr to call. Thank you." In closing, they exchange mutual invitations and make plans to get together in Poland [on a visit Trump later canceled].

Now Trump and his minions will insist that this smoking transcript includes no explicit quid pro quo, but of course, explicit isn't the style of our mobbed-up president or his role models. Instead,

he speaks in an indirect but easily understood "code," as his former attorney Michael Cohen once explained.

Damning as it is, there is still more to be discovered about this fateful conversation. Is what the White House released truly an unredacted transcript, despite abrupt transitions and ellipses in the text? Were there preliminary conversations between subordinates to prepare for the call? Is that why Zelensky seems to know exactly what Trump wants before he asks? When did he learn that Trump had unilaterally withheld almost \$400 million in military assistance? In all likelihood, the intelligence whistleblower knows the answer to those questions and more.

What we do know is that Trump – evidently abetted by his consiglieres' Rudy Giuliani and Bill Barr – has perpetrated gross abuses of power. The full extent of their misconduct ultimately will be revealed because impeachment, the proper forensic remedy, is finally in the hands of the people's representatives.

© *Creators.com*

Trump And The Death Of Integrity

BY RANDOLPH M. FEEZELL

What is personal integrity? That's not the only question addressed in *Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche*, by James Miller, a series of short biographies of philosophical lives. It is, however, a unifying question in Miller's account of the contrast between the lives of Socrates and Seneca, the Roman Stoic. And it is an important question when we attempt to take stock of Donald Trump, his Republican supporters, and the topsy-turvy political world dominated by the Divider-in-Chief.

My intent in reading Miller's book was not to gain more ammunition for a takedown of Trump. Like many people, I'm exhausted; he wears me out. I thought I might escape from Trump for a few days by thinking about philosophy as a way of life [rather than the rational defense of certain propositions]. Yet one of the central problems with Trump and his supporters is embedded in Miller's account of Socrates' exemplary life and his effect on the lives of Plato, Diogenes, Aristotle, Seneca – and the western tradition.

Miller's narrative captures the profound influence of the Socratic ideal of harmony between what one says and how one lives – a harmony between talk and life.

Plato's account of the trial of his philosophical hero in the *Apology* is an idealized and moving picture of a man who eschewed a conventional way of life. Socrates devoted himself to the pursuit of wisdom about how best to live. He examined Athenian

bigwigs; his questions challenged the reputations of those thought to be wise. He criticized naively held beliefs. He influenced his young followers [including Plato] to care not for material wealth or social prestige, but to be concerned about the most important questions in life: how to live well, how to become good – how to achieve moral excellence.

Socrates was sentenced to death for supposedly studying strange metaphysical issues, rhetorical trickery, corrupting the youth, and holding unconventional religious beliefs.

His fellow Athenians neither understood nor appreciated his novel approach to life – his philosophical way of life. He accepted the penalty, faced death serenely, and drank the hemlock.

Miller says that Plato encourages the reader "to appraise the character of Socrates by judging his integrity – and this requires judging how his life harmonizes or fails to harmonize, with his declared convictions."

Socrates " ... is prepared to die rather than renounce his beliefs. Serene in his willingness to sacrifice himself, he will give up living in order to prove his unswerving commitment to his transcendental project, his unending search for wisdom."

The sinews of Socrates' life are strengthened by the substance of his personal integrity. That ideal seems to wobble in Seneca's life because his public and literary commitment to Stoicism clashed with his wealthy lifestyle and the messiness of his politi-

cal life as Nero's main advisor. If the greatest human good is happiness, construed as tranquility; if moral virtue is sufficient for a good life; if the life of contemplation is best for human beings; then, how could Seneca be so closely involved with a ruthless and murderous emperor?

Seneca's political life and wealth seemed to conflict with his declared stoic convictions.

For any Stoic, Greek or Roman, the ideal of Socratic integrity was foremost in life. "But Seneca's service to the emperor left him open to the charge of hypocrisy;" a contemporary critic of Seneca "enumerated the apparent contradictions between Seneca's words and his conduct ... "

"For while denouncing tyranny, he was making himself a tyrant."

Late in life, in Seneca's Moral Letters, he turns repeatedly to the subject of integrity. He recommends a way of life at odds with how he had lived, a life that did not reflect Socratic integrity. Miller says about Seneca's claims, "Constancy and resoluteness are hallmarks of integrity in this account: being good hinges on the cultivation of a will sufficiently strong and unwavering to be consistently effective in practice."

Seneca exhorts us to "say what we feel, and feel what we say: harmonize talk with life." We should

seek a unity between words and deeds. The key to integrity is consistency and constancy.

The meaning of integrity that Miller extracts from his discussion of Socrates is important, but incomplete. The concept of integrity assumes other conditions besides the formal test of consistency between one's values or convictions and how one lives. The nature of the convictions matter.

A judgment that a person has integrity assumes at least a minimal level of moral conviction that can be tested in life. Consistency, as a formal test of integrity, depends on a basic material condition: having moral beliefs or values, being committed to moral principles, especially honesty, and having a kind of resoluteness that resides in the will to resist impulse and the inclination to act for personal gain at the expense of one's principles.

There is a very old puzzle in moral philosophy about whether the villain [thief, terrorist, murderer] displays a virtue [for example, courage, when faced with danger and risk] in the pursuit of evil ends. Does the mass murdering white supremacist display courage and resoluteness as he guns down his innocent victims? Does he display integrity because of a consistency between his convictions and his actions? Recent examples show

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

Morality During This Time Of Chaos

BY ANN DAPICE

How do we understand and respond to these times of political chaos? What measures assist us in knowing what actions are ethical? How are we to understand the president and his administration, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the "Fourth Estate"? Is our system of government serving us as intended or is it showing its inadequacy to provide justice? How are we to act as citizens? Who are the moral adults?

The first level of human development is egocentric in scope. It is normal and necessary for children to be egocentric since they are fully dependent on their families for survival. Adult relationships, however, require concern for others beyond oneself, and when an adult remains at a childlike level of development, there are consequences for the family, the larger society, and in this case, the world.

The second level of development is ego-ethnocentric in attitude, focusing on concern for one's own family and group. The ethnocentric concern may be limited to face-to-face relationships or may extend as far as to those who work in the same business, same profession, or even to one's race, religion or nation. There is however, a genuine concern for those other than oneself. Research shows that few people develop beyond this level.

The third level is universalizing in attitude, focusing on others beyond one's own kind or nation to a larger world. Since these people are rare, and since most ethical theory requires these stages of development, there is an enormous gap between who we are and who we need to be for mature ethical action.

Initially, a child tries to avoid punishment and defers to power. For children, this is a continuation of the understanding that adults are both physically larger and have in their power the literal survival of the child. If there are enough agents of discipline, whether parents, teachers or police, individuals in this stage are unlikely to break rules or law. Children or adults will obey, not because they respect the values or the rules, but because they fear punishment and retaliation. Punishment, therefore, should not be confused with "teaching" values. Nor is obedience to the law necessarily a sign of ethical behavior.

Coercive institutions, typically considered to be prisons, military organizations and other such organizations of control, routinely demand behavior based on fear. When as individuals or groups, adults are forced into complete submission to a dominant group or political power, the consequences in the long run can be extreme, both for the oppressed and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

Jim Hightower



Who's Behind The Increasing Suppression Of Your Right to Protest?

As British playwright and political rabble-rouser George Bernard Shaw noted, “You don’t learn to hold your own in the world by standing on guard, but by attacking, and getting well hammered yourself.”

