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# THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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AUGUST 25, 2012

## SIZZLING SUMMERS

**Longtime Oilman Concludes Climate Change Is No Hoax:  
Record Heat, Crippling Drought Are Just The Beginning.**

By George Krumme

Everyone occasionally makes decisions that prove to be unwise. I recall the story of a man who was warned that an approaching flood would soon reach his house. When a fleeing neighbor offered him a place in his car, the man refused, saying, "My faith will save me."

Later, as the rising water drove him to the second floor, a man in a rowboat offered him a place, but he declined for the same reason. The flood finally forced him to the roof, but he refused to get in a rescue helicopter, and eventually he was swept away and drowned.

At the Pearly Gates, the man protested, but St. Peter replied, "We sent you a car and a boat and a helicopter – how much more did you expect?"

OK, a dumb joke, but even a dumb joke sometimes can help us think a little about what we know, what we think we know, and what we need to know about the care of our home, the planet Earth.

**AS ONE WHO HAS SPENT** more than 60 years in the oil business, I took special interest in the public debate over climate change. Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe was traveling the world claiming it was the "greatest hoax" ever. Climate scientists were sounding the alarm over an impending point of no return.

I decided to investigate for myself. What I found scared the hell out of me. And this was before the sizzling summers of 2011 and 2012.

All things being equal, the Earth might well be approaching a cooling period now, leading slowly toward a new glacial age. But other things are not equal. There are new kids on the block – us. And there are billions of us.

Until recent times, the highest concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> gases in the 800,000-year ice core history reached 299 parts per million [ppm] about 325,000 years ago. By the year 2000, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere had increased to 370 ppm, but the growing consumption of fossil fuels, helped a little by the widespread destruction of forests, has added an additional 20 ppm in only 10 years.

**THIS UNPRECEDENTED RAPID INCREASE** in greenhouse gases has alarmed most trained observers, because it portends a dangerous increase in the temperature of our planet.

Since 1980, the earth has grown about one degree Fahrenheit warmer than the average temperature of the previous 30 years, a warming that seems to be very modest. But the earth is quite sensitive to small changes in temperature. And there is every indication that the temperature will continue to climb.

There is a popular misconception that the science of climate change itself is still in question. Not exactly. Virtually all members of the profession agree, and the few scientists who disagree mostly specialize in other fields – geologists, meteorologists, geographers, and physicists of various specialties, many of whom have a relationship with coal and other fossil business interests.

How did we get here? And how bad is it?

For one thing, we know why we are on Earth rather than any other satellite in the solar system – all the other planets are too big or too small or too close to the sun or too far.



On the earth, the atmosphere absorbs only a little of the sun's incoming energy, but greenhouse gases trap a considerable amount of the radiation that the earth sends back into space.

**AT ITS FORMATION**, the earth was molten, and it took a billion or so years to cool enough to form a crust. Lacking an effective thermostat, the earth continued to cool – the oldest rocks indicate that the surface became so cold that, more than once, the planet became a snowball, or at least a slushball, and the first appearances of life on earth were restricted to some variety of green scum.

Finally, about 600 million years ago, enough greenhouse gases had accumulated in the earth's atmosphere that the last of the ice and slush melted, and a warming earth became hospitable for more advanced forms of life.

Since that time, the earth has cooled and warmed, but seldom to a life-threatening degree. True, two long Ice Ages have occurred, each lasting millions of years, with numerous advances and retreats of the ice within each. We are currently in a third such Age.

The causes of these cold periods are complicated and obscure, but many scientists believe that the height and position of the continents as they drift across the surface of the globe and as they alter ocean currents are the most likely cause of the Ice Ages. [The physical properties of the earth and of water are such that relatively small changes in temperature can trigger important changes in climate.]

**IN OUR PRESENT ICE AGE**, North America has experienced four easily documented glacial periods. In one of those, the ice coverage, which can attain thicknesses of two or three miles, reached as far south as Kansas.

During the couple of centuries since geologists recognized the existence of repeated continental glaciation, scientists have speculated about the cause of the glacial advances and retreats. Some proposed that changes in the sun's radiation caused the fluctuations, and indeed the strength of radiation does wax and wane



# Observations

## Why?

The horror is becoming all too routine. This time, the massacre site was a movie theater in Aurora, CO, where James Holmes murdered and injured dozens of moviegoers. In 1999, the scene was nearby Columbine High School.

By some estimates, there are more than 20 mass shootings per year in the United States.

And always the same question: Why?

When the U.S. is compared to the rest of the world, one reason becomes obvious: while America may not have more homicidally insane people than other countries do, homicidally insane people can get their hands on guns more easily in America than they can virtually anywhere else.

A 2007 survey found the United States is far ahead of the rest of the world in terms of gun ownership, with 90 guns for every 100 citizens and half the world's civilian-owned guns – around 270 million weapons.

Why are gun-control laws so hard to pass?

We have open-carry in Oklahoma today, despite law enforcement opposition.

A mass murder is going to happen in Oklahoma but we don't know the time or the place. Only the insane do.

In Oklahoma, state law limits payday loans by licensed lenders at \$500 and allows a maximum fee of \$65. Borrowers are limited to one payday loan at a time.

That happened because the Oklahoma Observer counted the payday loan shops on Air Depot Boulevard in Midwest City, which ends at the Tinker Air Force gate.

But 14 states and the District of Columbia have laws – classified as “restrictive” by the Pew study – that mean no storefront payday lenders are available. We should do likewise.

In those states, the use of payday loans was lower, about 1%, principally representing borrowers who either go across state lines to get loans or had lived in other states and used lenders there in the past.

State Sen. Rick Brinkley – who is also the chief operating officer of the Better Business Bureau of Eastern Oklahoma – took issue with the Pew study's classification of Oklahoma payday loan laws as permissive.

“Nothing could be farther from the truth,” the Owasso Republican said. He wouldn't recognize the truth if it bit him in the butt.

## Only In Oklahoma

Tell us again how awful the Affordable Care Act is.

Oklahoma could save about \$47.8 million a year – mostly in the cost of serving poor mental-health patients – if it accepts an expansion of the Medicaid program under the federal Affordable Care Act, a state agency estimates.

Services currently funded completely with state money would shift to Medicaid funding – allowing the state to either shift its tax money to other uses or magnify its ability to provide those services.

“I think it's darn sure one of the selling points for accepting” the Medicaid expansion, said Michael Brose, executive director of the Mental Health Association in Tulsa.



Carter Kimble, spokesman for the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, said first-draft estimates of potential state savings with the Medicaid expansion show that the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services could save \$34 million, the Corrections Department \$11.2 million, and the state Health Department \$2.4 million.

Currently, only a limited number of Oklahoma adults are eligible for Medicaid. They typically fall into particular categories, such as blind or disabled.

Under the Affordable Care Act, anyone who earns up to 133% of the federal poverty level – which would currently be \$30,657 for a family of four – would be eligible for Medicaid.

Oklahoma has more than 503,000 uninsured adults, and the authority estimates that 200,000 people would become Medicaid-eligible under the federal law.

Republican Gov. Mary Fallin, who takes her marching orders from the State Chamber, has said the state probably won't decide on whether to accept the funding until after November's election.

Brose said that by accepting the federal funding, the state could serve more mentally ill people, give service providers a desperately needed rate increase, bring more crisis beds to northeastern Oklahoma and end up with more productive, tax-paying citizens as a result – all without any increase in state costs.

Does that include members of the Republican Legislature? We hope so.

## Help On Way

Five hundred foster children age out of the system at 18. With no follow-up, 60% face homelessness, prison or death within two years.

Where are all the “Christians” who pack the pews or fill the radio and TV airwaves with pious blather?

There are 8,300 Oklahoma foster children – and the odds would seem to be stacked against them. Eighty percent of prison inmates spent time in the foster care system, according to the National Association of Social Workers.

“Without healthy adult relationships, such youth are often very vulnerable,” says Dr. William Tabbernee, executive director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches [OCC].

Confounded by these figures, the OCC Board of Directors recently met

with Russ Urquhart, a representative from Life Launch who presented information about the work of Life Launch to minister to these “graduates” of Oklahoma's foster care.

Life Launch is a ministry of Stand in the Gap Ministries that seeks to change these statistics, one youth at a time.

This is done through a proven small-group relational ministry, connecting four adults with one adolescent youth to form a “Life Launch Family.”

This group meets regularly to provide relational, emotional and spiritual support to each other.

“There is no cost to a church or organization to become involved with this ministry. Life Launch provides the training, the youth, and supervision for the teams,” Urquhart stated.

The Oklahoma Conference of Churches has sent out an e-mail about the Life Launch Ministry, encouraging local congregations to take a close look at the program.

For more information, see the Life Launch website [www.sitgm.org](http://www.sitgm.org) or contact Urquhart at 405.603.3380 or at [russ@sitgm.org](mailto:russ@sitgm.org).

## Slap In Face

Sen. Patrick Anderson recently received the Distinguished Service Award from the Oklahoma Association of Career Tech Educators [ACTE].

The award ostensibly is designed to recognize individuals or organizations outside the field of career and technology education for meritorious contributions to the improvement, promotion, development and progress of career and technology education.

According to ACTE, the Enid Republican has championed legislation throughout his tenure in the Senate that supported and assisted the state's CareerTech centers.

Really?

How did it help the state's cash-strapped public education system – including CareerTech – when Anderson voted for more than \$800 million in tax cuts right along with the Republican majority in the state Senate?

It's worth remembering that those businesses looking to create high-paying jobs, whether in Oklahoma or other states, first check out the quality of public education.

We haven't the slightly idea who determined Anderson fit for the award. It's a slap in the face for all Oklahomans that care about public education.

## Payday Loans

We were not surprised by the Pew study that shows payday loans are at a record high for Oklahoma. We've preached against them for years.

“Payday Lending in America: Who Borrows, Where They Borrow and Why,” a study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, shows that 13% of Oklahomans are using storefront payday loans – the highest level of use among the 32 states for which the survey had sufficient data.

Payday loans – small, short-term consumer loans typically used by people who don't have access to other forms of credit – are expensive and are regulated by most states.

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OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

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

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe



# Observerscope

By 2015 the Affordable Care Act will bring health insurance to 32 million Americans but the downside is that America will need an additional 663,000 doctors.

Dart: To U.S. Sens. Tom Coburn and Jim Inhofe for endorsing U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert E. Bacharach for the Appeals Court, then refusing to vote for him when he was up for Senate confirmation.

No one has done more to help poverty-stricken youth than Jonathan Kozol. He has spent 25 years in the trenches and tells about it in his new book *Fire In The Ashes: 25 years among the Poorest Children in America*.

Laurel: To President Obama for the Affordable Care Act. An estimated 12.8 million uninsured women of reproductive age will become newly eligible for Medicaid or qualify for premium tax credits to help purchase insurance.

Federal employees owe more than a billion dollars in unpaid taxes. A bill has been introduced in the U.S. House calling for firing them if they fail to pay up. Other Americans owe \$3.4 billion in unpaid taxes.

Dart: To Congress for not addressing the health needs of 35 million poor children. In all, Medicaid and the related Children's Health Insurance Program cover 70 million people.

Oklahoma City University and the University of Central Oklahoma were included in the Chronicle of Higher Education's Best Places to Work.

Laurel: To Harold Aldridge, Dr. Charlon Anderson, Sylvester "Prof" Franklin, Albert Johnson, Dr. Loreta Brown Collier and Dr. Franklin D. Moon, all inducted in the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame.

It was not a moment to soon. Executive Director Martha Spears of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs has retired. The veterans centers have been grossly mismanaged.

Dart: To 80 Oklahoma cities and towns for failing to file annual audit reports, as required by state law. The Tax Commission reports that \$90,000 in gasoline excise tax was forfeited.

The Election Board reports that the latest registration is 47% Democrats, 42% Republicans. In 1986 it was 1,354,313 Democrats and 610,000 Republicans.

Laurel: To the Oklahoma Supreme Court, issuing a ruling that struck down the Personhood Law initiative petition, but the U.S. Supreme Court questions that ruling. Lawyers on both sides will sort it out.

Oklahoma now ranks fifth in wind energy. According to the Department of Energy's 2011 Wind Technologies Market Report, Oklahoma is among the nation's fastest-growing wind markets.

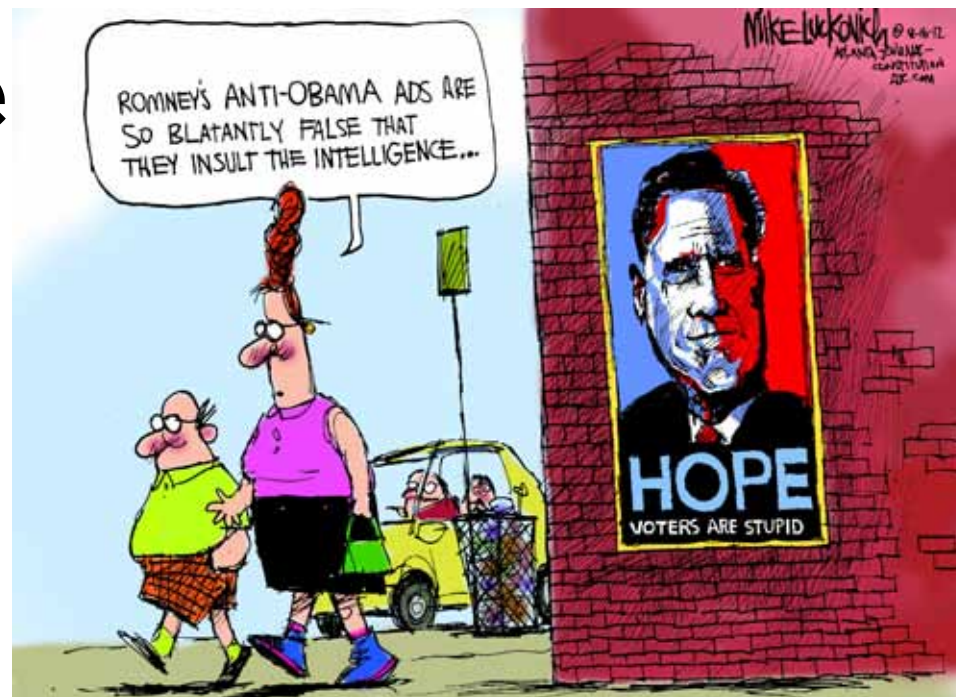
Dart: To BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Shell, earning more in 60 seconds [\$261,000] than 96% of American households make in a year. The five companies make a \$375 million in daily profits yet Congress gives them billions a year in subsidies.

A new report shows Oklahoma spending on education is 49th. The state funds 46%, federal funding is 13% and local funding 41%. State average per pupil is \$7,869 compared to the national average of \$10,615.

Laurel: To Gov. Mary Fallin prohibiting tobacco [cigarettes or chew] on state property. Unfortunately, she failed to include a penalty of any kind.

American doctors are being urged to screen children for obesity. You would think they already would be, given America's No. 1 obesity rate in the world.

Dart: To the Daily Disappointment for defending charter schools. Some are worthwhile but big money is behind the growth. Seen their TV ad for virtual K-12? That's private capital trying to make millions off charter schools.



Republican Gov. Mary Fallin in 16 months has approved only 51% of the Parole Board's recommendations. In November, Oklahomans will vote whether to remove the governor from the routine parole process - only state to give the governor such power.

Laurel: To Steve Miller, filing a lawsuit against the town of Bernice for refusing to enforce the open-meetings, open-records law. Oklahoma received an "F" nationally in access to public meetings and public records.

Dart: To our half-assed attorney general, Republican Scott Pruitt, still making hay off ObamaCare. He wants the State Supreme Court to "lift the stay, giving us 30 days to determine the next step."

Oklahoma women of reproductive age who will gain insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act total an astonishing 159,322. - Planned Parenthood report

Laurel: To Carol Herrick of Midwest City for providing 250 back-to-school backpacks with school supplies for military families.

Our condolences to former state Rep. Bill Nations and family in the loss of his beloved wife, Dr. Teena Nations. She devoted her life to improving education and supporting children and youth.

Dart: To those who criticize Sen. Constance Johnson, D-Forest Park, for her drive to ease Oklahoma's tough marijuana laws. We're stacking too many non-violent Oklahomans in prison.

State Senate Pro Tem Brian Bingman received \$1,377 in meals and gifts last session. Compare that to House Speaker Kris Steele's \$83.

Laurel: To high school students and their math teachers, raising scores more than 30%. Unfortunately, the Oklahoma City school board is considering cuts in science and art classes - not enough funds.

We just received the biography of Dr. Milt Leher. He spent a lifetime in both public schools and Northwestern University educating students, often with his own innovations. He was a pioneer in teacher education.

Dart: To Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney for scolding the NAACP for wanting "free stuff" when he got a \$77,000 tax credit for his pet horse last year.

Payday loans since 2008 amount to \$1.6 billion. A Pew study showed interest rates as high as 391%. Last year a total of 54,000 loans were issued.

Laurel: To state employees that made charitable contributions totaling \$613,157 in 2011. The funds support social services, the arts, health services and food pantries.

Hope you're sitting down for this one. TV's Judge Judy [Judith Sheindlin] earned \$45 million last year. Compare that to comedian Jon Stewart's \$16 million.

Dart: To the Legislature for not adequately funding the Ethics Commission. Common Cause has made its mission for independent funding in the next session. Good luck.

Republican U.S. Tom Cole mailed out a letter at taxpayer expense to constituents filled with lies, claiming the Republican Party is "setting America back on the path to prosperity." He was a cheerleader for George W. Bush's administration.

Laurel: To Calumet resident Faye Hansen, Ms. Senior Oklahoma for 2012. At 90, she's battled cancer but follows a hectic schedule, including playing the piano every Sunday for the First Christian Church.

Oklahoma didn't have enough poor children. A new Kids Count survey shows that Oklahoma is up 9%. Those aren't statistics, they are real children. Five percent go to bed hungry night after night, yet the Legislature cuts taxes more than \$800 million.

Dart: To Congress for not raising the minimum from \$7.25 an hour to \$10. More than a million Americans live on less than a minimal family budget.

They don't make many headlines these days but the Southern Poverty Law Center keeps on fighting hate groups. Ted Koppel's documentary gives the center's lawsuits credit for the rapid decline of the KKK.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Let me understand – we can't be part of national health care ... that would be socialist. And we need to keep the government out of our lives by disbanding public education.

But roll out those federal disaster relief dollars so those contractors can start rebuilding those houses with those government dollars.

Ah, the simplicity of the simple conservative mind. No socialism! No welfare!

And hurry up with those disaster checks, dammit!

Richard L. Fricker  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Note to self: Go to Chick-fil-A with my buddies to protest that the missus now has better insurance coverage under ObamaCare. That way, I can let Obama know what I think of him and his health care plan, not to mention his race.

Will a chicken wing count as one vote against Obama, or would I have to buy the whole chicken?

Men know this new coverage for women is just an Obama plot to catch unfaithful or abusive husbands.

For example:

- Free testing for the Human Papilloma Virus [causes cervical cancer] – caught from an infected partner.

- Free counseling for STI's [sexually transmitted infections] – Ditto.

- Free counseling and screening for HIV. Ditto.

- Free birth control. Will cut down on the eventual child support, but this will just give her another reason to play around on me.

- Free breastfeeding support and supplies. Like most guys, I don't want my wife breastfeeding because those knockers belong to me, by God!

- Free Screening and counseling on domestic violence. No man wants to see his handiwork aired in public. It's not exactly considered plastic surgery when he rearranges her face.

I guess a whole chicken it is!

– An Anti-Obama Male

Barbara Santee  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Our do-nothing Congress gave itself a five-week vacation even though Congress so screwed up the Post Office that the Postal Service recently defaulted on a \$5.5 billion debt. Do House members deserve 38 days off, when their documented interest in our mail service equals 60 bills filed to name post offices! Not one bill has

been considered on the House floor aimed at reforming the Postal Service.

Equally bad, the current Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30. Most of Oklahoma and major areas throughout the U.S. are in a severe-to-exceptional drought, and farmers are in dire need of relief provided by the Farm Bills, now held up by House Republican leadership.

The Senate in June and the House Agriculture Committee [chaired by Oklahoma's own Frank Lucas] passed similar Farm Bills to spend almost \$100 billion a year over the next five years for farm and nutrition programs. House leadership refuses to bring a Farm Bill to the House floor fearing defeat from "small government" conservatives who say the bill spends too much.

Also left on the table: A cyber-security bill to protect the U.S. electrical grid, water supplies and other critical industries from cyber attack and electronic espionage. Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act for five years. A bill to end Cold War restrictions and extend normal trade relations with Russia. And other important measures.

Isn't it time to replace our current vacationing representatives in Congress with those who will stay until they get the job done?

Wanda Jo [Peltier] Stapleton  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Only Romney could trash a well-oiled PR opportunity in England. The British have a way with words and struck gold with the caption "Mitt the Twit."

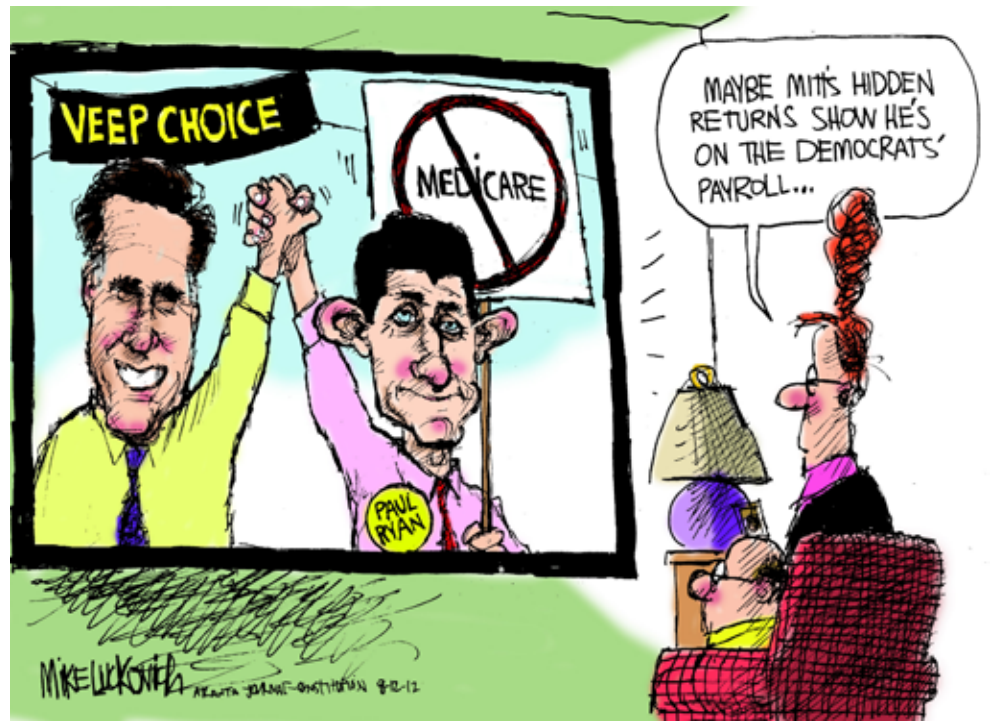
Was he serious about statesmanship? What a joke.

Tom Birbilis  
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and it was followed with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. When President Johnson signed these acts, he said, "With the enactment of these two laws we are giving the Republican Party control of the Southern states for a generation."

Forty-eight years later, the Republicans are still in control of the Southern states, but the South is changing. There has been a major transition of people from the North and East to the South. African Americans, Latinos and Asians have taken full advantage of public school education with the knowledge and understanding that



public school education is the true equalizer for success in America.

Equal educational opportunity and the right to be full participants in local, state and federal elections guaranteed by the Voting Rights Act, that is strengthened by the Civil Rights Act, was the reason some of the states in the South cast a majority vote for Barack Obama in the election of 2008.

Barack Obama's election in 2008 sent shock waves through the elected Republican senators and representatives of the Southern states. The Republican leader of the Senate issued a public statement that it would be the priority of the Republican Party to prevent President Obama from serving a second term.

The minority party in the United States Senate immediately started using the 60-vote rule [the filibuster] to stop the Obama Administration, which had a majority vote of over 50 in the Senate, from passing legislation to energize the economy by creating jobs and growing the middle class in America.

The 2010 elections placed a record number of states under Republican controlled legislatures and Republican governors. The Republican controlled legislatures – influenced by the policy voice in Washington, DC to prevent President Obama from being elected to a second term – immediately began passing legislation that requires photo identification or a birth certificate for voters to exercise their historic right to vote. They also placed restrictions on early voting.

This political action is designed to make it difficult for minorities, senior citizens and young people to vote. These are the voters that elected President Obama in 2008. With their vote he even carried a couple of Southern states. The Republican mindset is that if he is elected in 2012 Republican control of the Southern states will come to an end and the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act will have served their purpose.

James B. Townsend  
Shawnee

Editor, The Observer:

Give me a minute ... I just have to get a handle on this: The evangelical Christians have decided to back the Joseph Smith/Ayn Rand ticket?

Atlas Shrugged and Jesus wept. No, Jesus is sobbing.

Romney really wants to stop getting questions about his taxes. Ayn

could have based *The Fountainhead* on Romney. Dick Cheney is on video saying he worships Paul Ryan.

There must be something in there for all sides to hate.

If elected it will be another GOP administration with a puppet to sign the papers and a really mean puppet-master in control from the VP office.

Ryan may look like the guy you want to ask you to the prom, but that budget makes Simon Legree look like Mother Teresa.

His budget is Ayn Rand, not Jesus Christ.

Do they know Ayn Rand was a Russian atheist? I have a lot of friends who think an atheist would be great in the White House, but I am not sure this is the kind of atheist influence they would want.

Ryan quotes Ayn way more than he quotes scripture.

Karen Webb  
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Many registered Democrats in Roger Mills County were kind enough to answer yes, no, maybe or undecided to my poll as to whether or not they intended to support President Obama in the next election. I appreciate the short answers and the long answers.

As we all know, Oklahoma per capita is the reddest state in the United States. My polls both in Beckham County and Roger Mills County showed that to be true for both. However, Gov. Romney has now chosen Paul Ryan as his running mate. This troubles me for a lot of reasons.

First of all, Mr. Ryan wants to privatize Social Security, which means it will be in the hands of Wall Street and we all remember the billions of dollars President Bush had to spend to bail out Wall Street, AIG, Citibank, etc., to keep this country from plunging into yet another depression.

Mr. Ryan's plan for Medicare [which was supported by 262 Republicans in the House and 40 Republicans in the Senate in 2011] would be to place every Medicare recipient on a voucher system. That means that you would get only so much money per month to spend toward your health care and medication with Medicare. After that ran out, you would be responsible for the rest, until your next month's voucher became available.

The specifics of how much that would be has not been unveiled, be-

See LETTERS Page 5

## Frosty Troy's What's Right About Oklahoma

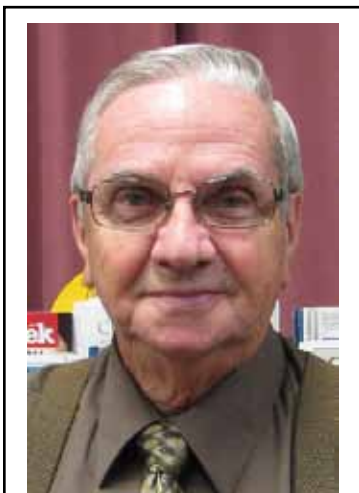
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## Frosty Troy's Notebook

# Don't Give Up



FROSTY TROY  
Founding Editor

*Politics ain't worrying this country one tenth as much as parking space. – Will Rogers*

Apathy is American as apple pie. Historians will tell you that the majority of colonists favored the Crown, not Patrick Henry and his fellow revolutionaries.

There are those who crow that the country handed the November 2010 winners a mandate from a majority of Americans. Wrong! Only about half of eligible voters turned out, and the GOP received a majority of that vote. Too many progressives of both parties failed to vote.

The truth is far from the idyllic scenario painted by too many social studies teachers. Purists don't want to admit it, but except on rare occasions [i.e., civil rights, the Vietnam protests] this country – for good or ill – is run by a minority of activist individuals.

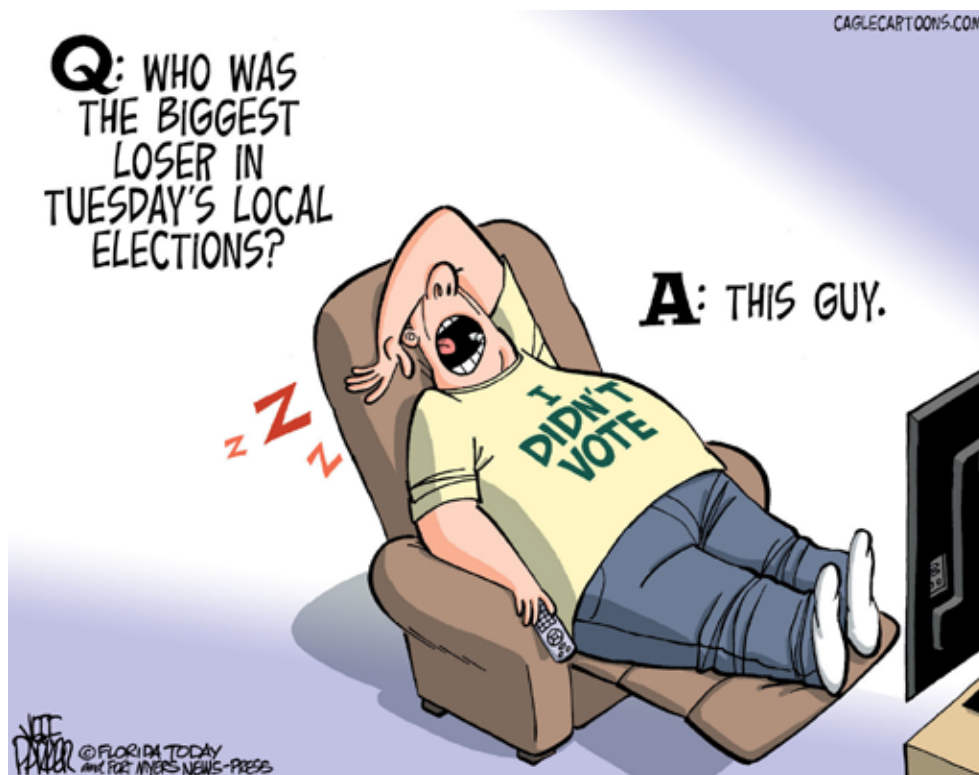
Today, the national agenda is fueled by those who are rich enough to capture the media, often through paid advertisements. Lazy voters would rather believe a 30-second attack ad than research the issue.

There are hundreds of rightwing talk shows. Most television is a mindless morass. Most newspapers are little more than revenue machines for chains.

So what's a body to do? Be part of the few who are involved! That's a gospel I have preached across Oklahoma and America. The claim that one person can't make a difference is hokey. It is the tiny Oklahoma Observer that crusades relentlessly against censorship in public and school libraries, exposing those who promote it.

How to fight? Find organizations that will come in with real firepower – People for the American Way, the American Library Association, etc. [The Observer won the First Amendment Award for our work.]

My daughter Marti was co-editor of the Midwest City High School newspaper when the principal seized an entire issue because it dared reveal to the commu-



nity the growing problem of teen pregnancy. It was a carefully written, balanced presentation – and the superintendent ordered it released.

Journalists must learn an early real-world lesson – the publisher has the final word. That's why a cooperative spirit that eschews surprise attacks works best.

The Republican Legislature crippled mental health, refused to help public education but found time to approve more than \$800 million in tax cuts, mostly for the rich.

The wonderful aggregation that met in Philadelphia didn't say they'd formed a more perfect Union, they said we must strive to create such a Union. America is a work in progress.

Never give up if you think you're right. Never surrender to the forces of darkness that would pervert the Constitution to fit their narrow political or religious views.

The day this country stops being a pluralistic society is the day America dies.

## OETA Wins Emmy For Racism Documentary

OETA's *A Conversation With ... George Henderson* program won an Emmy Award from the Heartland Regional Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Emmy Awards Went to Producer Mickie Smith, Associate Producer Jessi Crino and Writer/Host Dick Pryor.

*A Conversation With ... George Henderson* provided a unique and deeply personal account of Oklahoma history through the eyes of one of the nation's most eloquent and respected civil rights scholars.

Henderson grew up in Alabama during the Great Depression. The son of sharecroppers, he was expected to rise above his surroundings and pull his family out of poverty.

After fleeing to the Midwest, he graduated from college, served in the Air Force and became an educator and community activist. In 1967, Henderson accepted a job as professor at the University of Oklahoma, a place his mentor warned was "a small redneck school in a backward state."

Henderson moved his family into a state and city that was not yet ready for the change he was destined to bring, and began his life's work. Against the odds, Henderson courageously confronted "institutionalized racism" and led the movement for racial equality at the university and across the state.