That certainly has been true of progressives in our country. We’ve never been able to advance our people’s little-D democratic goals by idly hoping the established powers will do it for us; they’re the ones doing it to us, imposing plutocratic rule to increase their fortunes at our expense.

Rather, it has been audacious American rebels who’ve incrementally advanced our democratic possibilities by defying the repressive laws of the authoritarian order. That’s what the revolutionaries of 1776 did, and so have subsequent generations of abolitionists, suffragists, unionists, populists, feminists, integrationists, anti-corporatists and other grassroots activists.

Now add to them a team of bold environmental advocates who, on Sept. 12, literally put their lives on the line to confront the looming global crisis of industrially induced climate change. Eleven members of Greenpeace were suspended on static lines a couple of hundred feet above the water from a huge bridge that spans the Houston Ship Channel, temporarily shutting down Big Oil’s largest U.S. outlet for climate-destroying petrochemicals.

Unfortunately, these intrepid climate defenders quickly found themselves suspended even more precariously. They had their fundamental First Amendment freedoms of speech and assembly suspended by a new, little-known law passed at the behest of the very same corporate powers they had dared to protest.

Unbeknownst to the general public, oil giants and other multinational corporations have been quietly colluding with legislators and governors that they’ve purchased to ram through a series of autocratic state laws criminalizing our right to protest at the sites of what they have imperiously designated to be “critical infrastructure.” Encompassed in their sweeping lockdown are public demonstrations that they deem interrupting or interfering with their hallowed pursuit of profits.

Each of the 11 Greenpeace activists involved in the

ship channel protest, along with the 20 others who were also arrested, now face years in prison and a permanent criminal record for “interrupting” Big Oil’s operations for 18 hours. So rather than protecting our fragile environment and constitutional rights, America’s power elites are defending corporate profits – from us!

When did we the People vote to outlaw peaceful public protest against corporate excesses? When did we demand that lawmakers in Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas make it a felony for us to assemble and speak out at corporate sites to protest profiteers who’re running roughshod over our values, livelihoods, environment and ... well, our lives?

Answer: Never. Yet, behind our backs, for-sale lawmakers in those states and many others are taking big bucks from oil giants, utilities, industrial ag outfits and other for-profit entities to pass corporate-written laws that criminalize protest actions against their greed.

The laws assess inordinate jail time and exorbitant fines for the vague offense of “interrupting” or “interfering with” the operations and infrastructure of corporations that despoil, contaminate, violate and otherwise abuse us, the planet and everything else that gets in the way of another dime in profit.

Where did these anti-democratic, corporate-coddling laws come from? ALEC, the secretive American Legislative Exchange Council, which convenes closed-door tete-a-tete sessions to link its corporate members with a nationwide network of whorish state lawmakers willing to do tricks for them.

In January 2018, ALEC produced a model bill called the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, which would effectively sledgehammer peaceful protestors of corporate wrongdoing as though the demonstrators were terrorists. Suddenly, virtually identical versions of ALEC’s plutocratic/autocratic bill were introduced in 22 state legislatures. Nine have already been enacted, usually with little public notice or participation.

The Texas version, which took effect Sept. 1, was used just 11 days later to slap harsh felony charges on the Greenpeace protestors and the 20 others who

were also arrested during the nonviolent symbolic shutdown of the Houston Ship Channel.

The two primary sponsors of the Texas anti-democracy legislation are ALEC adherents. The corporate powers that formally lobbied it through the legislature included Chevron, Dow, Exxon, Koch Industries, Shell and various industry consortiums, ranging from pipeline builders to poultry factories. And the legislation was forcefully backed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, whose top industrial donor group is – surprise! – oil and gas, which pumped more than

\$10 million into his 2018 election campaign.

Of course, the autocrats say their crackdown is necessary to stop violence and vandalism at corporate facilities, but such destructive acts are already against the law. And, besides, the Greenpeace activists did neither.

The real reason that corporations are getting their political hirelings to apply such egregious punishment is to penalize *legitimate* protest, hoping to scare the American people out of even trying to exercise our basic democratic rights.

Why Would We Trust Plutocrats To Save Us From Plutocracy?

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote of being leery of a loud-talking huckster who visited his home: “The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons,” Emerson exclaimed.

Likewise, today’s workaday families should do a mass inventory of their silverware as an integrity check on a mess of loud-talking corporate honchos. Suddenly, 181 of these union-busting, tax-cheating, environment-contaminating, consumer-gouging corporate hucksters are asking us to believe that they stand with us in the fight against ... well, against them.

Wall Street banksters, Big Oil polluters, anti-union extremists and a myriad of other profiteers grouped into a prestigious collective called Business Roundtable issued a “grito” in August, trumpeting their future intentions to serve not just themselves but every “stakeholder” [which is what they call employees, customers, supplies, et al.].

Nice of them, of course, but vague proclamations are cheap, and it’s worth noting that these new champions of the common good propose no specifics – no actual sacrifices by them or benefits for us. Excuse me, but their grandiose promise of corporate beneficence is what West Texas cowboys would call “bovine excrement.”

Yes, we’ve now been joined in the trenches of class struggle by the CEOs of JPMorgan Chase, Walmart, Amazon and nearly 200 other giant corporations. Well, not quite in the trenches, for you can get your Guccis dirty in there. Still, on the battleground of public relations, Business Roundtable [the chief lobbying front for America’s biggest corporations] has declared its solidarity with all of us who seek economic fairness and equal opportunity.

Their opening volley was fired in August in a grand declaration titled “Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation.” For 50 years, that purpose has been ruthlessly clear: maximize their investors’ profits, no matter who or what they have to run over.

But now, the barons of big business are putting

on a softer face, proclaiming that their “fundamental commitment” is not merely to serve shareholder greed but also to benefit workers, reduce inequality, protect the environment and serve the whole community. It’s corporate kumbaya, y’all – solidarity forever!

Alex Gorsky, CEO of Johnson & Johnson, was designated to write the Roundtable’s new declaration of concern for the common people. He later expressed a historic sense of pride in the task: “There were times when I felt like Thomas Jefferson,” Gorsky gushed.

Really? This is the same guy who presided over Johnson & Johnson’s profiteering roll in spreading deadly opioids throughout America. Even as he was posing as Jefferson, an Oklahoma jury was assessing a \$572 million fine on his corporation for foisting the opioid horror on the common people he now professes to love.

So forgive me for not believing for a moment that there’s one iota of sincerity in this sudden assertion of egalitarian sentiment by the soulless organizers of today’s corporate plunder. They’re still going to plunder your unions, paychecks, jobs, health, environment and overall wellbeing. The only difference is that they now want you to think they feel bad about it.

A few media observers have been mildly skeptical, saying it’s “an open question” whether any of the corporate proclaimers will change how they do business. But it’s not an open question at all. *They won’t.*

They won’t support full collective bargaining power for workers, won’t join the public’s push to get Medicare for All, won’t stop using monopoly power to squeeze out small competitors and gouge consumers, won’t support measures to stop climate change, won’t back reforms to get their corrupt corporate money out of our politics ... won’t embrace any of the big structural changes necessary to reverse the raw economic and political inequality that

has enthroned their plutocratic rule and made them richer than royalty.