Henderson inspired his students to chip away at the formidable color barrier that stood in their way and established a new era of human relations in Oklahoma.

## LETTERS

From Page 4

cause the Democrats in the Senate shot it down before the numbers were crunched.

President Obama has said that he will veto any change in Social Security or Medicare if it comes across his desk.

I have lived in Roger Mills County since I was nine years old – I love the folks in this county – but if you're dependent on Medicare and Social Security, or if your parents or grandparents are, please think before you vote. It may be devastating for somebody you know or love.

Sherri Goodwin  
Cheyenne

Editor, The Observer:

The quarterback who made Oklahoma State into a national championship contender confessed: "You come to one of those workouts in the morning and you don't work, bad things are going to happen."

Brandon Weeden, who calls signals

for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, was talking about OSU's year-round speed, strength and conditioning workouts:

1. Run eight miles a day.
  2. Use the Run Rocket, a resistance machine that connects a retractable cable to the player's back and teaches exploding off the line and sprinting 20 yards.
  3. Cone drills.
  4. Weighted ball throw, under hand, to a teammate 10 yards away.
  5. Lifting in the weight room [squat, bench press, glut/hamstring raise, triceps extension, shoulder press, position-specific lifts, shoulder "pre-hab" to prevent injury].
  6. Passing with quarterbacks and receivers; defensive backs, backpedaling; linemen/linebackers, gap control.
  7. Sprinting from one side to the other three times [in 28 seconds or less for skill players].
- Do these student athletes deserve a paycheck for their demanding duties?

"If you want money go to the pros or get a job," says former Notre Dame Coach Lou Holtz. "I would have played football for nothin'."

Texas Coach Mack Brown and South Carolina's Steve Spurrier say pay the players because the new playoff system will produce a half-billion in TV rights alone.

A better argument was made by OSU's All-American basketball player, seven-foot Bob Kurland: "The pres-

sure to win at any cost, brought on by alumni and NCAA rules that are impractical and invite cheating, have made crooks out of the coaches and hypocrites out of the players."

Our millionaire football coaches, OSU's Mike Gundy and OU's Bob Stoops, should demand their players be paid a salary like all other employees of the state.

Virginia Blue Jeans Jenner  
Wagoner

## THE WONDERS OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

I was visiting my son and daughter-in-law recently when I asked if I could borrow a newspaper.

"This is the 21st Century, old man," my son said. "We don't waste money on newspapers. Here, you can borrow my iPad ..."

I can tell you, that bloody fly never knew what hit it!

# Will Parole Board Fiasco Endanger SQ 762?



You remember Willie Horton, don't you? No, not the ex-Detroit Tigers slugger, but rather the murderer and rapist whose menacing mug shot helped propel George H.W. Bush to the White House 24 years ago.

Horton was serving a life without the possibility of parole sentence in Massachusetts when he was released on a weekend furlough. He failed to return, as promised, and went on a crime spree in Maryland that included armed robbery and rape.

The furlough was part of a Massachusetts inmate rehabilitation strategy approved under a Republican governor in the early 1970s. But Horton was given a weekend pass during the administration of a Democratic governor, Michael Dukakis, who just happened to be Bush's 1988 general election opponent.

An "independent" group [sound familiar in this Citizens United era of unlimited corporate donations and SuperPACs?] financed a series of

devastating ads that tied Horton like a millstone around Dukakis' neck – depicting the Democratic nominee as a soft on crime, bleeding heart liberal.

Very few things frighten the elected class in this country more than the suggestion they are soft on crime. It's one of the reasons the U.S. leads the industrialized world in prison population. And why Oklahoma incarcerates more women per capita than any other state and is sixth in locking up men.

It's also why the mushroom cloud that enveloped the state Pardon and Parole Board recently was very bad news for clear-thinking Oklahomans who know the state is bankrupting itself with this punitive lock-'em-up, throw-away-the-key approach to criminal justice.

The parole board was first on the hot seat because it allegedly violated the state's Open Meetings Act by failing to give proper public notice when it reviewed names of inmates placed on a special list for "early consideration" for parole or commutation. Later the focus shifted to whether it had ignored the law requiring that violent offenders complete at least 85% of their sentences.

Whether the board met the spirit, much less the letter of the 85% mandate may depend on who's interpreting their actions. But the board's opaqueness when it comes to agenda details is inexcusable. Nothing is more important to a fully functioning democratic republic than keeping public decision-making in public.

What makes the parole board's vapidly even more egregious is that it came to light just as Oklahoma is on the verge of doing something meaningful to reform its out-of-whack criminal justice system: In November, voters will be asked to approve SQ 762 that would remove the governor from the parole process for non-violent offenders.

No other state requires its chief executive to make the final call on each case, down to the repeat shoplifter. And for good reason: It unnecessarily gums up the process, it ends up costing taxpayers more [some inmates simply choose to finish out their sentences instead] and it needlessly exposes the decision to political influence.

Governors are political animals. They aren't impartial jurists – criminal court judges or parole board members are supposed to review the facts, ignore the politics and make the tough calls – but instead are all-too-often scared witless to sign parole recommendations.

Why? There is no crystal ball to predict whether an offender will live an exemplary life – or do something stupid and criminal again. No chief executive wants to be the one blamed for the next Willie Horton.

Former Gov. Brad Henry, a Democrat, routinely milked the clock, waiting as long as possible to take action. Often he answered no, despite the parole board's recommendations. Call it the better safe than sorry approach.

So far, current Republican Gov. Mary Fallin is approving just over half the cases sent her by the parole board, according to a Tulsa World analysis.

Who can blame inmates for, in effect, saying: Why bother? They can skip the paperwork and all the anxiety over whether they'll be approved – opting instead to finish their terms and not be subject to the post-incarceration supervision that would be required if they were allowed to depart the Big House early.

What a scenario: A strictly controlled life in prison one day, freedom the next – a transformation that should worry both ex-cons hoping for a smooth transition to a productive life and rank-and-file citizens hoping to avoid becoming victims of ex-inmates who can't cope with their suddenly unsupervised, free-wheeling lives.

This isn't a partisan issue. It was the Republican-dominated Legislature, after all, that last spring ordered SQ 762 placed on the ballot – a constitutional amendment that if approved would reduce the power of a Republican governor.

Frankly, my guess is the current and all former Oklahoma governors gladly would have given up this power – a headache creator if there ever was one. But this isn't an issue of political convenience; it's a matter of stewardship and leadership: how best to ensure public safety and the fair treatment of lawbreakers and how to most wisely spend the taxpayers' money.

At the end of June, Oklahoma had nearly 26,000 inmates in custody – at an annual cost of about \$16,000 each. Far too many of those are serving time for non-violent offenses, thrown behind bars because of the punitive three strikes

and you're out that too many politicians demagogue.

In many cases the taxpayers would be better served by having them supervised, but not incarcerated – able to work, able to remain productive citizens, able to keep their families together, but required through community service and rehabilitation programs to repay their debts to society.

At a time when teachers are being laid off, highways and bridges need fixing, highway patrol cruisers need replacing, Oklahoma cannot afford to waste money on punitive warehousing.

Further, more money is squandered by keeping the governor in the parole process for non-violent offenders: An independent audit of the corrections department five years ago found an average 100-day delay in the governor's review of paroles – costing the state an average \$4,700 per inmate.

As House Speaker Kris Steele put it, removing the governor from the non-violent parole process "will save money and resources that can be redirected to strategies and programs that actually increase public safety and reduce crime."

Unfortunately, the parole board's alleged shenanigans could make it more difficult to win passage of SQ 762. Who could blame voters for suddenly being suspicious of the process? For wondering what games the parole board is playing?

Voters paying attention to the dust-up may conclude it's better to keep the governor in the process – as a watchdog, of sorts. Others could easily misinterpret SQ 762 as a soft-headed, soft-on-crime proposal that gives law-breakers undeserved breaks.

The truth is, SQ 762 deserves to be approved because it is smart public policy. It shouldn't be a casualty of the alleged misadventures of the parole board.



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# RAIL ROAD

## Is Eastern Flyer Task Force Blowing It?



By Arnold Hamilton

As gas prices spike *yet again* – blamed on rising oil futures and refinery problems *yet again* – Oklahoma dallies on passenger rail *yet again*.

The latest bungling involves the legislatively created Eastern Flyer Task Force, charged with studying the feasibility of service between the state's two urban centers, Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

The panel has until Dec. 31 to complete its work, but there appears little reason to believe it will seriously advance new passenger trains in a state where the highway contractors dominate any discussion of transportation spending.

"We're up against some pretty big players here," says Evan Stair, vice chair of the Eastern Flyer Task Force and a longtime rail proponent.

**THE FEAR ISN'T** a couple of daily trains between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. The fear is the service would be successful – and would eat into the already meager budget for transportation needs in a state that routinely appears near the top of lists rating the nation's worst bridges and roads.

What a shame.

Can you imagine hopping onto the train in downtown Tulsa or Oklahoma City, using the on-board wifi to work all the way, disembarking and walking a block or two to a business meeting – or to Chesapeake Arena for a Thunder game or to the BOK Center for a concert? Then kicking back for a leisurely ride home?

The success of the state's lone passenger service – Amtrak's Heartland Flyer, linking the state capital and Fort Worth – indicates Oklahomans are fully capable of thinking outside the 20th Century, *Drive the USA in your Chevrolet* box.

**WHEN AMTRAK LAUNCHED** the service more than a decade ago, it projected it would serve 25,000 passengers annually. Instead, nearly three times as many rode the rails the first year – 71,400. This year the Heartland Flyer is on pace to carry 92,000 passengers.

Moreover, a 2009 Texas Transportation Institute study showed the \$3.95 million invested in the Heartland Flyer by the two states yielded \$18 million in traveler spending along the route and \$1.4 million in local sales taxes.

Alas, the conventional wisdom in politics is that task forces are where good ideas go to die. And there may be no better current example than the Eastern Flyer task force.

It was slow to launch, at least in part because Senate President Pro Tem Brian Bingman and House Speaker Kris Steele were slow to appoint its members. And once they did, three of the state lawmakers assigned to the task force never showed up for a single meeting and the fourth only attended once. Moreover, both the House members – state Reps. Eric Proctor, D-Tulsa, and Charlie Joyner, R-Midwest City – have now quit the task force.

**THE TASK FORCE'S** approach to analyzing the Eastern Flyer's feasibility has been – uh – interesting, to say the least. It met in late August with New Mexico officials to review the embattled passenger service between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. But it wasn't until passenger rail advocates raised a stink that the task force agreed to meet with Missouri officials to study the highly successful twice-daily train between Kansas City and St. Louis.

If this were a football or basketball game, you'd get the sense the task force is merely playing out the clock.

Thirty years ago, a Tulsa-Oklahoma City passenger train probably wouldn't have generated much enthusiasm, except among the most devoted railroaders.

Oklahomans weren't about to give up their pickups until their cold dead fingers were pried off the steering wheels. And Tulsa and Oklahoma City might as well have been on different planets.

**THE CAPITAL WAS STILL** a sleepy cowtown, dependent primarily on government jobs. Tulsa viewed itself as a virtual nation-state, vastly superior to the bumpkins at the other end of the Turner Turnpike.

Now that we're in a global marketplace, the synergy between Tulsa and Oklahoma City is tighter than ever. When you're from a small state like Oklahoma, your two business centers need to work together – not as competitors – to be successful.

Some states get it. California Gov. Jerry Brown recently signed legislation that will kick-off the state's high-speed rail efforts, authorizing the sale of \$4.5 billion

in voter-approved bonds to be matched by \$3.2 billion in federal start-up funds.

The primary focus will be a San Francisco to Los Angeles bullet train. Construction will put thousands to work. Operation will help reduce the strain on California's highway infrastructure. And it's environmentally friendlier than cars and trucks.

**THE EFFORT ALREADY IS** attracting the interest of private entrepreneurs and investors who would like to create a San Francisco Bay Area-to-Las Vegas "party" train.

President Obama has promoted the idea of a nationwide high-speed rail network that would be the next generation's equivalent of Dwight Eisenhower's interstate highway system or Abraham Lincoln's transcontinental railroad.

Oklahoma is uniquely positioned to be a major player if Obama's dream is realized. In 2000, the Federal Railroad Commission included Oklahoma in its South Central Corridor – one of only 11 designated nationally – that links Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio and Little Rock.

In the late 20th Century, the state actually looked at the feasibility of creating a 180-mile-per-hour train between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. The \$880 million price tag was do-able by matching \$800 million in federal transportation monies with a 10-year, 1-cent increase in the gasoline sales tax that would generate \$200 million.

**THE STATE'S TRANSPORTATION** powers-that-be [think: highway contractors] so coveted the potential largesse for themselves that they worked overtime to defeat it, portraying it as a pie-in-the-sky scheme.

The Eastern Flyer task force is charged with studying both conventional and high-speed rail service. But there are signs the task force is preoccupied with high-speed – a proposition that even some passenger rail diehards consider remote.

What makes more sense, says former Tulsa City Councilor Rick Westcott, is a conventional passenger rail system that would need only about \$150 million in improvements and other equipment to get up-and-running.

"We have found tremendous interest in the private sector" in a public-private rail partnership, says Westcott, who chairs the Tulsa Passenger Rail Advisory Committee. In fact, he says, the service – with four or more daily roundtrips – could be launched with six months of the state and a private operator signing an agreement.

**TOWNS ALONG THE ROUTE** salivate at the prospect, seeing the huge economic boost created by the Heartland Flyer.

The state owns the 97.5 miles of rail between Oklahoma City and Sapulpa, having purchased it from Burlington Northern Santa Fe in 1997. BNSF owns the line between Sapulpa and Tulsa. So a deal would have to be worked out.

Here's a potential rub: In this era of tight state budgets [thanks to a sluggish overall economy and nearly \$1 billion in ill-advised, but politically pleasing tax cuts], Oklahoma is looking at selling surplus properties to generate cash.

It is not beyond the realm of possibility the state could sell the OKC-Sapulpa line, especially if demand increases to transport North Dakota oil tank cars through Tulsa to Stroud where oil could be piped to the refineries in Cushing.

**IN OTHER WORDS**, short-term cash flow could once again trump long-term economic – and environmental – considerations.

A helluva way to run a railroad, eh?

The highway contractors and auto manufacturers notwithstanding, passenger rail is going to be an important component in America's efforts to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and reduce pollution.

The Tulsa-Oklahoma City route also could provide a significant boost to rural towns along the route – as evidence by the Heartland Flyer's economic impact.

Even if the Eastern Flyer Task Force fails to produce a workable plan for passenger rail between the state's two largest cities, Oklahomans should demand lawmakers produce a solution next session.

And they should threaten lawmakers within an inch of their electoral lives if they even consider selling the Oklahoma City-Sapulpa line.

All aboard?

# Ryan Plan Threatens State Services, Recovery

By David Blatt

Without new revenue, federal deficit reduction efforts will lead to devastating cuts in federal support for education, transportation, law enforcement, the social safety net, and other state and local programs, according to a new report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Oklahoma faces a loss of \$345 million in discretionary state and local aid in 2014 alone, and over \$3 billion from 2013-2021 under the House-approved budget plan developed by the Republican vice-presidential nominee, Rep. Paul Ryan, which illustrates the kind of approach Congress likely would take if it rejects significant new revenues.

Cuts of this magnitude would lead to a significant reduction in the quality and reach of core public services in Oklahoma and would threaten the state's economic recovery.

**UNDER THE RYAN** plan, federal support for discretionary non-defense spending would be slashed by over 20% compared to 2012 levels, according to the Center's estimates. That part of the federal budget funds grants to state and local governments to support services that states and localities provide, such as education, law enforcement, water treatment facilities, and disaster response.

The cuts in the Ryan plan would be three times deeper than under the automatic cuts scheduled to take effect beginning in 2013 under the "sequestration" process set in place during last year's debt ceiling agreement.

By 2021, federal grant programs for state, counties, and cities likely would be less than half the average of the last 35 years.