In fact, their empty proclamation is nothing but a cynical ploy to soften people's anger at their ram-

pant greed in hopes of fending off the actual changes that real reformers are advancing. Corporate elites won't fix inequality *for us*; they're the ones doing it to us. – *Jim Hightower*

Here's Real Deal On 'Medicare For All'

What do we want our health care system to do? Care for our health! Yours, mine, our families', our country's. But don't look for such straightforward logic or ethics in the labyrinthian industrial complex that now controls the "care" we get – or are denied. The structure itself must be changed if care and the Common Good are ever to be prized over profit.

The proof of that is made clear by the Affordable Care Act, the admirable attempt passed almost a decade ago to mitigate the effects of unrestrained corporate greed. Dubbed Obamacare, the ACA dramatically decreased the number of uninsured Americans. And yet – because its Democratic authors caved to corporate demands that the profiteering structure be kept intact – Obamacare cannot deliver the universal coverage and range that other [often less wealthy] countries provide.

Don't despair, for a warm glow of hope beckons from the very midst of today's cold, often nightmarish system. Millions of Americans are doing much, much better through an alternative structure that already delivers superior care for much less: Medicare.

This government program pays the health care bills of 44 million Americans – those over 65 and nine million younger people with disabilities. For more than half a century, Medicare has comforted and benefited so many patients and families that it's now treasured and integral to our people's sense of the Common Good. Yes, the program needs more controls to prevent hospitals, drugmakers and others from overcharging taxpayers and doing unnecessary treatments, but such fixes are included in various bills to extend the successful program to all Americans: "Medicare for All."

As shown by other countries, a universal single-payer system eliminates insurance middlemen, dramatically cuts administrative waste, reins in price gouging and focuses care on the less-costly approach of improving long-term health. Thus, while Medicare for All would cover every American – from birth to death – it would actually reduce what we pay for the inefficient, insufficient, incomplete coverage provided by today's industrial health complex. Check the numbers:

U.S. health expenditures jumped 16.5% between 2009 and 2016 for corporate-insured patients, while the cost dropped 2% for Medicare patients – despite their having more complicated, chronic and expensive problems. The for-profit system eats up 12% of its of budget just on billing and paper shuffling, compared to Medicare's 2%. Even a 2019 Koch-funded analysis concluded that Medicare for All would

cut U.S. health spending by \$2 trillion over 10 years. Less ideologically biased studies estimate even higher savings from Medicare for All's administrative efficiencies.

Taxpayers already foot the bill for nearly two-thirds of America's health care spending – including Medicare, Medicaid and the subsidies that corporations get for their health plans, plus coverage for congressmembers, veterans and a few other groups. Medicare for All's big savings [as shown above] mean overall expenditures would drop while the quality and quantity of coverage would rise. And any additional funding needed for full universal coverage could come from progressive tax mechanisms [e.g., a transaction tax on Wall Street speculation] that don't cost middle-income families a penny.

America's Medicare patients are regularly able to get more timely appointments than privately insured people. In fact, delays in the corporate system are growing worse, as so much of doctor and staff time is consumed by insurance company red tape [plus, private insurers are increasingly limiting policyholders' choice of doctors]. Also, among advanced countries, our corporate-run system produces by far the highest percentage of people who skip treatment because they can't afford it – making some wait times ... eternal.

Every major Medicare for All bill in Congress includes several transitional years, with substantial funding for training, placement and other assistance for those whose jobs will not be part of the restructured system. Besides, some new administrative and fraud protection jobs will be created in the single-payer program, and universal provision of dental, mental health and other health services will create new jobs as well.

Health care giants already spend more than half a billion bucks a year on lobbying – the most of any industry – and that spending is mushrooming as they rush to maintain, by hook or crook, the status quo ethic of profits over care. But a growing majority of Americans see that we're being robbed of our money, health and rights, and they're demanding that politicians reject the entrenched interests and produce real change. [At least 48 of our newly elected congressmembers ran on pledges to support Medicare for All or similar health justice programs.]

The power of the establishment's money and lies wilts in the face of the moral imperative that is at the heart of Medicare for All: Everyone deserves, as a human right, affordable access to quality health care. – *Jim Hightower*

New Immigration Rules Are Already Hurting Families – And It's Going To Get Worse

BY COURTNEY CULLISON

Last month, the Department of Homeland Security issued a final rule that will make it harder for low-income immigrants to legally come to the United States, and more difficult to stay here once they've come.

Very soon, immigrants who use certain safety programs to get through hard times will have that counted against them when they apply for a visa or for a green card.

These changes will force immigrant families to make terrible choices, and many are already refusing help they desperately need to put food on the table and take care of their health so they can stay in America.

Anyone seeking to come to the United States, or anyone already here legally seeking to stay here permanently with a green card, must demonstrate that they, or someone sponsoring them, can provide for their family so they won't become dependent on the government. The new rule will expand the programs that can be counted as negative factors.

In addition to cash assistance, participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], use of public housing or a Section 8 housing voucher, and adults getting health insurance through Medicaid will all count as negative factors when applying for a visa or green card.

Unless a federal court intervenes [several states and organizations have brought lawsuits], immigration officials can begin using the new, expanded negative factors to screen individuals beginning on Oct. 15. Immigrants who are participating in SNAP, housing programs, or Medicaid [adults only] after Oct. 15 may have that participation considered as a negative factor in their application for a new visa or a green card.

However, these new factors won't apply to all immigrants. Current green card holders seeking citizenship and refugees, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking and domestic abuse, and citizen children will not be subject to these new standards.

This new rule, and the confusion about which programs count and which do not, has made many families afraid that any help in these areas may be counted against them.

We are already seeing families refusing help they need because of this fear: SNAP participation among immigrant families dropped last year, after 10 straight

years of increasing participation for this group, amidst uncertainty about what would be included in the final rule.

This does not mean that fewer families need help putting food on the table and are eligible for SNAP. Rather, it means that more families are going hungry.

This chilling effect that we are already seeing may become quite large. There are currently over 100,000 non-citizens in Oklahoma living on a low or modest income [below 250% of the federal poverty level, or \$53,325 a year for a family of three]. Any of these individuals could be subject to the terms of this rule change if they seek to change their immigration status in the future.

The new rules regarding who can come to America, and who can stay in America, will contribute to the fundamental alteration of who we are as a nation.

This change, and other actions taken by the current Administration, will make it harder for the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses yearning to breathe free to find a place in this country, and we will all be worse off for the loss of the contributions they could make to our country.

Courtney Cullison is a OKPolicy analyst focusing on issues of economic opportunity and financial security; okpolicy.org.

Looking for extra copies of *The Observer* to share with friends or loved ones? They're available from our OKC partners:



Full Circle Books
1900 NW Expressway
405.842.2900



Commonplace Books
1325 N Walker Ave #138
405.534.4540

Read The Observer On-Line
www.okobserver.org

25 Ways Canadian Health System Better Than ObamaCare For 2020 Elections

BY RALPH NADER

Dear America:

Costly complexity is baked into ObamaCare, and although it has improved access to healthcare for some, tens of millions of Americans still cannot afford basic medical care for their family. No health-care system is without problems but Canadian-style single-payer – full Medicare for all – is simple, affordable, comprehensive and universal for all basic and emergency medical and hospital services.

In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon Johnson enrolled 20 million elderly Americans into Medicare in six months. There were no websites. They did it with index cards!

Below please find 25 ways the Canadian health care system – and the resulting quality of life in Canada – is better than the chaotic, wasteful and often cruel U.S. system.

Replace it with the much more efficient Medicare-for-all: everybody in, nobody out, free choice of doctor and hospital. It will produce far less anxiety, dread, and fear. Hear that, Congress and the White House!

25. In Canada, everyone is covered automatically at birth – everybody in, nobody out. A human right.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, 28 million Americans [9%] are still uninsured and 85 million Americans [26%] are underinsured. ObamaCare is made even worse by TrumpCare restrictions. [See TrumpCare by John Geyman MD, 2019].

24. In Canada, the health system is designed to put people, not profits, first.

In the United States, ObamaCare has done little to curb insurance industry profits and in fact has increased the concentrated insurance industry's massive profits.

23. In Canada, coverage is not tied to a job or dependent on your income – rich and poor are in the same system, the best guaranty of quality.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, much still depends on your job or income. Lose your job or lose your income, and you might lose your existing health insurance or have to settle for lesser coverage.

22. In Canada, health care coverage stays with you for your entire life.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, for tens of millions of Americans, health care coverage stays with you only for as long as you can afford your insurance.

21. In Canada, you can freely choose your doctors

and hospitals and keep them.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, the in-network list of places where you can get treated is shrinking – thus restricting freedom of choice – and if you want to go out of network, you pay dearly for it.

No. 20. In Canada, the health care system is funded by income, sales and corporate taxes that, combined, are much lower than what Americans pay in insurance premiums directly and indirectly per employer.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, for thousands of Americans, it's pay or die – if you can't pay, you die. That's why many thousands will still die every year under ObamaCare from lack of health insurance to get diagnosed and treated in time. The survivors are confronted with very high, often unregulated drug prices.

19. In Canada, there are no complex hospital or doctor bills. In fact, usually you don't even see a bill.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, hospital and doctor bills are terribly complex, replete with massive billing fraud estimated to be at least \$350 billion a year by Harvard Professor Malcolm Sparrow.

18. In Canada, costs are controlled. Canada pays 10% of its GDP for its health care system, covering everyone.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, costs continue to skyrocket. The U.S. currently pays 17.9% of its GDP and still doesn't cover tens of millions of people.

17. In Canada, it is unheard of for anyone to go bankrupt due to health care costs.

In the United States, health-care-driven bankruptcy will continue to plague Americans.

16. In Canada, simplicity leads to major savings in administrative costs and overhead.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, often staggering complexity ratchets up huge administrative costs and overhead.

15. In Canada, when you go to a doctor or hospital the first thing they ask you is: "What's wrong?"

In the United States, the first thing they ask you is: "What kind of insurance do you have?"

14. In Canada, the government negotiates drug prices so they are more affordable.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, Congress made it specifically illegal for the government to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39



Celebrate Peace & Justice
at the



FALL PEACE FESTIVAL

**Saturday, November 9
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

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

Free Admission ☪ *Kid-Friendly*

HOLIDAY SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES

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

Booths and Tables of Social Justice Organizations

Live Music and Entertainment All Day

Supervised Children's Area



SPONSORS: Peace House ☪ Home Creations ☪ The Lemon Family ☪ Oklahoma Observer ☪ Bill Nerin
☪ David Brinker, MD ☪ Church of the Open Arms UCC ☪ Social Justice Committee First Unitarian Church ☪
Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty ☪ Just Future

MORE INFO: PEACEHOUSEOK.ORG

2019

Integrity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

that some mass murderers died for their [repugnant] convictions.

It would be peculiar to say that terrorists display integrity. One way to resolve the puzzle is to say that praiseworthy character traits [moral virtues] do not function as virtues unless they are put in the service of good ends. If integrity requires a fit between a person's convictions and her life, the relation must take place in a familiar moral neighborhood. Failures of integrity are often moral failures.

Integrity requires that a person has convictions and they must be of the right kind, or else white supremacists or terrorists would be exemplars of praiseworthy traits [and exemplary consistency]. A person with integrity must have principles, the principles must be of the right kind, and they must be embodied, consistently and habitually, in that person's intentions and actions.

[I'm not unaware that the concept of integrity can be applied quite widely: to games, structures, materials, science, elections, neighborhoods, and so forth. Usages suggesting "wholeness and completeness" or "soundness and freedom from defect," as Miller mentions, are, in my judgment, interestingly related to meanings suggesting moral goodness and the unity of moral personality. They are not relevant here.]

Consider Trump and Trumpist Republicans against the background of this analysis of integrity.

Trump fails miserably the most minimal test of integrity, that is, having what we would typically call moral beliefs, values, or convictions. As far as we can tell, he doesn't really believe in the values of honesty, kindness, respect, justice, or generosity. As I have previously argued, Trump is an asshole, a person who "systematically 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." Assholes lack integrity; they think of themselves as living outside of consistent moral constraints.

The only consistency and constancy in Trump's character are his total disregard for norms like civility, courtesy, truth-telling, and respect for persons, and his unbridled pursuit of self-interest – lying and cheating as a way of life in business, golf, interpersonal relations, and politics.

For many, the essence of integrity is rooted in honesty and trustworthiness. Integrity has a special relation to truth. If a person is found to be a serial liar [or bullshitter, who is unconcerned with truth] then that person lacks integrity. The inference about Trump is obvious.

When we consider Trumpist Republican politicians [and religious conservatives], Seneca's problems

emerge in a robust way. Of course, the challenge of harmonizing expressed convictions and actions may appear in other areas of life, whether it's preaching, talking to employees and shareholders, or motivating players not only to play well but also to be good.

But a political life [or, in an often self-serving and nauseating phrase, "a life of public service"] is particularly susceptible to these challenges, because politicians must talk and talk in order to inspire and persuade, while simultaneously being seduced by the charms required for political survival.

Terms like "political calculation," "political implications," and "political consequences," are scarcely disguised appeals to self-interest. These terms raise questions about what is required for the political survival of individuals who seek influence, power, and re-election – some of whom may even be motivated by the public good.

How do Republican politicians, in particular, preserve their integrity, that is, a harmony between their convictions [assuming they have some] and their [political] life, when their leader repeatedly outrages our [their] moral sensibilities?

He encourages demonizing immigrants and separating their families, he attacks people and acts as a bully; he talks about grabbing females' genitals and pays off porn stars, and lies and lies. Yet Republicans support the leader of their party of "family values."

Republicans' political integrity [involving their political convictions] is challenged by a leader who assaults democratic institutions, cozies up to authoritarians, takes the word of his buddy Vlad over the American intelligence community, attacks the independence of the Fed, contributes to increasingly huge budget deficits, appears to be unconcerned about possible [probable?] Russian interference in our next election, and probably obstructed justice.

What do Republicans stand for? How should Republicans respond? Silence is capitulation. Support for Trump expresses moral and political weakness of will. Anything less than explicit talk and action to preserve and reinforce both moral and political convictions is insufficient. Integrity requires a public rejection of Trumpism.

I assume that politics is a messy enterprise. At some level political support should reflect one's deepest convictions. Compromises are inevitable, but support for Trump tarnishes otherwise good people in a deep way. Seneca had his Nero; Republicans have their Trump.

We are seeing glimpses of integrity among Republicans: Jeff Flake, Justin Amash, William Weld, Marc Sanford, thoughtful conservative columnists and pundits. Former Illinois congressman Joe Walsh will challenge Trump for the Republican nomination.

Walsh says what Republican integrity requires. “He’s nuts. He’s erratic. He’s cruel. He stokes bigotry. He’s incompetent. He doesn’t know what he’s doing.”

Walsh’s campaign slogan is “Be Brave.” It could be: “Integrity now!” [I can imagine a more profane slogan.]