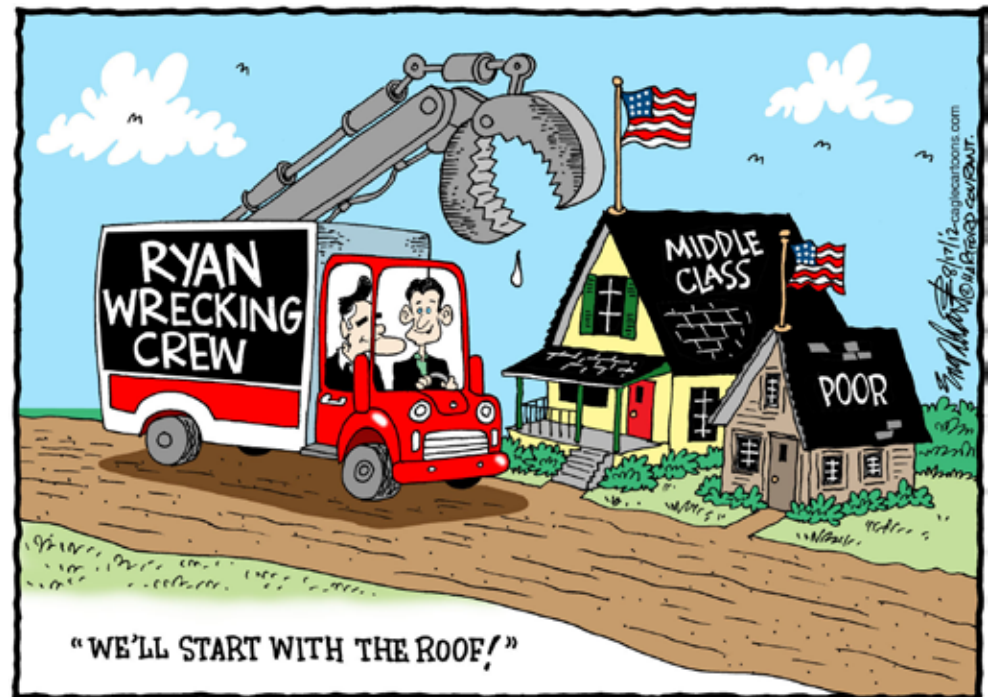
Federal aid for states is extremely vulnerable if Congress sets large deficit reduction goals while avoiding any revenue measures and sparing Social Security, Medicare and defense from substantial cuts.

**ACCORDING TO THE CENTER**, "If the savings from Social Security, Medicare, and defense – which together account for well over half of non-interest federal spending – are limited and the deficit plan does not include significant revenues, federal support for programs operated by state and local governments will stand out as one of the few remaining sources of large potential savings."

The discretionary non-defense budget includes dozens of federal programs that support key functions of state and local government.

Among the areas facing cuts in federal spending exceeding 20% under the Ryan budget would be: Education – Funding for schools in high-poverty areas [Title I], special education, Head Start, adult and vocational education, training and employment services; Transportation – Road and bridge planning, construction and rehabilitation, public transit, and airports; Health and Social Services – Nutrition services [WIC], mental health and substance abuse services, community health centers, child care subsidies, home heating and cooling assistance, and rental assistance; Public Safety and Disaster Response – Federal disaster relief, Justice Assistance Grants, funding for state and local police officers.

**IN ADDITION TO SLASHING** discretionary programs, the Ryan budget would cut federal funding for the Medicaid program by 34% by 2022 relative to what Medicaid funding would be under current law, leaving states with greater respon-



sibility to support the health care costs of low-income residents.

The threat of significantly reduced federal support comes at a time when Oklahoma, like other states, has yet to fully recover from years of budget cuts which have battered schools, public health departments, law enforcement agencies, correctional facilities, and other core public services.

Large cuts in federal aid will further compound the states' structural budget deficits by widening the gap between the cost of services and the revenues available to pay for them.

This report presents a stark picture of the enormous stakes for states and local governments in the federal budget and tax negotiations that will follow November's election.

State policymakers and advocates must make clear to our federal representatives that a balanced approach to deficit reduction that includes new revenues and limits cuts to discretionary non-defense programs is essential to Oklahoma's continued prosperity.

– The author is director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute. An earlier version of this article appeared on the OKPolicy blog. You can sign up for OK Policy's e-mail alerts and daily news digest at <http://okpolicy.org>.

## Avoiding The Medicaid 'Coverage Crater'

By David Blatt

When Congress approved a prescription drug benefit for the Medicare program in the mid-2000s, it created the infamous "Medicare donut hole" – a large gap in coverage of prescription drug costs.

The Affordable Care Act [ACA], the landmark health care law, brought about important changes that gradually eliminates the "donut hole" by 2020. But now, as a result of the Supreme Court's recent ruling, low-income Oklahomans could find themselves in a similar situation, stuck in a "coverage crater," without access to public or private coverage and consigned to the ranks of the uninsured.

The ACA adopts two primary mechanisms to cover the uninsured. The first is to expand Medicaid, the federal-state insurance program that primarily covers low-income children, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

In Oklahoma, like in many states, Medicaid coverage for working-age adults is extremely limited. Only parents of dependent children with incomes below roughly \$7,000 per year for a family of three [37% of the federal poverty level] are eligible.

**WORKING-AGE ADULTS** without children are ineligible for Medicaid regardless of how little they earn. The uninsured rate for this population is extremely high, nearing 50% in Oklahoma. This population is especially likely to suffer from chronic physical and mental health conditions that make earning a steady income difficult.

The ACA makes adults with income up to 133% of poverty eligible for Medicaid as of Jan. 1, 2014. To ensure that states go along with the expansion, the law provided both a large carrot and a heavy stick.

The incentive is a federal commitment to cover the lion's share of the costs of the newly-eligible Medicaid population – 100% for three years, then phasing down to 90% in 2020 and subsequent years.

For states that didn't adopt the expansion, the federal government could withdraw all federal funds for the Medicaid program.

**THE SUPREME COURT**, however, ruled that the threat of withholding all federal Medicaid funds for a state that does not expand coverage for low-income adults was unconstitutional.

As SCOTUSblog explains, "The result is that states can choose to participate

in the expansion, must comply with the conditions attached to the new expansion funds if they take that new money, but states can also choose to continue to participate only in the unexpanded version of the program if they want."

The second mechanism for expanding coverage to the uninsured is by providing tax credits to subsidize the purchase of insurance through the newly-created health insurance exchanges that are set to launch in January 2014. These credits will be available on a sliding scale for individuals with income between 100% and 400% of the federal poverty level.

Between expanded Medicaid coverage and subsidies for private coverage through the exchange, the expectation was that everyone would have access to affordable coverage.

**A MAJOR CONSEQUENCE** of the Supreme Court's ruling is that in a state that chooses not to expand Medicaid, most adults living in poverty will be left without coverage options.

They will earn too little to be eligible for premium credits that will make individual coverage affordable through the exchange.

Yet they will remain ineligible for Medicaid unless they fit the narrow categorical and income requirements [parents of dependent children under 37% of poverty].

Some 130,000 uninsured Oklahomans could remain stuck in the "coverage crater."

Expanding Medicaid to this population would help them access timely and appropriate health care, leading to better health status and improved economic prospects. It would reduce uncompensated care costs for hospitals and other providers, and reduce state spending on mental health care and other services for the uninsured.

To turn down this opportunity to lift 130,000 Oklahomans out of the coverage crater would be contrary to the state's interests and lacking in basic compassion and common sense.

– The author is director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute. An earlier version of this article appeared on the OKPolicy blog. You can sign up for OK Policy's e-mail alerts and daily news digest at <http://okpolicy.org>.



# 'Let's Meet At Church, Then Head To Casino'

By Cal Hobson

## Second of Three Parts

Through the existence of thousands of churches, and over 80 casinos, Oklahomans have proven they covet the right to choose, at least when it comes to religion and gambling.

Indian casinos offer the full spectrum of games, with some variations, that you would find in Las Vegas.

There are about 68,000 video slot machines in Oklahoma – 38,000 of them Class III and thus taxable under the negotiated compacts between the state and the tribes. The remaining 30,000, designated as Class II, are of the bingo style and not taxable. Additionally thousands of poker, blackjack, roulette, and crap tables also tempt gamblers.

Our state's population is roughly 3.7 million. Compare this to California, which has a population of 37.5 million and is home to 70 casinos containing 64,000 slot machines and other games of chance. The Golden State also has 90 free standing poker rooms.

Oklahoma casinos range in size from that of a double-wide trailer to the sixth largest gaming palace in the world – Winstar, owned by the Chickasaw Nation, and located along I-35 in far southern Oklahoma near Thackerville.

[On a personal note, Thackerville was settled in 1881 when my great grandfather, Dr. Robert E. Lee Thacker, his parents and siblings crossed the Red River from Texas in a covered wagon. I'm told the good doctor was very much a teetotaler, regular church-goer, and certainly not a gambler, except for settling within Indian Territory in the late 19th Century. He is undoubtedly spinning like a roulette wheel in his grave, especially since I authored the bill to fully recognize and legalize casinos in what has become the gaming mecca of the Midwest.]

Conversely why is it that Texas, the state we often view with envy, had in 2002 a grand total of ONE tribal casino owned by the Tiqua Pueblos and remotely located near the Rio Grande River?

Ironically, it was just one of many tribes nationwide stolen from, to the tune of \$85 million, by crooked lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his allies in the U.S. Congress. Mr. Abramoff, former Republican Congressman Bob Ney of Ohio and other smaller fry received time in federal prisons for their illegal actions.

While the Lone Star State became enmeshed in this scandal, Oklahoma was then and is now covered with gaming outlets, north to south, east to west. To understand this gaming comparison between the two states, one must realize that many of Oklahoma's 37 federally recognized tribes and the United States government entered into treaties during the 19th Century and they are the basis for tribal sovereignty.

Texas, on the other hand, has fewer tribes that are much weaker financially and politically than those north of the Red River. They also



do not have similar treaties as ours and current Texas Gov. Rick Perry, backed by a Republican state legislature, has vowed to never allow tribal gaming in his state even though it does have horse racing and a lottery.

For the benefit of our casinos, especially those located on our borders, I hope Perry keeps his head in the sand because the majority of wagers at both Winstar and the Choctaw Grand Casino in Durant reside in Texas.

These Texans leave many of their entertainment dollars north of the border and thus pay millions in taxes to our state coffers.

Also the Congress passed the Indian Regularly Gaming Act of 1988 and the floodgates – or should I say casino doors – were cracked open, but with many restrictions that proved unenforceable. It was the ongoing struggle between law enforcement entities and Native American tribes that convinced me something had to be done by our Legislature that hopefully could lead to a win/win situation for all involved.

Oklahoma has at least a 40-year history of trying to sign so-called "compacts" with tribes to regulate and tax certain products and activities. These range from the sale of cigarettes and gasoline to the even more contentious activity of gaming on Indian lands.

I was directly involved as a legislative negotiator with tribal leaders on the first of such arrangements in the mid '80s as related to the sale of motor fuel.

From that experience I learned a valuable lesson. Whether the white man likes it or not, tribes have many of the same inherent powers as state government.

Opponents say they are just businesses, corporations, or groups of people similar to thousands of other non-tribal individuals and activities living and operating in our state. Due to numerous federal court rulings, and, of course, those old treaties, it is a futile and losing argument.

Fast forward now to January 2003 when I became the pro tempore of the Senate. I had watched for years as casinos expanded, only to be raided by local, state, and federal law enforcement entities for violations of various gambling restrictions.

These offenses ranged from tribal invented card games, such as bingo bones, to video machines that, instead of just offering legal Class II bingo style slots, were trending toward so-called Class III slots similar to those found in Vegas, Atlantic City and tribal activities in other states.

The reason? People preferred to play them and they were more profitable for the Native Americans who offered them.

As this turbulence was swirling around casinos, another very important part of Oklahoma's economy was slowly dying. It was the racehorse industry, especially that of the breed known as thoroughbreds.

The Legislature had legalized horse racing in 1982 and Remington Park in Oklahoma City opened to great fanfare in 1989. However, by

2002, due to competition for gaming dollars, especially from casinos and out of state lotteries, the daily "purse structure," or money paid to horsemen from races, had dwindled to slightly more than \$40,000 per day at Remington and much less at Oklahoma's other two tracks. The quality of horses declined accordingly and the 10,000 jobs tied to the equine business were fleeing our state on a regular basis.

Growing up I had worked at race-tracks and later authored most of the industry's legislation during my time at the Capitol. Therefore, I hated what I saw happening in horse country. After all, only Texas and Kentucky had more horses per capita than we did.

Therefore, in January 2003, as leader of the Senate, I once again suggested we find a way to "compact" with the tribes for gaming, garner revenue for the state from them, and save the horse racing industry at the same time.

Sounds reasonable, fairly simple, and logical.

It was anything but.

Newly elected Gov. Brad Henry, a Shawnee Democrat, was also sworn in January 2003, and fortunately for my goals, he too, as well as the excellent Speaker of the House, Larry Adair, D-Adair, shared this vision.

Just as importantly, Henry hired his old law school buddy, Scott Meacham, lawyer and banker from Elk City, to be his finance director and cabinet secretary. Some of my legislative colleagues found Meacham to be strident, blunt, and too clever for his own good. I found him to be smart as hell [probably in the top three IQ-wise of all people I served with at the Capitol], aggressive and a very, very hard worker.

Henry wisely put him in charge of discussions with the tribes that wanted to compact with Oklahoma concerning gaming, and without his wisdom, good judgment and negotiating skills there would not be the arrangements with the tribes as we know them today.

While I was the author of the legislative effort to tax and regulate casinos, along with Speaker Adair, we had many allies within the House and Senate but two individuals stand out.

For the higher body, a man of impeccable military and law enforcement credentials became my strong, indispensable right hand – Sen. Dick Wilkerson, D-Atwood. He not only was a decorated warrior from the Vietnam War but also had previously served as deputy director of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. He also was a historian of Indian law and treaties so no one, not even our most ardent and passionate opponents, questioned Dick's knowledge and integrity.

Over in the House a young politician named Clay Pope, D-Loyal, became the go-to guy on Indian gaming and the horse industries. Clay came from a noted western Oklahoma

See GAMING Page 17

## BOOKS

# Shriver, Obama: American Success Stories

By Derrek Belase

By Wanda Jo Stapleton

### A GOOD MAN

*Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver*  
By Mark K. Shriver  
Henry Holt and Co.  
266 pages, \$24

For Father's Day I received a wonderful gift. I thought I was going to crack the cover to read about the life of R. Sargent Shriver, but surprisingly I found a biography and an autobiography rolled into one.

Ostensibly Mark Shriver's new book is about the life, illness and death of his father, Sargent Shriver. After reading it, I realized it was as much about Mark's life as it was his father's.

However, it is Sargent's life that provides the main fodder for reflection. After graduation from law school and a stint in the United States Navy, Shriver went to work for Joseph Kennedy Sr. at his sprawling Merchandise Mart in Chicago.

The rest is history. After a long courtship, he married Kennedy's daughter, Eunice. Their love affair lasted some 56 years and included working together on many projects. Eunice is known for being the founder of Special Olympics.

**SHRIVER WAS PLUCKED** from relative national obscurity by his brother-in-law, President Kennedy, to become the first director of the Peace Corps. After Kennedy's death, he served as a chief architect of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, was the first director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and served as the ambassador to France. Earlier in his life, he also had a hand in desegregating the Chicago Public Schools.

Helping others was his life's work. In one of the final speeches of his professional career, he encouraged others to do the same.

"Break your mirror," he told students at Yale University in 1994, just three days after the death of his sister-in-law, Jackie Bouvier Kennedy. "Shatter the glass. In our society, which is so self-absorbed, begin to look less at yourself and more at each other."

**IN THIS RIVETING WORK**, son Mark spends as much time discussing his father's political involvement as he does describing, in great detail, the kind of father Sargent was to his five children. Part of the story has to do with what it was like growing up in the shadows of the Kennedy family.

In one poignant story, Mark tells about a time when his older brother, Bobby, was playing a game with the Kennedy children at the Hyannis Port compound. An accident occurred and Bobby started crying. Robert Kennedy said to him, "Kennedys don't cry."

Mark says that his father picked up his son and said, "It's OK, you can cry! You're a Shriver!"

Shriver was loyal to the Kennedy family, but he also maintained his separate-ness.

**THAT CAME THROUGH** when Sargent stepped out on his own and dabbled in national politics. He was George McGovern's seventh choice as a running mate in 1972 and then attempted to capture the nomination for our nation's highest office four years later.

In gripping detail, Mark describes how gracious his father was after announcing that he would suspend his candidacy.

After his speech and shaking the hands of all the well-wishers, the time came for the Secret Service to leave the Shriver family to themselves. Sargent signed the appropriate paperwork and shook hands with the agent.

Mark writes, "I noticed them looking each other in the eye just a bit longer than usual."

This was only one of two times when Mark says his father was "shaken." The other was during the speech itself. Why? Mark surmises that it was because "he had to bid farewell to people he felt he had let down."