An architect who was stiffed by Trump laments the fact that he was “snookered” by a con man. [Con men lack integrity.] “When I see Lindsey Graham and members of Congress kissing his ass over stuff they

Canadian

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

negotiate drug prices for volume purchases. As a result, drug prices remain exorbitant and continue to skyrocket.

13. In Canada, the government health care funds are not profitably diverted to the top one percent.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, health care funds will continue to flow to the top. In 2017, the CEO of Aetna alone made a whopping \$59 million.

12. In Canada, there are no required co-pays or deductibles in inscrutable contracts.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, the deductibles and co-pays will continue to be unaffordable for many millions of Americans. Fine print traps are everywhere.

11. In Canada, the health care system contributes to social solidarity and national pride.

In the United States, ObamaCare is divisive, with rich and poor in different systems and tens of millions left out or with sorely limited benefits.

10. In Canada, delays in health care are not due to the cost of insurance.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, patients without health insurance or who are underinsured delay or forgo care and put their lives at risk.

9. In Canada, nobody dies due to lack of health insurance.

In the United States, tens of thousands of Americans will continue to die every year because they lack health insurance or can’t pay much higher prices for drugs, medical devices, and health care itself.

8. In Canada, health care on average costs half as much, per person, as in the United States. And in Canada, unlike in the United States, everyone is covered.

In the United States, a majority support Medicare-for-all. But they are being blocked by lawmakers and their corporate paymasters.

7. In Canada, the tax payments to fund the health care system are modestly progressive – the lowest 20% pays 6% of income into the system while the highest 20% pays 8%.

In the United States, under ObamaCare, the poor pay a larger share of their income for health care than

know isn’t right for the country, I don’t blame them. He makes fools of people. I know how persuasive that man is now.”

I would change this slightly. Trump transforms supporters into hypocrites – and I do blame them. Integrity isn’t completely dead in the Republican Party – but it’s on life support.

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

the affluent.

6. In Canada, people use GoFundMe to start new businesses.

In the United States, fully one in three GoFundMe fundraisers are now to raise money to pay medical bills. Recently, one American was rejected for a heart transplant because she couldn’t afford the follow-up care. Her insurance company suggested she raise the money through GoFundMe.

5. In Canada, people avoid prison at all costs.

In the United States, some Americans commit minor crimes so that they can get to prison and receive free health care.

4. In Canada, people look forward to the benefits of early retirement.

In the United States, people delay retirement to 65 to avoid being uninsured.

3. In Canada, Nobel Prize winners hold on to their medal and pass it down to their children and grandchildren.

In the United States, a Nobel Prize winner sold his medal to help pay for his medical bills.

Leon Lederman won a Nobel Prize in 1988 for his pioneering physics research. But in 2015, the physicist, who passed away in November 2018, sold his Nobel Prize medal for \$765,000 to pay his mounting medical bills.

2. In Canada, the system is simple. You get a health care card when you are born. And you swipe it when you go to a doctor or hospital. End of story.

In the United States, ObamaCare’s 954 pages plus regulations [the Canadian Medicare Bill was 13 pages] is so complex that then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said before passage “we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it, away from the fog of the controversy.”

1. In Canada, the majority of citizens love their health care system.

In the United States, a growing majority of citizens, physicians, and nurses prefer the Canadian type system – Medicare-for-all, free choice of doctor and hospital, everybody in, nobody out and far less expensive with better outcomes overall.

It’s decision time, America!

For more information, visit singlepayeraction.org.

How The Koch Brothers Reshaped America's Economy And World Politics

KOCHLAND

***The Secret History Of Koch Industries
And Corporate Power In America***
By Christopher Leonard
Simon & Schuster
704 pages, \$35

BY JOSEPH H. CARTER SR.

At \$300 an hour, a full-time working stiff would require 30,449 years to earn \$19 billion, this author figures. Charles Koch of Wichita had done it at age 72. At age 83, the chief of Koch Industries has now doubled to \$40-plus billion, with the numbers still soaring.

Charles' brother and cohort in business and politics, David of New York's social scene, was equally affluent at the time of his recent death.

This book spells out how four Koch brothers inherited \$4 billion each and Charles was given the reins of their late father's business – plus much, much more about dark businesses and the people's government.

The wealth was enriched by the theft of oil from Oklahoma Indians, according to court documents authored by brother, Bill, who contested Charles' leadership. Bill's net worth now is probably under \$2 billion.

Koch wealth is only part of this dynamic, well-written, finely-researched and chilling report on how, over the past half century, Charles and David Koch have reshaped both America's economy and world

politics.

Author Leonard clearly reports Koch's successful fights against policies of fellow billionaire President Donald Trump, but it also makes clear that Koch propaganda and grass-roots efforts paved the way for the current national administration and Republican dominance of America.

While 574 pages of magnificent book read like a novel detailing the incredible Koch saga, another 100-plus pages are scholarly notes about the sources of information.

Despite all the journalistic digging, the author managed to gain only one audience with Charles Koch, the main character.

With multiple engineering degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Charles Koch was reared to lead the family businesses and kept the base in Wichita, KS. Only similarly educated Bill challenged his brother. David supported Charles' business decisions and shared the wealth.

Moreover, Charles headlined the Koch's political activism, donating heavily plus raising millions of

dollars for mostly Republican candidates.

Although the company made early riches by stealing oil from Osage Indians and the government, under Charles' rein there was a mandate for obeying laws and regulation – 100% of the time.

On the other hand, David Koch was the 1980 vice presidential candidate on the anti-government, right wing Libertarian Party ticket. David spent \$2.1 million and campaigned vigorously in the election that Ronald Reagan won.

The Kochs' best weapon for business success was they operated secretly and kept the company and holdings private. At times, in decisions made by Charles Koch, various parts of the businesses operated without budgets. Managers were graded by profits – mostly long-term.

Instead of dividends, profits were largely plowed back into the company, business acquisitions and growth. That philosophy, Leonard explains, was the basis of Bill Koch's revolt and lawsuits against his brothers and the firm.

Based on a deeply held philosophy about business, Charles wrote and instilled his own code into all facets of operations called "Market-Based Management." One facet: to destroy labor unions. Another was to regard each employee as a free enterprise entrepreneur.

Leonard's searching, revealing and even-handed book, the product of seven years of research, collaboration, writing and edited ends with the 2019 copyright and publication. It explores possible leadership of the firm including the role of Charles' only son, Chase Koch, who attended Texas A&M and spent a period of work in Austin outside the family, including playing in a popular band.

Chase finally came home to Wichita and joined the work force and led companies after holding a minor job mucking stalls for a Syracuse, KS company his family owned. At press time, Chase appeared undecided whether he is top talent for CEO.

Meanwhile, his dad, Charles

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

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

1900 NW EXPRESSWAY
OKC OK 73118
405/842.2900

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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

WHY WAIT?

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

IMPORTANT RESTRICTIONS

To take advantage of this offer, visit Full Circle Books, where you can subscribe to The Oklahoma Observer at the checkout counter and receive your free book certificate immediately. You also may subscribe to The Observer using the coupon on page 2 of this issue or by visiting our web site www.okobserver.net. You then will receive via U.S. Mail a certificate from Full Circle Books for a free book (\$20 limit). The certificate is not transferable and must be presented in person at Full Circle Books in order to receive your free book. No facsimiles, printouts or photocopies will be accepted as a substitute for the original Full Circle certificate. This book offer is for new subscribers only. Not valid with any other offer.