**IN AN EXAMPLE** of the biographical/autobiographical nature of the book, Shriver compares how charitable his dad had been when dropping out of the race for our nation's top office with a description of his own defeat for the United States House of Representatives.

"I should have remembered ... how he took it all in with equanimity, gave his great speech, said good-bye to his Secret Service agent and staff, and then flew away with his family to take in the sun and water of the Dominican Republic. But I didn't. I just sat there stunned and sad. And angry."

A portrait of a father's love for his children was painted throughout the many short chapters of this book. None of us want to disappoint our parents, but when you are the son of a high profile person, the pressure is surely even greater.

**MARK WAS THE FIRST** of his generation to be accepted into the Peace Corps.

After a public announcement that the founding director's son would become a Peace Corps volunteer, Mark had second thoughts and decided not to serve overseas. His father, he said, never winced or expressed disappointment. He was "unconditionally supportive and understanding."

The book is divided into two parts with two sections of family photos. The first half of the book reads like a Who's Who of American politics. After all, a book about a Kennedy in-law would certainly contain many stories about the men and women who have shaped this country. Stories of family life and politics dominate.

But in the second half of the book, Mark Shriver narrates his father's long

See **SHRIVER** Page 15

### BARACK OBAMA

*The Story*  
By David Maraniss  
Simon and Schuster  
672 pages, \$32.50

Pulitzer Prize winning Washington Post editor David Maraniss chronicles as never before the forces that shaped the first black president of the United States and explains why Barack Obama thinks and acts as he does.

This volume begins long before Obama was born and ends before he entered politics.

### MEET THE PARENTS

Chance meetings and random connections of his parents [from different races, on separate continents] led to our president's birth. President Obama's mother was Ann Dunham, a white middle-class woman from Kansas. Stanley Dunham, Ann's father, was a furniture salesman with "itchy feet."

In his wanderlust, he sold furniture in various places including Ponca City; Vernon, TX; and Seattle. Stanley ended up in Hawaii because a former competitor

See **OBAMA** Page 15

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## ROMNEY'S VEEP

# Paul Ryan, The Borens And George Wallace

By Karen Webb

Mitt Romney supposedly picked Paul Ryan because he is just one of us – part of the 99%. You might think that, at first glance, with their divergent ideas regarding sports. Mitt prefers dressage and Paul prefers “noodling.” If you don’t know what that is, then you aren’t from Oklahoma.

Maybe Paul could introduce Mitt to it. Picture this: First, Mitt locates the dirtiest body of water he can find, then he goes to the bank, squats down, ducks his beautifully coiffed hair in the muck, rams his hands in a big hole and brings out a large catfish.

Now, see, I am laughing already.

Paul Ryan has pulled himself by his bootstraps? After driving an Oscar Meyer Wiener-mobile while in college, he went to DC and has been there almost continuously since. He met his wife there – she was working as an intern in the office of then Sen. David Boren, D-OK. She is Boren’s niece.

**LATER SHE WORKED** as a tax attorney in the office of another Oklahoma democrat, Bill Brewster. Her first cousin is Rep. Dan Boren, d-OK, and if I could make that “d” any smaller I would. It should be so small you need a microscope to tell what it is.

Janna Little Ryan is the granddaughter of Reuel Little, who in 1967 started the movement to help found a third party for the 1968 election.

Right ... he was out collecting signatures to get George Wallace on the ballot in Oklahoma and helped get the American Party started.

Wallace got 20% of the vote and then Reuel Little ran for governor on the American Party ticket and only got 4%, but a few years later his son-in-law, David Boren, was elected governor on the Democratic ticket.

David was conservative, but his son Dan makes him look like a rabid New Dealer.

I am sure Mitt Romney thought Paul Ryan would balance the ticket because he isn’t as well off as the Romneys, but we may never know since Romney is keeping every thing a secret. He is running on his business experience and now it is off-limits to ask him anything about it.

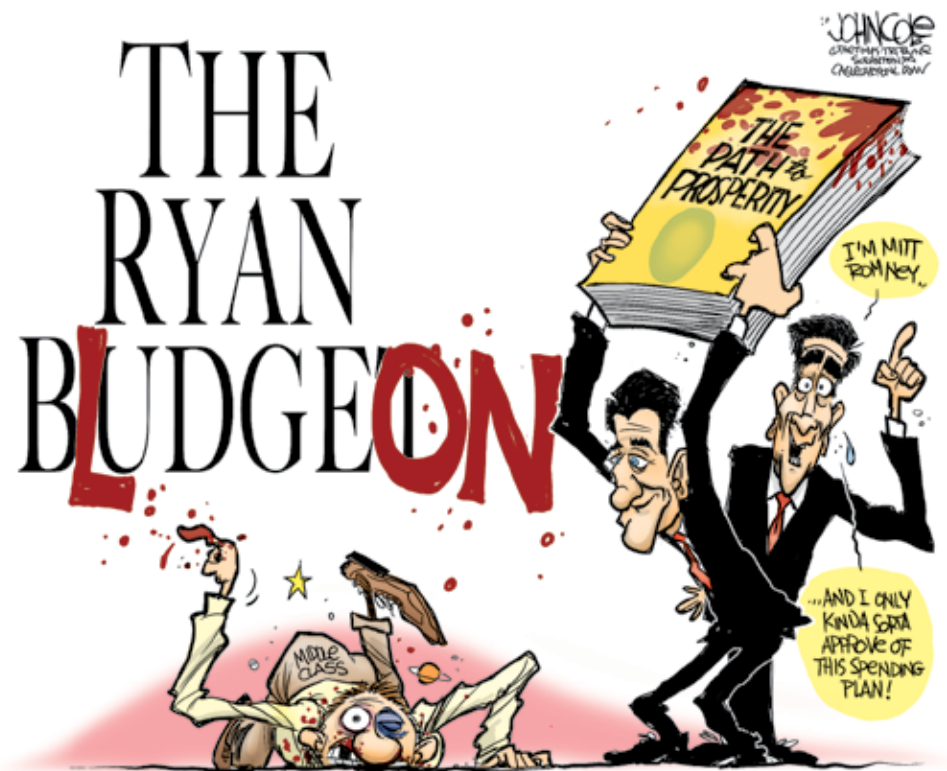
Anyway, unless Janna has been completely disowned by the family, which isn’t likely, she is probably in the 1%, if Paul isn’t.

**REUEL STARTED THE FAMILY** oil business and since Dan Boren has been in the House, controlling the oil and gas committee, the business has really taken off. Boren has voted with the GOP on oil and gas legislation 31 out of 32 times.

His congressional pay is \$174,000, but his personal wealth and income, according to the House financial statements, is in the millions.

Dan Boren has been fighting really hard against President Obama’s idea of regulating the fracking business, along with other aspects of the industry.

On April 28, 2011, according to the FOX New site, he said, “If the president doesn’t want to stand up and be a leader, then his silence would be appreciated



from people who are trying to find solutions.”

I am really sure that is the same thing as telling the president to “sit down and shut up.”

According to Newsmax, another right wing site, Boren said, “And these tax breaks do not go to the big major oil companies, they go to small independent companies like we have in Oklahoma.”

Dan and the GOP love to talk about small businesses and love to use edited quotes where the president says “you didn’t build that.”

**IF YOU EVER WONDERED** what they think a small business is, ask Dan Boren: “These are the Devons, the Chesapeakes, and even smaller companies that are

See RYAN Page 14

## VP Choice Makes GOP Agenda Crystal Clear

By Vern Turner

Now that Mitt Romney has selected Paul Ryan as his vice-presidential candidate, one can have no doubt any longer as to the intent of the Republican agenda: Destroy the middle class, render the poor to even deeper poverty, allow the sick to get sicker because they can’t pay for their medical bills, allow homeowners who have had their jobs sent to Asia to continue to lose their homes while having to pay higher federal tax rates than they currently pay and give still more tax breaks to the rich.

The drumbeat for dismantling our government involvement in the “general welfare” of the people is now reaching a crescendo of craven callousness, arrogance and abject hubris.

How did we allow this to happen?

In the 1970s, liberals didn’t keep protesting what the military-industrial complex was doing to our industrial base. We protested about ending Nixon’s War and were successful. Then, we took the money and shut up.

Meanwhile, we elected a Congress that began taking apart the middle class and the New Deal.

The infamous letter from Lewis Powell to the U.S. Chamber of Com-

merce, the largest lobbying organization on Earth, was a call to arms for corporate/banking America to come to the rescue of the rich by buying the government.

In a spate of the most blatant acts of economic terrorism, Powell created the impetus to form the lobbying industry, now over 29,000 strong. Bit by bit, this industry purchased first one then another politician until they had enough of them and judges to change laws such that the citizen protections against rampant banker abuse was eliminated in 1999.

H.R. 1489, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, overturned the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 that would have prevented exactly what happened in 2007-08.

The kicker is that the richest got richest no matter what because they were using public money. The top 400 made record fortunes while the world’s economy nosedived.

The perfect storm of economical malfeasance was supplemented by the hopelessly inept and wrong-headed Bush Administration that couldn’t run a popcorn stand let alone the world’s largest economy.

They thought they could fight wars [after they intimidated a compliant Congress into giving the executive

branch virtually unlimited military power] while cutting taxes and borrowing it all from one of our job sinks, China.

Where were the howls of protest from our liberal politicians? Why weren’t people in the streets demanding the return of their lost retirement funds and stock investments?

Nobody complained. Thieves are validated when the alarms at the bank don’t ring while they’re cleaning out the safe.

Our own countrymen took the money and put it in foreign banks so they wouldn’t have to pay taxes on top of the theft.

That takes some hubris ... among other things.

In the years since Barack Obama was elected we’ve had only the meager attempts by the Occupy Wall Street “movement” to protest income inequality.

The rich sneered and laughed and turned on the pepper spray. End of protest.

Don’t forget, they own the police, too, by way of the local governments.

So, how do we reverse the trend to our own self-destruction as a people? Do we stand up and vote all the in-

cumbents out? That might be a start, but who will replace them? More bought and paid for liars?

How do we actually secure our own representation the way a Constitutional Republic is supposed to when 30% of our eligible citizens aren’t even registered?

How do we pick the right people when less than half of those registered voters turn out?

Our own sloth has allowed the foxes into the henhouse of our country and we the people are the only ones who can root them out. Action is required. Voter registration efforts are necessary to overcome election rigging. Protesting and flooding even the most backward Congressman with rebellious verbiage is necessary.

We will never get the obscene amounts of bribery out of our election process, and thus our government, unless we take charge of the elections and who the candidates are. After all, there are more of us than the top 1% who fund the graft in government.

We should be able to do something to save ourselves, shouldn’t we?

– The author lives in Marble Falls, TX. You can read more of his essays at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net).



# Smallest Spender? Barack Obama!

By Rick Ungar

It's enough to make even the most ardent Obama cynic scratch his head in confusion.

Amidst all the cries of Barack Obama being the most prolific big government spender the nation has ever suffered, Marketwatch is reporting that our president has actually been tighter with a buck than any United States president since Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Who knew?

So, how have the Republicans managed to persuade Americans to buy into the whole "Obama as big spender" narrative?

It might have something to do with the first year of the Obama presidency where the federal budget increased a whopping 17.9% – going from \$2.98 trillion to \$3.52 trillion. I'll bet you think that this is the result of the Obama sponsored stimulus plan that is so frequently vilified by the conservatives ... but you would be wrong.

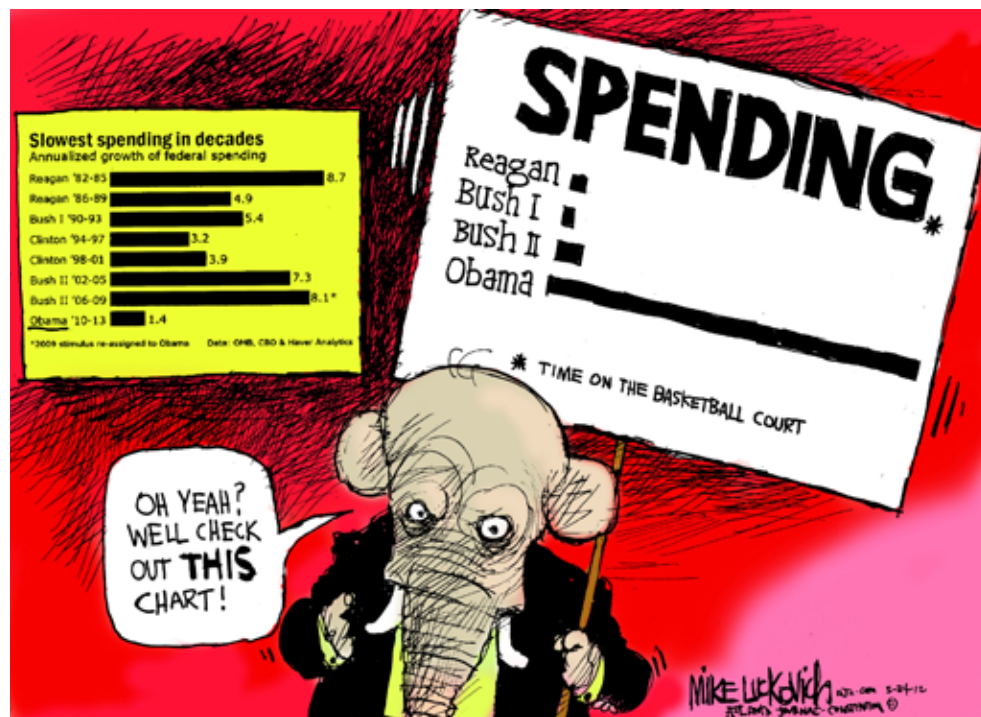
The first year of any incoming president term is saddled – for better or for worse – with the budget set by the president whom immediately precedes the new occupant of the White House. Indeed, not only was the 2009 budget the property of George W. Bush – and passed by the 2008 Congress – it was in effect four months before Barack Obama took the oath of office.

Accordingly, the first budget that can be blamed on our current president began in 2010 with the budgets running through and including fiscal year 2013 standing as charges on the Obama account, even if a President Willard M. Romney takes over the office on Jan. 20, 2013.

So, how do the actual Obama annual budgets look?

Courtesy of Marketwatch:

- In fiscal 2010 [the first Obama budget] spending fell 1.8% to \$3.46 trillion.
- In fiscal 2011, spending rose 4.3% to \$3.60 trillion.
- In fiscal 2012, spending is set to rise 0.7% to \$3.63 trillion, according to the



Congressional Budget Office's estimate of the budget that was agreed to last August.

- Finally in fiscal 2013 – the final budget of Obama's term – spending is scheduled to fall 1.3% to \$3.58 trillion.

No doubt, many will wish to give the credit to the efforts of the GOP controlled House of Representatives. That's fine if that's what works for you.

However, you don't get to have it both ways.

Credit whom you will, but if you are truly interested in a fair analysis of the Obama years to date – at least when it comes to spending – you're going to have to acknowledge that under the Obama watch, even President Reagan would have to give our current president a thumbs up when it comes to his record for stretching a dollar.

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## 'Missing Evidence' In Romney's Tax Records

By Joe Conason

Harry Reid has provoked outrage among liberals as well as conservatives, who seem to believe he has violated propriety by repeating gossip about Mitt Romney's taxes.

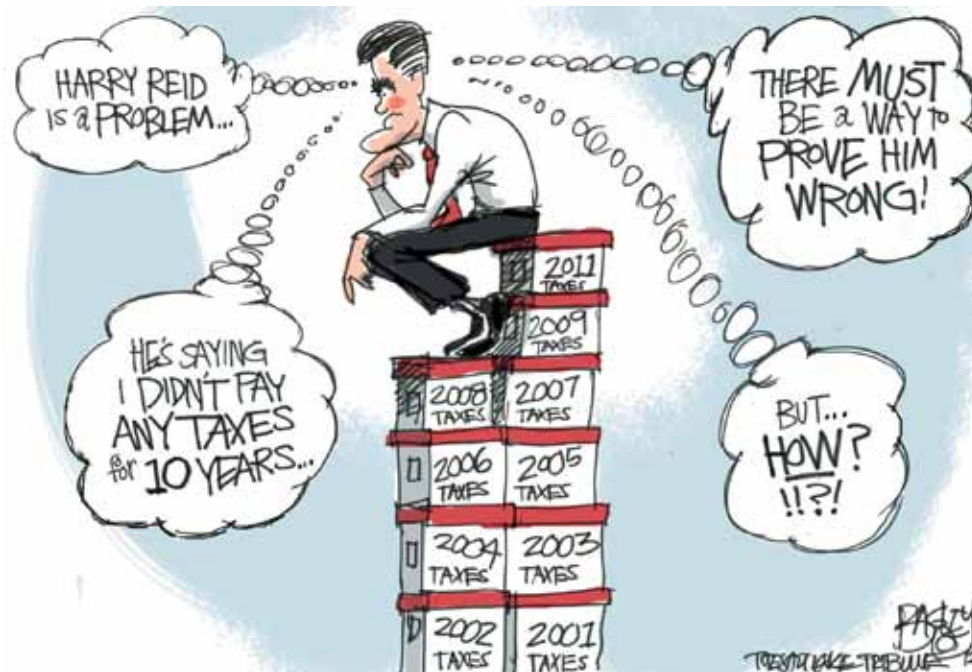
The Senate leader says someone connected with Romney told him that the Republican candidate paid no income taxes for a period of 10 years. Offended by Reid's audacity, commentators on the right have indicted him for "McCarthyism," while others on the left have accused him of inventing the whole story.

Evidently the chief complaint against Reid – aside from aggressiveness unbecoming a Democrat – is that he cited "an extremely credible source" who he has so far declined to name. Some journalists have gone so far as to suggest that Reid must be lying because he won't identify the source.

Despite all this righteous tut-tutting among the great and the good, in newspapers and magazines as well as on television, Reid's critics simply have no way of knowing whether he is telling the truth or not.

From the beginning, Reid himself admitted forthrightly that he has no way of being absolutely certain whether what he was told is factual or not, although he believes the person who said it was being truthful.

Many of Reid's critics work for news outlets that rely on unnamed sources every day, of course, publishing assertions that range from the mundane to the outlandish. It is hard to see why an unnamed source quoted by a daily newspaper or a monthly magazine – or hidden



behind a screen in a TV studio – is more credible than a person whispering in the ear of a United States senator.

Indeed, several of the news outlets barking at Reid have suffered their own episodes of scandalous embarrassment owing to the exposure of invented sources and quotes [see Jayson Blair, Stephen Glass, etc. etc.]. Yet they nevertheless continue to publish quotes from such unnamed individuals.

After all, where else would Reid have learned that this is acceptable conduct?

Meanwhile, Romney's response is to demand that Reid "put up or shut up" – that is, reveal the name of his source. But that would prove nothing. As Reid has pointed out, only the former Bain executive can demonstrate conclusively that suspicions about his tax history are unfounded.

Although the irritated Romney retorts that he has "paid a lot of taxes,"

his denial won't suffice as proof either. He could have paid hefty real estate taxes on his various homes and sales taxes on his purchases of cars, car elevators, powerboats, and other luxury goods, among other levies, while paying little or no federal income tax.

Obviously, it would be simple for Romney to disprove Reid's statement, which is unlike McCarthyite accusations that involve someone's personal associations or state of mind.

The necessary evidence is not only within Romney's possession but is also material that candidates in his position normally release to the public and that the public expects to see.

It is material that he previously surrendered to Sen. John McCain's campaign staff in 2008, when they were vetting him for a possible vice presidential nomination.

There is a legal doctrine that applies to Romney's current behavior, as Indiana attorney John Sullivan points out – and it doesn't place the burden of proof on Reid:

At law, if a person in control of evidence refuses to produce the evidence, then the jury is instructed that there is a presumption that the evidence would be against the party failing to produce.

It is called the "Missing Evidence" instruction.

The missing evidence is in Romney's grasp, yet he insists that he will never produce it. Does anyone need instruction from a judge to make the correct inference?

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# A Disappointment?

## Obama's Achievements Suggest Otherwise

### First of Two Parts

One of the most irritating things I hear these days is the idea that President Obama is really no different than Bush, or that he's a "disappointment." Both of those characterizations are flat ignorant.

If you truly believe that, you're in serious denial, and you can't be paying very close attention. In fairness, perhaps you were in a coma for the eight Bush Years, and if so, I forgive you. But please join the real world.

So far, this president has done most of what he said he would do if elected, and he's not even through his first term. Imagine what he could have done by now if we supported him, and gave him a Congress that doesn't look at him as if he's the demon seed.

Not only is he *not* a "failure," he's pretty much the opposite. And no, I don't just say that because he took out Osama bin Laden and helped Libya determine its own destiny for the first time in a while.

Is he perfect? No, he's human. Does he deserve some criticism? Sure. But criticism about certain specific problems is one thing; taking on an overall "Obama sucks" meme not only has the potential to put another Bush into power, but it's also a lie.

What follows is a *partial* list of Obama's accomplishments so far.

Anytime someone, right or left, tells you Obama sucks, or is a "disappointment," show them this list and tell them to kiss a part of your body not usually considered pleasant to kiss.

The first section alone should make them sit down and shut up.

### LEGISLATIVE PROWESS

Despite the characterizations of some, Obama's success rate in winning congressional votes on issues was an unprecedented 96.7% for his first year in office. Though he is often cited as superior to Obama, President Lyndon Johnson's success rate in 1965 was only 93%.

### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Within days after taking office, he signed an Executive Order ordering an audit of government contracts, and combating waste and abuse.
- Created the post of Chief Performance Officer, whose job it is to make operations more efficient to save the federal government money.
- On his first full day, he froze White House salaries.
- He appointed the first Federal Chief Information Officer to oversee federal IT spending.
- He committed to phasing out unnecessary and outdated weapons systems, and also signed the Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act to stop waste, fraud and abuse in the defense procurement and contracting system.
- Through an executive order, he created the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

### IMPROVING THE ECONOMY, PREVENTING DEPRESSION

- He pushed through and signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, otherwise known as "the stimulus package," despite the fact that not one Republican voted for that bill. In addition, he launched [recovery.gov](http://recovery.gov), so that taxpayers could track spending from the Act.
- In his first year, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act created and sustained 2.1 million jobs and stimulated the economy 3.5%.
- He completed the massive TARP financial and banking rescue plan, and recovered virtually all of its costs.
- He created the Making Home Affordable home refinancing plan.
- He oversaw the creation of more jobs in 2010 alone than Bush did in eight years.
- He oversaw investment in updated and improved manufacturing processes.
- He also doubled funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership which is designed to improve manufacturing efficiency.
- He signed the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act giving the federal government more tools to investigate and prosecute fraud in every corner of the financial system. It also created a bipartisan Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission to investigate the financial fraud that led to the economic meltdown.
- He signed the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure [CARD] Act, which was designed to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive credit card practices.
- He increased infrastructure spending after years of neglect.
- He signed the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act, expanding on the Making Home Affordable Program to help millions of Americans avoid preventable foreclosures. The bill also provided \$2.2 billion to help combat homelessness, and to stabilize the housing market.
- Through the Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009, he and Congressional Democrats provided tax credits to first-time homebuyers, which helped the U.S. housing market recovery.
- He initiated a \$15 billion plan designed to encourage increased lending to small businesses.
- He created [business.gov](http://business.gov), which allows for online collaboration between small businesses and experts re managing a business. [The program has since merged with [SBA.gov](http://SBA.gov).]
- He played a lead role in getting the G-20 Summit to commit to a \$1.1 trillion



deal to combat the global financial crisis.

- He took steps to improve minority access to capital.
  - He created a \$60 billion bank to fund infrastructure improvements such as roads and bridges.
  - He implemented an auto industry rescue plan, and saved as many as 1 million jobs.
  - Many are of the opinion that he saved the entire auto industry, and even the economy of the entire Midwest.
  - Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, he saved at least 300,000 education jobs, such as teachers, principals, librarians, and counselors that would have otherwise been lost.
  - Provided funding to states and the Department of Homeland Security to save thousands of police and firefighter jobs from being cut during the recession.
  - He used recovered TARP money to fund programs at local housing finance agencies in California, Florida, Nevada, Arizona and Michigan.
  - Crafted an Executive Order establishing the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability to assist in financial education for all Americans.
- ### WALL STREET REFORMS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
- Ordered 65 executives who took bailout money to cut their own pay until they paid back all bailout money.
  - He pushed through and got passed Dodd-Frank, one of the largest and most comprehensive Wall Street reforms since the Great Depression.
  - He made it so that banks could no longer use *your* money to invest in high-risk financial instruments that work against their own customers' interests.
  - He supported the concept of allowing stockholders to vote on executive compensation.
  - He wholly endorsed and supported the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act of 2009 that would close offshore tax avoidance loopholes.
  - He made a deal with Swiss banks that permits the U.S. government to gain access to the records of criminals and tax evaders.
  - He established a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau designed to protect consumers from financial sector excesses.

### CIVIL RIGHTS AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- He advocated for and signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which made it a federal crime to assault anyone based on his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.
- He pushed through, signed and demanded the Pentagon enact a repeal of the discriminatory "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy that forced soldiers to lie to fight for their country, and put our troops at risk by disqualifying many qualified soldiers from helping.
- He appointed Kareem Dale as the first ever Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy.
- Helped Congress pass and signed the Civil Rights History Act.
- He extended benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees.
- He's appointed more openly gay officials than anyone in history.
- He issued a Presidential Memorandum reaffirming the rights of gay couples to make medical decisions for each other.

*Editor's Note: To find Internet links that verify the accuracy of each item on the list, visit either [The Fifth Column](http://TheFifthColumn.com) blog <http://kaystreet.wordpress.com/2011/12/17/to-those-who-consider-president-obama-a-disappointment-youre-just-not-paying-attention/> or the [Please Cut The Crap](http://PleaseCutTheCrap.com) blog <http://pleasecutthecrap.typepad.com/main/what-has-obama-done-since-january-20-2009.html>. The second half of this list will appear in the Sept. 10 Observer.*



# Dirty Windfall Underwrites Dirty Politics

By Jim Hightower

Question: If you mix a cocktail of “black liquor,” biofuels, diesel and a generous splash of tax subsidies – then have it shaken vigorously by a U.S. senator and served in a golden goblet by corporate lobbyists – what do you call it? Answer: Koch Brothers Moonshine.

Black liquor is the key ingredient here, though don’t mistake it for an adult beverage like Johnnie Walker “black label” scotch or the relatively new wine named “Black Box.” No one drinks this black liquor moonshine. But fasten the seatbelt on your barstool, for you do pick up the tab for it – and the billionaire Koch boys do appreciate your civic generosity.

What we have here is an alcoholic sludge. Yuck! Yeah, you would never imbibe the nasty goo, which is a by-product of the papermaking process, but it is a useful fuel that the industry uses to power its mills. Fine – it’s an example creative recycling.

But, next thing you know, the scheming honchos of these very profitable paper corporations went from creative to cabal. Conspiring with Sen. Mike Crapo and other practitioners of the legislative black arts, they turned their humble sludge into a slick, \$3-to-4-billion-a-year corporate welfare freebie.

In 2007, Crapo and a covey of corporate lobbyists quietly made their “liquor” eligible for a subsidy meant to help wean America off of oil by encouraging the production of a biofuel-gasoline mix to power cars and trucks.

Taking advantage of this subsidy meant for the common good is not at all fine.

One, the subsidy for black liquor benefits so few at such a high price for no public purpose. Two, mill



sludge can’t be used in vehicles, so the subsidy perverts the law’s integrity. And three, rather than adding a biofuel to their sludge, the papermakers add diesel!

So these sneaks are siphoning-off billions of dollars from a clean-fuels

program by making a dirty fuel even dirtier.

Wait, there’s more. Crapo’s cynicism and hypocrisy are truly breathtaking, for this Idaho Republican routinely blasts other senators for making the federal deficit worse by

creating tax loopholes for – hello – special interests.

Moreover, not wanting to be seen as just another senatorial servant of industry, deficit hawk Crapo performed his black magic in the dark, working behind closed doors early this year to preserve the fuel-funding loophole for black liquor. [The next time you hear Congress critters like Crapo demanding that you sacrifice to cut the deficit, demand that they show you the rabbits they’re hiding in their magician’s hat.]

Who’s profiting from this load of moonshine? Right at the top are the infamous, far-right-wing Koch brothers.

The secretive multibillionaire political extremists have long been financing everything from dozens of corporate front groups to the Tea Party in their relentless effort to impose their plutocratic agenda on our country.

One major way they pay for this onslaught is by tapping directly into the blatant corporate welfare of the black liquor loophole.

The Koch industrial empire includes Georgia Pacific, one of America’s largest papermakers, which produces such household products as Brawny and Sparkle brand paper towels, Dixie paper plates and paper cups, Angel Soft and Quilted Northern brand toilet paper, and Vanity Fair paper towels.

GP – and the Kochs – are the happy recipients of as much as a billion bucks a year from the perverted biofuel subsidy.

A dirty windfall from a dirty fuel to underwrite dirty politics. You don’t need a bloodhound’s nose to sniff this one out. The whole thing stinks.

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## RYAN

From Page 11

based in Oklahoma, that are employing a lot of, by the way, a lot of Democrats in blue-collar jobs. And the president needs to understand that.”

Yes, and guess what that poor smallish business has been employing blue-collar Democrats to do? They have just finished a new office building for Devon, it is 400 feet taller and has 18 more floors than the second tallest building in Oklahoma City. We needed that in OKC, even though there is a rather large assortment of 10- or 12-story buildings that are completely vacant. They could have employed those people to redo those buildings.

Yes, I think I might cry over the dire straights that Devon is in. Now Chesapeake is getting a little flack, but they aren’t down, yet.

Back to the Borens/Littles/Ryans. Since Dan has been in office making sure nothing is regulated and that poor Devon gets all the help they need, the family business, believed to be led by Paul Ryan’s father-in-law, has signed 325 oil and gas leases on hundreds of acres of mineral rights. Between 2000 and 2004 they signed 35. They have 48 new ones this year.

**BUT DAN SAYS THERE IS NO** conflict of interest because he has nothing to do with the business or the negotiating on the leases. Kind of like Romney with Bain, Dan didn’t buy the leases he just made buying them and using them as easy as possible.

Dan says: “There’s zero conflict. It’s like if you are living in a timber community and your parents are working for the local mill. You should go and advocate for your local mill, even if you derive some benefit from it.”

Absolutely, and you, even if you derive benefit, get to make sure there are no regulations.

Well, Dan, it isn’t exactly the same because when trees fall it doesn’t cause earthquakes. According to the Oklahoma Geological Survey, Oklahoma usually has about 50 earthquakes a year with only a few that can be felt. When you have 200 in four months and 60 are large enough to be felt the rest of us start to wonder. In 2009 there were 43 felt and 27 in Oklahoma County and two that I person-

ally felt. I have been here since Dan was two and those were the first I have felt.

Commenting on the HBO documentary *Gasland*, which he says is muckraking, Dan told the Daily Disappointment’s Chris Casteel, “I have not seen the movie in question but believe that it contains many inaccuracies. In Oklahoma, we have a proud heritage in the energy sector. We have seen the proper regulation of hydraulic fracturing at the state level.”

**I DON’T CLAIM TO KNOW** all Oklahomans, as Boren seems to, but the ones I know think you should see a movie before you critique it. Besides the earthquakes which some of us believe show the effects of “proper regulations,” there are the growing number of Oklahomans objecting to the dead spots in their fields from the results of “proper regulation.”

Somehow, even if they aren’t as wealthy as the Romneys, I think the Ryans are in that top 1%. Ryan’s budget calls for some really stiff cuts in Medicare and social programs and more tax cuts and benefits for Devon, and the Borens, and the Littles, and the Ryans.

We should all get together for a pity party and, if we can afford it, maybe we can have it in that lovely convention center at the base of the Devon monument to tax breaks and deregulation when it is finished.

**WE SHALL ALL BE THRILLED** to know that Paul Ryan is here every holiday, wallowing in the mud and muck and shooting things.

According to Rep. Tom Cole, the Republican who represents the district that includes the Littles, some of the Borens and me, says, “Paul Ryan and Dan Boren are responsible for the killing of half the game in Oklahoma.”

I hope he is exaggerating because I think there is a limit, even in Oklahoma.

Cole also says he went on a congressional junket with the Ryans and it was like traveling with a president and first lady. Really, I thought the Romneys were on the top of the ticket.

– The author lives in Moore. You can read more of her essays at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net).



# OBAMA

From Page 10



in the furniture business had done well in Honolulu and needed Stanley to come and help him manage the furniture stores there.

Stanley accepted. So he, his wife Madelyn [called Tut; pronounced Toot] and daughter Ann moved to Honolulu.

Ann felt stuck and lonesome in a strange place away from her Seattle friends. She was a free thinking young woman looking for adventure, looking to the promise of another life.

This 17-year-old disdained social conformity and racial biases of her era. That's when she enrolled in Russian 101 [and other courses] at the University of Hawaii, just down the street from her parents' home.