Koch is spending his time penning another book. His view about Leonard's book, if he had read it, would be interesting. For any businessman or citizen who cares about government, the book is gem. It also is an incredible tale.

Norman resident Joseph H. Carter Sr. is author of President or Precedent: Carl Albert's History Changing Choice, Never Met A Man I Didn't Like: The Life and Writings of Will Rogers and The Quotable Will Rogers.

Morality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

eventually for the oppressor. Based on punishment, this stage is, given the opportunity, one of revenge.

Eventually, children assert normal developmental independence and realize that they're not always punished for infractions of rules, decide that the "crime" may be more than worth the punishment, recognize that as they grow older and physically larger their parents have decreasing control over them and their environment, and thus children move towards satisfying themselves. Most oppressed adults, whether out of frustration or exhaustion, will move to the next stage. When large numbers of oppressed adults move beyond this stage all at once, chaos and revolutions are a common result.

The movement to satisfying self is again normal in children. This is the hedonistic or "feel good" stage. The child or individual has a "give to get" orientation. People only do things for what they'll "get out of it." Their ego development is such that they externalize blame, are opportunistic, wary, manipulative, and exploitative. To the extent that they are bigger [as in "bullies"] and more powerful, they can cause great misery. Control and advantage are their aim. People at this stage rather enjoy the challenge of breaking the law and are not intimidated – nor usually stopped – by rules and laws. This is the stage of most prisoners in the U.S. It can also be the stage of business. Some Big Pharma CEOs have stated that they are there to make money for shareholders, not treat the sick.

Almost all lawbreakers, whether "white" or "blue-collar crime," can be located in this stage. Whether street "con" artists, or "white-collar" smart, as expert manipulators these individuals can often pretend group values well. Such values may be middle class or street gang, depending on the system to which they belong. If they are smart, these individuals work the "system" well to their advantage. They tend to support their own group – as long as individuals in the group are "loyal" to them. They are also often diagnosed to be psycho/sociopaths.

As people move towards ethnocentric development what others think becomes important. It is often called the adolescent stage though most people do not go beyond this stage. Approval of others in manners, speech or dress is key. They seek "niceness" as opposed to universal "goodness" and do not understand the difference. They will only break rules if everyone in their group is "doing it." They will not want to be caught doing anything that would embarrass them to their group. The people who matter to them are the people with whom they have a direct relationship. They will make unkind comments, seemingly unaware, about people of other races and religions in front of people of that race or religion. When asked, they'll say something such as, "Oh, she's my friend,

she's not like the 'others.'"

Still in the ethnocentric mode, individuals may move to an orientation of authority and fixed rules. There is a genuine belief in the need for laws, for "without laws there would be chaos," and there is perceived guilt for breaking the law. These rules and laws are behaviorally stated – e.g., "Don't steal," "Don't kill" – but often don't make finer distinctions between placing people in the situation so that things can be "legally" taken from them and actually stealing from them, or the difference between allowing people to starve and killing them. Ethnocentric in determination, these laws generally only apply within one's own group. For example, one cannot kill within the group [murder], but may be required to kill someone from the "outside" [war].

Laws generally place strong emphasis on property orientation and possession. People in this stage may be generally law-abiding in a narrower sense, but will lack an understanding of the meaning or "spirit" behind the law. They may write loopholes into the law-loopholes which "just happen" to fit their ego/ethnocentric interests.

Moving to the universalizing level it is important to note that change in laws can occur after determining that they are faulty. While most people at this stage will not break existing laws, they will work conscientiously to make laws more just. The stage of the U.S. Constitution, there is formal opportunity for change, but few lawmakers actually achieve this stage of development. Such change can take decades or may never occur.

The final developmental understanding allows action on individual principle. It is the stage of the Golden Rule and the Kant Imperative. Such individuals will openly break laws they believe to be unjust but only using the criteria of non-violence. Since so few individuals throughout history have accomplished this stage of development – people such as Socrates, Jesus, Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr. – research is scant and therefore frequently criticized. Just as importantly, their lives are often shortened by the societies they have served. The few individuals who reach universal stages only do so in mid-life and beyond.

We do have guidelines to determine right and wrong. It is a time of moral choice in the U.S. What decisions will be made?

Ann Dapice, PhD, is Director of Education and Research for T.K. Wolf, Inc., a 501(c)(3) American Indian organization and Founder/Executive Director, Institute of Values Inquiry. She has taught and/or served as administrator at a number of universities teaching courses in the social sciences, philosophy and Native American Studies.

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

and life expectancies continued to plummet because of political ideology, not bureaucratic incompetence. It was elected leadership's decision to cut off the state's nose to spite its face – forfeiting a 9-1 federal match for a decade.

Expanding Medicaid would help provide coverage to 200,000 or so working poor, likely improving overall health and reducing costly emergency room visits. It's also important to remember the federal match involves tax dollars Oklahomans already sent to Washington, but instead are being deployed to improve health outcomes in other states.

It's too bad there wasn't more time to gather signatures for the permitless carry veto referendum. Returning Oklahoma to the Wild West days of open carry – without training or permit – is terrible public policy.

It creates headaches for law enforcement, trying to discern split-second who the good and bad guys are. Further, a new social media meme warns businesses that customers will bail if anyone walks in with a gun.

This much is certain: petition drives are sending the message that rank-and-file Oklahomans are no longer content to sit on the political sidelines.

Fairness

Oklahoma has a tax problem. It's not as simple as taxes are too high or too low, depending on your political bent. It's that they're unfairly assessed.

The least among us shoulder a disproportionate share of the state's burden – the nation's fifth highest taxes if you happen to be among the lowest 20% of earners.

To whom much is given, much is expected? Not in Oklahoma, where the Golden Rule applies to tax policy. Not the “do unto others ...” Golden Rule, of course. Rather, it's the political Golden Rule: Those with the gold make the rules.

And all-too-often in recent years, the rules have been modified to favor those with the deepest pockets at the expense of struggling workaday Oklahomans.

Case in point: The Legislature's 2016 decision to end the refundability of Oklahoma's Earned Income Tax Credit – a pittance when it comes to the state's ledger, but significant coin in working poor budgets.

Why would lawmakers do such a thing? Why would they take about \$120 out of the pockets of the least among us?

Well, at the time, the state budget was in shambles, thanks to a series of legislative-approved tax cuts that primarily benefited the state's upper crust – read: political donor class. Rather than roll back income tax cuts, for example, the Legislature sought to close the



OKPOLICY.ORG
Oklahoma Policy Institute

Better Information, Better Policy

REX FRIEND
Attorney at Law

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

(405) 557-1277

Reasonable Fees — Terms Available

budget gap on the backs of those who don't make campaign contributions or hire lobbyists.

Now, however, state revenues are in the best shape since the 2008 recession – thanks to lawmakers hiking gross production taxes. The state sits on a \$1 billion Rainy Day Fund that Gov. Kevin Stitt wants to double.

All of which suggests this is the perfect time to revisit not only the Earned Income Tax Credit, but also to take a deep dive on state tax policy.

Sadly, legislative leadership shows little appetite for tackling the tax inequities, especially heading into an election year. But there is at least a glimmer of hope that EITC refundability could be restored.

House Democratic Leader Emily Virgin recently hosted an interim study on the subject – which could yield legislation next session aimed at giving gives 200,000-plus paycheck-to-paycheck Oklahoma households some relief.

Restoring EITC's refundability also would be good news for Oklahoma retailers. That \$120 or so that could go into the pockets of the state's working poor? It'll be spent – on food, on gas, on essentials.

EITC refundability is especially significant in economically depressed rural Oklahoma. That's notable given that nearly half of state lawmakers represent areas outside Oklahoma's two urban centers. Wouldn't they naturally prioritize the interests of their rural constituents over fat cats in OKC or Tulsa?

If they don't take action on EITC next session, voters should hold them accountable. It may require a ballot box revolution to shift the power from well-heeled special interests to the interests of the people.

BEN F. SANDERS

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

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

BFSCPA@HOTMAIL.COM

PHONE 405.843.0037 / FAX 405.947.0209



okea.org

TOM GOODWIN

Cheyenne, OK

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



Oklahoma Retired Educators Association



The only organization
that works for
Retired Educators

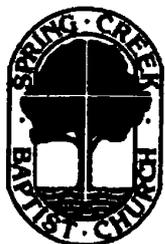
405.525.2230
800.310.2230
www.orea.org

Spring Creek Baptist Church

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

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

[405] 721-3252
springcreekbc.com



Observerscope



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby was sworn in Oct. 1 to an unprecedented ninth term. He's presided over the nation's remarkable growth in economic development and services.

Wingnut Sen. Nathan Dahm introduced legislation to nullify any potential federal red flag gun law. Someone who can speak slowly enough should explain to him federal law trumps state law.

Notable: About one-quarter of all Oklahoma families enrolled in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [food stamps] have a member age 60 or older. – AARP

We note the recent passing of former Dean of the Senate, Snyder's Gilmer Capps, who served southwestern OK for 36 years before retiring in 2006. He was 87.

Another casualty of climate change? 1,000 Elk once frequented the forest around Vail, CO. Recently, only 53 were counted. – High Country News

Oklahoma policymakers better wake up. Last month's prison lockdown is a stark reminder that a federal court takeover could result from the state's failure to properly staff and maintain corrections facilities.

Congress is expected to vote soon on HR 2382, aimed at ending the dubious requirement that U.S. Postal Service pre-fund health benefits for future retirees decades in advance. It's the reason for USPS's financial crisis – totally manufactured.

Shiver me timbers? A new study reports adults who take cold showers are 29% less likely to call in sick. Other research suggests cold showers trigger neurotransmitters [i.e. endorphins] that may help alleviate depression. – AARP

The attack on Saudi oil fields triggered a spike in gas prices. Why? Not only was the U.S. the world's No. 1 oil producer last year, it also produced more than it imported, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

cause, like Berlin in the 1980s, freedom and oppression can be seen side by side and frustrations, especially of the young who feel the meaninglessness of captivity without a promising future, can boil over on a stage much bigger than Tiananmen Square while the high cost of housing keeps another pressure on. Stay tuned.

Harry Compton
Bartlesville

Editor, The Observer:

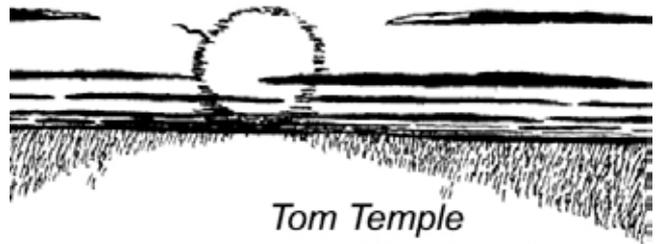
I like Mayor Pete Buttigieg. There's no doubt in my mind that he'll defend and support all Americans with his administration when it's for the common good of the country.

In his stump speech appearances Buttigieg often stresses one of his visions for the country as "... freedom to and not freedom from ..." I read this as a commitment to responsible exercise of citizenship and not to the grab-all-you-can-get greed of the other political party. There is no mention of "gay rights" or immunity from making our country better for all citizens.

One thing about the news coverage of Mayor Pete irks me: he is not LGBTQ+. This multi-letter paintbrush gets under my skin. He's a gay man who has married another gay man. I'm not aware of anyone else in the orientation alphabet who has had the right combination of experience, attitude, intellect, education, and character to sustain a nationwide campaign for president beyond a flash-in-the-pan appearance like those 10 to 12 other straight, mainstream, opportunistic Democrats who have dropped out in the last two months. Buttigieg has all the qualities this country needs and who happens to be a gay man unashamed of being in love.

There is some weak-tea criticism that Buttigieg didn't use the "H-word" – husband – during his time in the third candidate debate. He was telling his coming out story which still might be new information for some viewers. It was a good move to not overload voters with too much information all at once. This is still Amerikkka where knowledge has to seep in gradually like ground water in a cave.

Buttigieg needs to concentrate on policies and meeting as many voters as he can along with being on as much TV and radio as he can.



Tom Temple
Natural Design

405.478.4936

www.TTemple.com

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



WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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



Jean's
PLUMBING
HEAT & AIR

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL

FOR ALL YOUR PLUMBING, GAS & AIR WORK

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

BEST FLAT RATE PRICE

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

amazon smile



You shop. Amazon gives.

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

Read The Observer On-Line
www.okobserver.org

He has to convince voters across all walks of life that he will be there for all of us and his orientation is as natural as his hair and eye color and just as irrelevant.

James Nimmo
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Don't expect Oklahoma's congressional delegation to vote for any anti-gun proposals.

The blood of ex-Muskogee U.S. Rep. Mike Synar and gubernatorial nominee Drew Edmondson is still on the hands of the National Rifle Association.

The NRA buried Edmondson with a midnight flyer entitled, "Michael Bloomberg and George Soros Are Coming for Your Guns."

The flyer sent to all registered voters just before the 2018 general election turned mortgage broker Kevin Stitt from a Mr. Nobody into the governor of Oklahoma.

It says Stitt opposes bans on firearms and ammunition, gun control and supports Oklahoma's preemption law to ensure local governments can't pass gun control ordinances.

It says Edmondson supports anti-gun proposals of Bloomberg and Soros, and can't be trust to support our constitutional freedoms.

Our Congress members and senators fear the NRA's midnight flyer will happen to them if they vote for anti-gun laws.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner
Wagoner

American Hero

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

island of Tinian for the atom bomb "Little Boy" that was dropped on Japan to hasten the end of World War II.

After delivering the bomb, the Indianapolis was sunk by two Japanese torpedoes. Zee was below deck as the ship was going down and the hatches were secured. He banged on the hatch, and fortunately, a chief who was looking for his shoes heard the banging, opened the hatch and pulled Zee out. He was the only one in that compartment.

The sinking left Zee and hundreds other sailors swimming in shark-infested waters for several days. Zee was fortunate enough to be rescued, others were not so lucky. Of the roughly 1,200 men on board the Indianapolis, only 329 survived the sinking.

Not finished defending his country, Zee also served during the Korean War.

Zee was a great supporter, proudly tailgating at OU home games for many years at his favorite spot on

Lindsey.

He also supported his picks in decades of elections, proudly displaying their yard signs and attending events supporting the Democratic Party.

During my years as Cleveland County Democratic chair, Zee was always available to cook hamburgers and hot dogs for attendees of our summer outings. Zee always bought his own wood to cook with, saying that his secret was in the bark of his wood.

He told me of his many ventures from Norman south to the Red River, stopping in various towns to talk to the editor of the newspapers, promoting his favorite Democrats.

The World War II vet was a prodigious letter writer, often to the Norman Transcript offering his insight and opinion on many subjects, usually political. His letters were well written, concise, intelligent, and right on target. Zee would make his point in easy-to-understand language, and was never challenged.