President Obama's father, Barack Obama Sr., was a black man who was born in Africa, specifically in western Kenya, the capitol of which is Nairobi.

Obama Sr. had a superior intelligence, memorized the English alphabet when he was still a toddler, could read by the age of five, and was educated by Christian missionaries from Britain.

These missionaries used a church school in Africa as a base for spreading the gospel, but their academic focus was on the sciences, languages, literature, and the arts.

When Obama Sr. was ready for college, he had met Betty Mooney, a Christian missionary from the United States sent to Nairobi to spread the twin gospels of literacy and the Lord. She helped Obama Sr. get admitted to the University of Hawaii.

Mooney had read about the school in the May 24, 1958 issue of the Saturday Evening Post, written because the school was celebrating its 50th anniversary. She passed the article on to Obama Sr. who left a pregnant wife and small son behind to attend this university.

Once at the University, he enrolled in Russian 101, the same class with Ann Dunham. She was a teenager and a virgin; he was a 26-year-old sexually active married man. He, well dressed and immaculate, had an intense magnetism and seemed irresistible.

She was swept away by this force of nature, got pregnant right away, and soon married Barack Sr. She gave birth to President Obama [Barry] on Aug. 4, 1961 in Honolulu.

When she learned that she had married a bigamist, she left him but waited four years to file for a divorce.

Meanwhile, Obama Sr. had gone from the University of Hawaii to Harvard, quit Harvard without finishing his dissertation, and had gone back to Nairobi.

He had become an alcoholic. He drank heavily every night, drove drunk, and had numerous wrecks, one of which killed him. During his lifetime, he had made only one brief visit to Honolulu to visit son Barry.

## EXOTIC BUT UNSETTLED CHILDHOOD

Meanwhile, Barry had an exotic but unsettled childhood growing up half white-half black, with a mother often gone, an absent father in Africa, and, although living with white relatives, was treated as black by society at large.

His mother, Ann, was frequently absent because she found her passion as an anthropologist surveying the life and work of villagers on Java, an island of Indonesia.

She had married Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian, whom she met at the University of Hawaii. That's when seven-year-old Barry Obama became Barry Soetoro, mastered the Indonesian language, and became accepted as a darker-skinned Indonesian for the three-and-a-half years he lived there.

His mother would wake Barry up before dawn each morning to tutor him in English before sending him off to the local schools.

At age 10, Barry returned to Honolulu to live with his grandparents, Stanley

[Gramps] and Madelyn (Tut) Dunham. He spent eight years, fifth grade through graduation, at nearby Punahou School.

In a survey of college admissions officers, Punahou was ranked among the 10 best secondary schools in the nation and had a library on par with most college libraries.

Grandmother Tut was sure that Barry was a genius! And his mother Ann believed that Barry was special and told him he could accomplish anything that he put his mind to.

Her advice to Barry was "put yourself in the other person's shoes;" in other words, be empathetic.

Obama, while in New York attending Columbia, asked a friend, "Do you think I will be president of the United States?" The friend answered, "If America is ready for a black president, you can make it."

## MAKING LEMONADE FROM LEMONS

President Obama's unusual and sometimes troubled childhood taught him how to adjust to unsettling circumstances. In an oval office interview, he told the author of this book, "The only way my life makes sense is if regardless of culture, race, religion, or tribe, there is this commonality, these essential human truths and hopes and moral precepts that are universal."

Yet, that childhood made him extremely cautious, with an intense desire to avoid confrontation. He was not unwilling to take risks, but had to weigh everything to death and then take a dramatic risk at the end.

[Note: We see these characteristics in the president's extensive efforts to work harmoniously with recalcitrant Republicans in Congress whose only desire is that Obama be a one-term president.]

At the same time, he was on a long search for order and home. He found both in Chicago where he worked organizing neighborhoods in south Chicago where you could go 10 miles in any direction and not see a single white.

This experience drew the arc of his life deeper into the black world, where he was starting to find his black identity.

After 2½ years of organizing, he developed an attachment to the city. But he learned that organized neighborhoods acting together were not strong enough. That awareness came during the struggle to keep a steel mill open in south Chicago.

Keeping it open would take the power that came from politics.

That's when Obama set out for a life in politics by attending Harvard Law School to enhance his skills and give him more power to effect social change.

Before getting to Harvard, Obama took a side trip to Nairobi, Kenya in search of his African roots. There, he slept on the couch of his new-found half-sister, Auma, met other relatives, and learned his father's history.

Here, Obama felt, his life came full circle, so that he might recognize himself as a whole person, throw off the shackles of his childhood, and head toward his political destiny.

- Wanda Jo [Peltier] Stapleton, a former Democratic state representative, lives in Oklahoma City

# SHRIVER

From Page 10

journey toward death which we call by various names - memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease.

**WHEN SHRIVER WAS OFFICIALLY** diagnosed with this mind-robbing illness in 2000, he joined the more than approximately 1,000 people who are diagnosed each day with this disease.

In an engaging and tender way, Mark writes of his family's struggle to hold their own individual lives together while they cared for two aging parents. After the death of their mother in 2009, the children were left to make the decision so many families must make each day, "What do we do with dad?"

This book, for some reason, was just hard to put down. Shriver writes in a way that makes you feel the emotion he is trying to evoke.

I cried when I read about the family gathering for a funeral. I laughed when I imagined the Shriviers and Kennedys playing a game of football or tennis or swimming together.

After all, these larger-than-life people really are just like us in so many ways.

**IN THOMAS LONG'S BOOK**, *The Undertaking*, a funeral director in a small town in Michigan writes, "In even the best caskets, it never all quite fits - all that we'd like to bury in them: the hurt and forgiveness, the anger and pain, the praise and thanksgiving, the emptiness and exultation, the untidy feelings when someone dies."

I suspect the same could have been said of this man who spent his entire life pouring himself out for others through the many organizations of which he and his family were associated.

In the end, Shriver's motto for life was simple, "I'm doing the best I can with what God's given me."

What a world it would be if we could all adopt the same motto.

The world might just become that which Sargent Shriver envisioned in a speech he gave on the 25th anniversary of the Peace Corps - a world saved by those who are willing to serve others.

We read books for many reasons. We read for information and entertainment and enlightenment. I am often most attracted, though, to those books that contribute to me becoming a better person. This book certainly fit the bill.

- Derrek Belase is pastor of Highland Park United Methodist Church in Stillwater

# We Need To Rethink U.S. Killing Machine

By Simon Black

Earlier this month, U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich introduced HR 6357, a bill which aims to “prohibit the extrajudicial killing of United States citizens” by the federal government.

In other words, in the Land of the Free, they need to pass a law to prevent the government from indiscriminately murdering its own citizens.

Now if this doesn't give one reason to pause and consider the distortions of liberty that have taken place in western civilization, I don't know what will.

Think about it:

Does a free society send government hit men to eliminate anyone they perceive to be an enemy of the state?

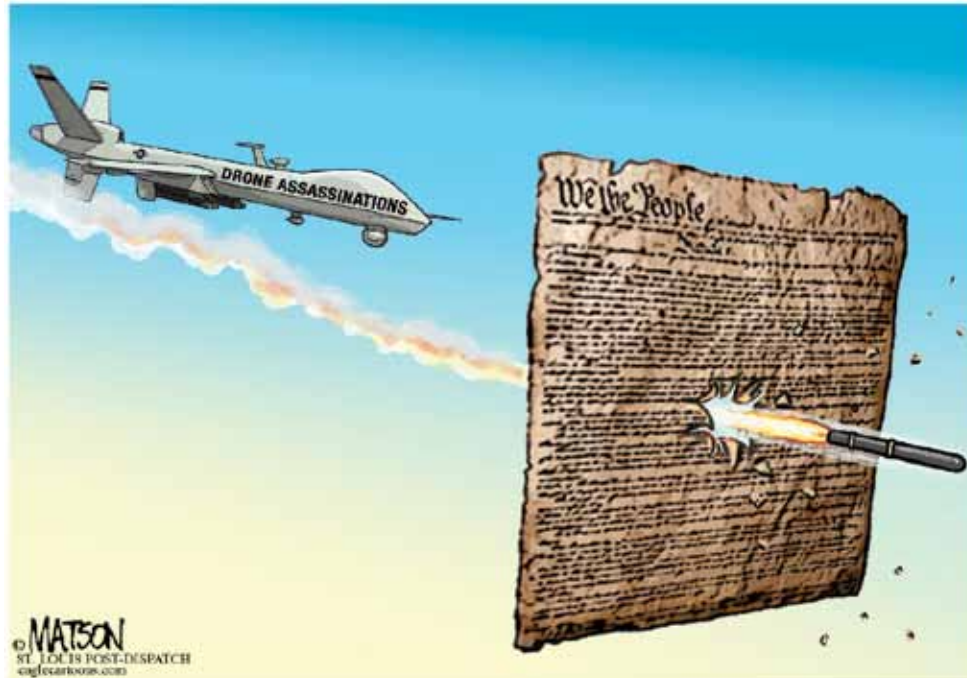
Does a free society have hundreds of police agencies, each with the authority to deprive a man of his life, liberty and property in their sole discretion?

Does a free society have hundreds of thousands of laws, codes, rules, regulations, and policies which effectively criminalize nearly every aspect of one's existence?

Does a free society lead the world in prison population?

Does a free society hunt down criminals and terrorists by treating its citizens like criminals and terrorists?

Does a free society tell its citizens what foods they are / are not allowed



to consume?

Does a free society steal your money at gunpoint to buy bombs that they drop by remote control on brown people in faraway lands?

Does a free society debase its currency and plunder the purchasing power of its citizens?

Does a free society saddle unborn generations with obligations they never signed up to bear?

Does a free society award near total

control of the economy, the money supply, and everything tied to it, to a tiny elite few?

Does a free society brainwash its citizens into believing that they live in a free society? [At least the Chinese know they're not free ... ]

Ask yourself, are you really living in a free society? Are you free? If not, why not? What else could possibly be more important?

It takes courage to answer hon-

estly. But once you realize the truth and begin to see the system for what it is, it can be a liberating and life-changing experience.

You'll find that there are places where you can live free in this world. There are ways to preserve your dignity, your privacy, your livelihood. You'll find that you can build great camaraderie and mutual trust with like-minded souls because you share the same values, not the same color passport.

My guess is that you're reading this because you've already started down the road to freedom. But you might feel alone ... intellectually isolated in a sea of automatons.

You're not alone. More and more people are waking up every day and beginning to realize the incredible fraud that has been perpetrated against them. When enough of them figure it out, this system will be finished.

That's why I fundamentally believe that today is one of the most exciting times to be alive since the French Revolution. And we're just getting warmed up.

If you have any friends or loved ones who still exemplify that self-deluded, bombastic serf mentality, I encourage you to pass this along to them ... and challenge them to answer honestly.

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## On Pentagon Spending, Fox Guards Henhouse?

By Zack Toombs

A former executive for the Pentagon's top defense contractor collected \$1.66 million in salary, consulting fees and retirement pay from two top defense contractors last year before becoming the Republican chief of staff for the Senate Armed Services Committee in February.

The appointment is the second by a Republican member of either the House or Senate Armed Services committee to provoke criticism from independent groups that consider it a conflict of interest.

Ann Elise Sauer, who was appointed to her present job by Sen. John McCain, R-AZ, worked for more than a decade as a vice president and lobbyist for Lockheed Martin before leaving in January 2011, according to a financial disclosure she made to the Secretary of the Senate in April.

In 2011, she was paid a salary and bonus totaling \$660,390, deferred compensation of \$769,574, and \$232,872 labeled as “retired pay” on the financial disclosure form.

**LOCKHEED IS THE DEFENSE** Department's largest corporate contractor, earning \$28.3 billion, or 61%, of its sales from the department in 2011, according to the company's annual report.

Sauer then worked as a consultant and analyst for BAE Systems, earning \$55,000 from the firm, according to her financial disclosure form. BAE is the Pentagon's ninth largest contractor.

The Project on Government Oversight's Ben Freeman reports that Sauer's appointment to the principal Senate committee tasked with overseeing all military spending and contracting creates a huge conflict of interest.

“\$1.6 million – that gives a lot of reasons to remember your former employer,” said Freeman, who specializes in defense contracting issues for POGO.

“When you've been working for a company for 10 years and then just last year you got \$1.6 million, I have to think that affects your decision making.”

**SAUER'S LINKEDIN PAGE** shows she served on various McCain political campaigns from 1998 through 2008. This won't be her first turn on the Armed Services Committee; she worked there as a professional staff member in the late 1970s. She then worked as a legislative assistant and legislative director on McCain's staff in the 1990s.

In an e-mailed statement, McCain spokesman Brian Rogers said Sauer's appointment as Republican staff director on the Armed Services Committee is on a “stop-gap, temporary, one-year basis.” He also noted that, although she received \$1.6 million in compensation last year, Sauer holds no stock in Lockheed Martin.

Her former employer has repeatedly drawn the ire of government watchdogs,

most recently for its work on the problem-plagued F-35 and F-22 jet fighters.

**THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY** wrote in June about the latest of those troubles, including \$1 billion in cost overruns on four early production contracts for the F-35; it is the single most costly military program in U.S. history.

A spokesperson for Lockheed Martin did not return request for comment on Sauer's appointment.

Sauer is not alone in taking a key job – and a major pay cut – to work on Capitol Hill helping oversee federal contracts with a former employer.

Last year, when Northrop Grumman lobbyist Thomas MacKenzie joined the House Armed Services Committee, he held between \$100,000 and \$250,000 of stock in his former company, according to his own financial disclosure to the House Clerk.

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### LIFE OF LEISURE

Have you many children? the doctor asked.

“God has not been good to me. Of 16 born, only nine live,” he answered.

Does your wife work?

“No, she stays at home.”

I see. How does she spend her day?

“Well, she gets up at four in the morning, fetches water and wood, makes the fire and cooks breakfast. Then she goes to the river and washes clothes. After that she goes to town to get corn ground and buys what we need in the market. Then she cooks the midday meal.”

You come home at midday?

“No, no, she brings the meal to me in the fields – about three kilometers from home.”

And after that?

“Well, she takes care of the hens and pigs, and, of course, she looks after the children all day ... then she prepares the supper so it is ready when I come home.”

Does she go to bed after supper?

“No, I do. She has things to do around the house until about nine o'clock.”

But you say your wife doesn't work?

“Of course she doesn't work. I told you, she stays home.”

– Thanks to Barbara Santee for this gem



# Oil Firms Raked In \$375 Million Daily Profits

By Rebecca Leber

The Big Five oil companies – BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Shell – announced their 2012 second-quarter profits recently.

These companies, all of which rank in the top 10 of the Fortune 500 Global Ranking, revealed billions of dollars more in profits, after earning \$375 million in profits per day in 2011 [\$261,000 per minute] – bringing their combined profits to \$1 trillion from 2001-11.

Below is a quick look at just how much these Big Oil companies are making, and where they are spending their billions in profits.

## BIG OIL'S PROFITS, IN 24 HOURS

- The five biggest oil companies earned a combined profit of \$375 million per day, or a record \$137 billion profit for the year, in 2011, despite reducing their oil production.

- In 60 seconds, these five companies earned \$261,000 – more than 96% of American households make in one year.

- These five oil companies received \$6.6 million in federal tax breaks every day.

- In 2011, the three largest domestic public oil companies spent \$100 million of their profits each day, or over 50%, buying back their own stock to enrich their board, senior managers, and largest shareholders.

- The entire oil and gas industry spent on average \$400,000 each day lobbying senators and representatives to weaken public health safeguards and keep big oil tax breaks, totaling nearly \$150 million.

- Each CEO of the Big Five companies received an average of \$60,110 in compensation per day last year. On average, their pay jumped 55% in 2011. Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson's compensation came close to \$100,000 per day last year.

## MILLIONS IN POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, LOBBYING

- Despite ranking as some of the most successful companies in the world, big oil and gas companies continue to receive \$4 billion in tax breaks each year.

- The oil and gas industry has already given over \$30.5 million in federal campaign contributions this year, with a whopping 88% going to Republicans.

- Big Oil has spent an additional \$37 million on lobbying Congress this year, with the top spenders being Exxon, Shell, Chevron, Koch Industries and BP.

- Their efforts are paying off. This is the most anti-environment Congress in history, with the House of Representatives averaging one anti-environment vote per day, or a total 247 votes through mid-June. The biggest beneficiary of these votes has been Big Oil. The House voted to enrich the oil and gas industry 109 times, a total 44% of its anti-environment votes.