Zee gave generously of his time, talent, and treasure. One of his treasures was his "famous" chewy pecan pralines! Everyone loved them and wanted his recipe, but he kept it to himself. He did donate the pralines on many occasions, though.

I remember him bringing the chewy delights to one of my fund-raiser events during campaigns for the state House. He donated them to my campaign and they were auctioned off. The last one brought the most money, raising \$50! They were worth every penny, too.

These are just a few of the reasons that Zee Howell was and still is a hero in my eyes, and I am sure many others that knew him will agree. Kind, caring, sharing, and loyal, we need more people like Zee Howell.

Rest in peace, Zee, you definitely have earned it! *Wallace Collins is a former state representative and state Democratic Party chairman.*



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

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

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION - Required by U.S. Postal Service.

1. Publication Title: The Oklahoma Observer
2. Publication No. 865-720
3. Filing Date: 9-17-19
4. Issue Frequency: Once Monthly.
5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 12
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$50.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication [Not Printer] [Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4]: 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013-7036 or PO Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275, Oklahoma County. Contact Person: Beverly Hamilton. Telephone: 405-478-8700.
8. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher [Not printer]: 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013-7036 or P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0275.
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor [Do not leave blank]:
Publisher: Beverly Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
Editor/Managing Editor: Arnold B. Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
10. Owner [Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.]
AHB Enterprises LLC, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
Arnold B. Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
Beverly Hamilton, 13912 Plymouth Crossing, Edmond, OK 73013.
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None.
12. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: Not Applicable.
13. Publication Title: The Oklahoma Observer
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2019
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:
 - a. Total No. Copies [Net Press Run]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 2,289.
 - b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
 - [1] Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541. Average No. Copies Each issue during preceding 12 months: 1,514 - No. Copies of Single Issue published nearest to filing date: 1,449.
 - [2] Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: Average No. Copies Each issue during preceding 12 months: 658 - No. Copies of Single issue published nearest to filing date: 641.
 - [3] Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 0 - No. Copies of Single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.
 - [4] Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 0 - No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 0

- c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2,172. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,090.
 - d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution [By Mail and Outside the Mail]:
 - [1] Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 13. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 25.
 - [2] Free or Nominal Rate In-County included on PS Form 3541: Average No. Copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 27. No. Copies of Single issue published nearest filing date: 25.
 - [3] Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: Not applicable.
 - [4] Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 77. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 10.
 - e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 117. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 60.
 - f. Total Distribution [Sum of 15d and 15e]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 2,289. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,150.
 - g. Copies Not Distributed: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 30. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 125.
 - h. Total [Sum of 15f and 15g]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months: 2,319. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,275.
 - i. Percent Paid [15c divided by 15f x 100]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 94%. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 97%.
16. Electronic Copy Circulation:
- a. Paid Electronic Copies: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months: 95. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 81.
 - b. Total Paid Print Copies [Line 15c] + Paid Electronic Copies [Line 16a]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months: 2,267. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,171.
 - c. Total Print Distribution [Line 15f] + Paid Electronic Copies [Line 16a]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months: 2,414. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,231.
 - d. Percent Paid [Both Print & Electronic Copies] [16b divided by 16c x 100]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months: 94.89%. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 97.21%.
- I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies [electronic and print] are paid above a nominal price.
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership required. Will be printed in the October 2017 issue of this publication.
18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Beverly Hamilton, Publisher. Date: 9-17-19.
- I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions [including fines and imprisonment] and/or civil sanctions [including civil penalties].

THE OKLAHOMA Observer Shop



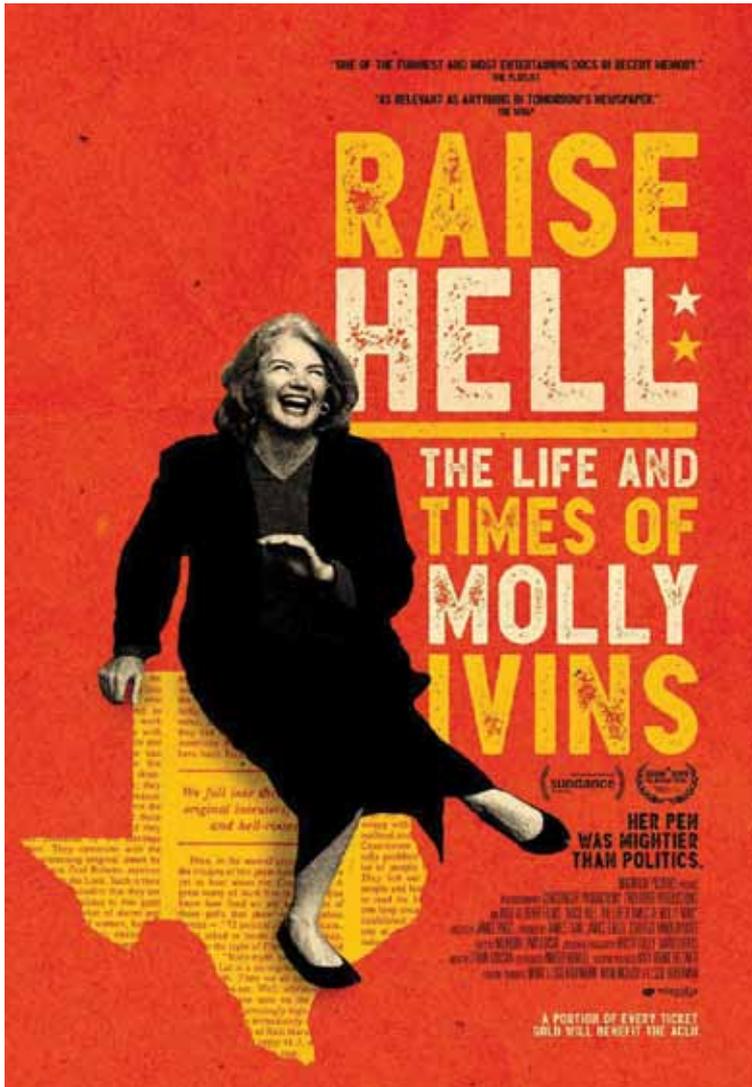
Vintage Logo T-Shirt

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

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

Two Special Nights!

OCT 29 TULSA'S CIRCLE CINEMA • NOV 5 OKC'S RODEO CINEMA



Join The Observer family for two exclusive events, featuring screenings of the acclaimed new documentary *Raise Hell: The Life and Times of Molly Ivins* and Observer Editor Arnold Hamilton's personal reminiscences about his former Dallas Times Herald colleague.

Molly's sidesplitting commentaries graced The Observer's pages for a quarter-century, deploying both scalpel and sledgehammer to brilliantly skewer rightwing nuts, greedy corporatists and venal politicians.

Proceeds from the screenings benefit The Oklahoma Observer, now in our 51st year of Comforting the Afflicted and Afflicting the Comfortable.

Come help us celebrate the memory of two progressive giants – our beloved Founding Editor Frosty Troy and our friend Molly Ivins – and gear up for what promises to be a rollicking 2020!

Events begin both nights at 7 p.m.

TICKETS

Early Bird Special: \$25 each [by Oct 15]

After Oct. 15: \$30 each

To purchase online, visit:

okobserver.org/raise-hell-the-life-and-times-of-molly-ivins/

[Facebook.com/OkObserver](https://www.facebook.com/OkObserver)

To purchase by phone: 405.478.8700

To purchase by mail: P.O. Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73116