- The House is on track to collect a record amount of oil industry contributions this cycle, having already reached 2008 and 2010 levels. And these are direct donations only – it does not include SuperPAC spending or other campaign assistance.

## OUTSIDE INTERESTS AND BIG OIL ALLIES SPENDING

### TENS OF MILLIONS MORE TO INFLUENCE THE ENERGY DEBATE

- Fueled by Koch Industries and other Big Oil interests, the industry is spending hundreds of millions to fund false ads in this year's elections. According to the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 85% of the dollars have funded a false ad during a season where most advertising have focused on energy.

- Pro-Romney outside interest groups spent \$24.6 million on energy ads



through June 24, according to Kantar Media CMAG data. This is more than 10 times the amount spent by pro-Obama groups, which spent \$2.3 million on energy spots.

- American Energy Alliance, Americans for Prosperity, American Future Fund, and Crossroads GPS – the top outside pro-oil and pro-Romney interest group spenders – have spent a total \$24.9 million on deceptive ads, many of them energy-related, according to the Annenberg Public Policy Center.

- Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity has devoted more than 90% of its ad spending to energy ads. Two of the Americans for Prosperity ads pushed patently false claims – roundly debunked by fact checkers – that the stimulus funded jobs overseas.

- Fact checkers have thoroughly debunked these anti-clean energy ads. Both Politifact and the Washington Post Fact Checker have given the ad their worst ratings of “pants on fire” and four Pinocchios, respectively. Politifact found all three examples used to be false, with the ad stringing together “alarming” soundbites that are “ultimately ridiculous.”

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## GAMING

From Page 9

family, was in the farming business, and had become widely respected through his hard work and common sense as chairman of the powerful Revenue and Taxation Committee, a most thankless task.

Therefore, because of his farm connections, he knew one end of a horse from another and with his experience dealing with tax law, he recognized horse manure from common sense. From many of his colleagues he would have to endure more of the former than the latter.

Economic desperation makes for strange bedfellows at the Capitol. Oklahoma horsemen usually spent legislative sessions fighting among themselves – quarter horses battling thoroughbreds, Appaloosas versus paints, each breed looking for some small financial edge against the other.

However, by 2003, all agreed that their businesses were hurting because racetracks could not offer what had proven to be the salvation of racing in other states – slot machines.

Tribes, of course, did not want the tracks to have gaming machines due to the competition. However, visionary Native American leaders such as Bill Anoatubby, governor of the Chickasaws; Chad Smith, principal chief of the Cherokees; and Greg Pyle, chief of the Choctaws, and many others saw the bigger picture.

They were confronted by law enforcement officials at every turn over alleged violations, therefore hurting their businesses. And, of course, it was a major distraction from what they do best – offer gaming venues that their patrons wanted.

As for state government, we were tired of trying to stop our citizens from doing what many expressed they wanted to do legally – which was, of course, gamble.

Oklahoma also was receiving zero dollars from the burgeoning casino industry within our borders and desperately needed the revenue.

Therefore, in the spring of 2003 the gaming battle was engaged with Democrats, tribes, horsemen, and some affiliated industries on one side. On

the other were many churches and almost all Republicans, save a handful who proved to be the difference between success and failure of the legislation.

After much acrimony, and more fiction than fact from our opponents, the bill passed and was later confirmed by the voters in November 2004 – 53% yes, 47% no.

Since its implementation in January 2005, tribal casinos have paid nearly \$800 million to the state with 87.5% going into the HB 1017 fund, earmarked for education, and 12.5% into the general fund.

When you combine lottery revenues, gaming assessments, and a large tobacco tax [which I will discuss in the next column], these three “sin taxes” have provided \$2.410

billion dollars since 2005 and are paid exclusively by those who smoke, gamble, and buy lottery tickets.

The money is earmarked in our Constitution to education programs as well as the health needs of our citizens.

The billions derived have diversified the tax base and recognized the reality of what was and is going on among both religious and not so religious gamblers, smokers, and lotto players.

Therefore, it's confirmed: We love our churches and we like our gaming outlets and we want to keep both.

– The author, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore

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# CLIMATE

From Page One

somewhat, but these periodic changes are weak and short, so investigators were forced to look for better answers.

During World War I, a Serbian geophysicist, Milutin Milankovitch, spent the years of his internment developing a theory to explain the warming that initiated the ending of a glacial period.

He proposed that variations in the tilt of the earth's axis of rotation, the precession of that axis in space, and alterations in the eccentricity of the earth's orbit around the sun brought about a modest increase in temperature that tripped various feedback mechanisms that, in turn, amplified those increases.

**SOUNDS COMPLICATED** and is complicated, but I'll be danged if the glacial periods of our current Ice Age haven't exhibited dominant cycles of about 100,000 years from peak cold to peak cold, so, despite Milankovitch's funny name, climatologists believe his analysis makes sense.

We now know quite a bit about our home planet and its activities. We know that none of the other satellites that circle our sun can support life – or at least our kind of life – which requires liquid water. We know that the amount of energy the planet receives from the sun, combined with just the right amount of greenhouse gases, keeps the temperature at livable levels, but close enough to the freezing point of water that sometimes the earth is covered with a bothersome amount of ice and at other times, with no ice at all.

Remember that the term "Ice Age," for purposes herein, is used for spans of time, 50 or 100 million years long, where the poles are continuously covered with sheets of ice. We know that investigators believe that those Ice Ages were probably caused by continental drift, and that they are punctuated by glacial periods, with extensive ice sheets, and interglacial periods, when the ice has retreated to the poles.

We also know that our planet has experienced two completed Ice Ages in the last 600 million years and we are at present in an interglacial period of a third such Ice Age, which began about 2½ million years ago. We know that we are still in that Ice Age – both the North Pole and the South are still covered with ice – but that mankind has adapted extremely well to the relatively constant temperatures during the 10,000 or 12,000 years since the end of the latest glacial period.

**WHAT'S MORE, SCIENTISTS CAN** now determine the approximate composition of the greenhouse gases and the approximate temperature of the atmosphere for the last 800,000 years. How can they do that?

The same level of scientific advancement that has allowed us to put men on the moon and fill the ether with messages and moving pictures has devised ways to read much of the history of our planet from cores cut with a hollow drill deep into glacial ice on Greenland and on Antarctica.

Many ice cores have been recovered worldwide. A 2.25-mile core taken in 1998 at Vostock station on Antarctica covers about 420,000 years. The core contains data extending back four complete glacial cycles and matches well with known geological and archeological evidence, and with analyses of cores of oceanic sediments. [An ice core taken a few hundred miles from Vostock in 2003 reaches back about 800,000 years.]

When graphs of air temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>] versus time are constructed, the curves track one another astoundingly well. The graphs show that glacial conditions develop slowly and that cooling continues for tens of thousands of years.

I mentioned earlier that the 100,000 year glacial-to-interglacial alternations were triggered by changes in the tilt of the earth's axis and periodic flattening of its orbit, as proposed by Milutin Milankovitch.

After 70,000 or 80,000 years of lowering temperature, the Milankovitch effect generates a moderate increase that sets off several amplifying feedback mechanisms that increase the warming drastically.

**FIRST, THE HIGHER TEMPERATURES** cause sea ice to melt and glaciers to shrink. Snow and ice are the best reflectors of radiation, and the blue sea and dark lands absorb much more of the incoming radiation.

Second, water vapor itself is a very powerful greenhouse gas, and evaporation from the warming seas feed more water vapor into the atmosphere. Increased water vapor, the raw material of clouds, furnishes the greatest climate feedback.

Third, hydrates of methane frozen in tundra swamps and locked in sediments on the oceanic continental shelves thaw and release methane into the atmosphere. Atmospheric methane lasts only decades, but during its short life it is 20 or 30 times more effective than CO<sub>2</sub> – and then it exchanges its four hydrogen atoms for two oxygens to begin a new, indefinitely long life as carbon dioxide.

As the temperature increases, the level of CO<sub>2</sub> increases – but, in Mother Nature's glacial cycle, the growth in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> does not force the increase in temperature, it follows the temperature rise by a few hundred years.

**NOWADAYS, IT IS WE,** not our dear Mother, who are causing the increase in atmospheric carbon.

There are negative, opposing feedbacks as well, of course, and the increase in plant growth is an important one. Plants prosper in wet, warm environments, and they utilize carbon dioxide in their growth, so an abundance of CO<sub>2</sub> benefits them. Trees particularly lock up carbon quite effectively, and parts of the world are blanketed by forests.

Trees, like all plants, are mostly made from air. Millions of years ago Mama Nature developed plants with leaves, which have the ability to use energy from sunlight to draw carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and combine it with water and a few minerals from the soil to make various forms of the hydrates of carbon – carbohydrates. [The structure of wood is built of various forms of such hydrates, most of which contain molecules too long and too tightly bound to be digested easily, although termites obviously have found a way.]

**Editor's Note: This is a condensed version of Krumme's analysis. His report may be read in its entirety at [www.okobserver.net](http://www.okobserver.net).**

Photosynthesis releases as a waste product a couple of atoms of oxygen for every carbon atom it consumes. Before plants adopted their magic process, the earth's atmosphere contained a limited amount of free oxygen, but now oxygen composes about a fifth of the air we breathe, allowing our lungs to extract it and deliver it into our blood, which distributes it throughout our bodies.

**OUR VARIOUS ORGANS** then perform their own magic to consume the energy that is released by the conversion of hydrates of carbon, including starches and sugars, back into water and, yes, carbon dioxide.

[I know, I know: I left out a lot of odds and ends, like proteins, calcium, etc.]

By the way, ultimately, plants furnish the chemicals that compose the human body, and their contributions of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen constitute 93% of the mass of each human. So you might say we are also made of air, which should furnish some degree of comfort by confirming that the people who don't share your opinions truly are airheads.

Anyhow, trees do soak up a lot of CO<sub>2</sub> and spreading forests do slow down the warming of the planet.

**AND THEN THERE ARE VOLCANOES.** One might think that volcanoes, transferring heat from the earth to the atmosphere, would add to global warming, and of course they do, slightly. They also spew out CO<sub>2</sub> – but less than 1% as much as the burning of fossil fuels.

On the other hand, volcanoes hurl a lot of tiny particles high into the atmosphere, and the dust remains suspended for several years, reflecting sunlight and bringing about significant, but temporary, cooling.

There are other cooling factors, but they are no match for the positive feedbacks that follow a Milankovitch trip point, and the elevation of temperature at the end of a glacial period is comparatively rapid – the last increase, very welcome to the Cro-Magnon cave dwellers, I am sure – began about 20,000 years ago and took about 8,000 or 10,000 years.

As the Milankovitch trigger fades and various feedback mechanisms elevate the temperature, the earth radiates more energy to space, a new balance is reached, and a blessed calm, an interglacial, sets in for a spell.

**ICE CORES REVEAL** that interglacial periods characteristically last only a short time, on Earth's time scale, commonly a few tens of thousands of years.

As mentioned earlier, all things being equal, the Earth might well be approaching a cooling period now, leading slowly toward a new glacial age. But things are not equal because our population is exploding – seven billion and counting.

The result: an increase in greenhouse gasses, portending dangerous increases in the temperature of our planet. And there is every reason to believe temperatures will continue to climb.

The earth reflects about 30% of the sun's energy back into space. Volcanic activity and industrial pollution increase reflectivity and have a cooling effect.

**THESE TWO FACTORS** were possibly the cause of a cooling trend between 1945 and 1975 – in the early '70s, a few climatologists even predicted an approaching ice age, but their theory was immediately shot down by the majority of their colleagues, who correctly forecast that the climate would soon resume warming.

[Volcanic eruptions still occasionally return to divert the sun's rays, but, oh yay, in the '70s, nations took steps to cut atmospheric pollution out of concern for the public health, so that cooling factor has lessened. Can't win for losing.]

Ice and snow are the best reflectors of the sun's energy.

Melting of the Arctic ice cover, which is currently declining both in area and in thickness, has boosted and will continue to boost the earth's temperature, as reflective white is replaced by the absorptive dark blue of the ocean's surface.

Climatologists have, so far, been unable to find any cause for the current rise in temperature except the increase in greenhouse gases, mostly carbon dioxide.

**IN 2010, THE ATMOSPHERE** contained 390 parts per million, about 25% more than the highest levels in the past 800,000 years, as far back as ice core data are available. We are in unexplored territory, experiencing a significant increase of greenhouse gases at a time when the climate is already warm.

So? What does it matter?

Well, for one thing, 18,000 years ago, when the continental glaciers were at their latest maximum, sea level was 390 feet lower than today, which allowed Siberian natives to walk to Alaska and spread across the Americas. It rose to today's level at the beginning of the present interglacial, and lately it has resumed its rise.

Not to worry; sea level has risen only eight inches since 1880. On the other hand, the rate is increasing and projections for the next 90 years range from 30 inches to six feet. [Unfortunately, under current practices, the rise will continue – the present stock of water that is locked in land-based ice is great enough to raise sea level an additional 250 feet, if, of course, all of the ice were to melt.]

Then, too, as the temperature increases, the intensity of weather will grow, bringing stronger winds and heavier rain and snow, commonly disruptive and occasionally very destructive. [Contrary to intuition, more snow falls in warm winters than in cold winters; the warmer air holds more moisture.]

**WEATHER PATTERNS WILL BE DISRUPTED;** climatologists predict that certain areas will become much drier overall, with the Southern Plains and Southwest particularly vulnerable. And the temperature of various regions will vary

See **WARMING Page 19**



# WARMING

From Page 18

wildly – recent winters' frigid weather in the eastern United States, where people live, was at the same time matched by record-breaking highs in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland, unpopulated ice country, where a few stations experienced a monthly average more than 35 degrees above normal. And Hudson Bay, normally covered with ice by mid-December, did not freeze over until Jan. 20, 2011.

Paradoxically, higher temperatures bring on both more floods and more droughts. It's a little too early to know for sure whether examples of recent unusual weather reflect climate change or are simply rare, but random, phenomena.

Even so, Lake Mead, behind Boulder dam, currently holds only 40% of its capacity. Southeast Asia has recently experienced unprecedented floods, and Russia record-breaking temperatures and drought. Northeastern Australia suffers floods "of Biblical proportions," while farmers in southwestern Australia are desperate for rain.

Some wags maintain that global warming should be renamed "global weirding."

**EVEN THE OCEANS** will change, as they absorb CO2 and continue to become more acidic. Organisms with carbonate shells or skeletons, including corals, will experience difficulty – even moderately acidic water dissolves carbonates.

All serious enough, but another factor, possibly even more dangerous, looms.

The frozen tundra of the northern lands and the sediments on the subsea continental shelves both contain vast quantities of methane generated by the decomposition of organic material – somewhat like the methane constantly being released to the atmosphere from garbage dumps, except that the methane in the tundra and subsea shelves is locked in place as hydrates of methane.

Atmospheric methane packs a greenhouse wallop 20 or 30 times more powerful than carbon dioxide until natural processes convert the CH4 molecule into CO2.

If the tundra, which is already melting, and the ocean, which is already warming, release enough methane to reach a trip point, an unstoppable, runaway condition could follow. [Siberian swamps already bubble with methane percolating from melting tundra during summers.]

**UNLIKELY? IMPOSSIBLE?** Thousands of our best-trained climatologists say otherwise.

Exactly how matters will develop if we continue to consume fossil fuels is uncertain; we are on untrodden ground. But we are on notice that catastrophic danger lies ahead, and, for the sake of succeeding generations, we would do well to pay attention.

Some may wonder about my personal position – I have spent my career looking for and producing oil, a fossil fuel [but, of course, our little volume is not only inconsequential, it has had and will have no effect on the amount consumed]. And I am almost 90 years old. Under no stretch of the imagination will I live long enough to be affected directly. But surely all of us share a concern for the welfare of our grandchildren, and particularly their descendants, because records of the past indicate that the effects will last for centuries – or longer.

**I TRY NOT TO BE AN ALARMIST**, although the situation is alarming. So far, the predictions of the climate hawks have been substantially correct – actually, their forecasts were too sunny. The earth's climate is definitely warming.

[The Pentagon is "deadly serious about global warming," and the Navy's chief oceanographer predicts the Arctic will be basically ice-free for four weeks during the summers of the mid-to-late 2030's.]

It is obvious, I think, that, unless all the industrialized nations cooperate, little can be accomplished. But most scientists say that the accumulation of greenhouse gases can be arrested if nations seriously attack the problem soon enough. They counsel action in the next decade or so. I have confidence in their optimism; otherwise there would be little point in writing this article.

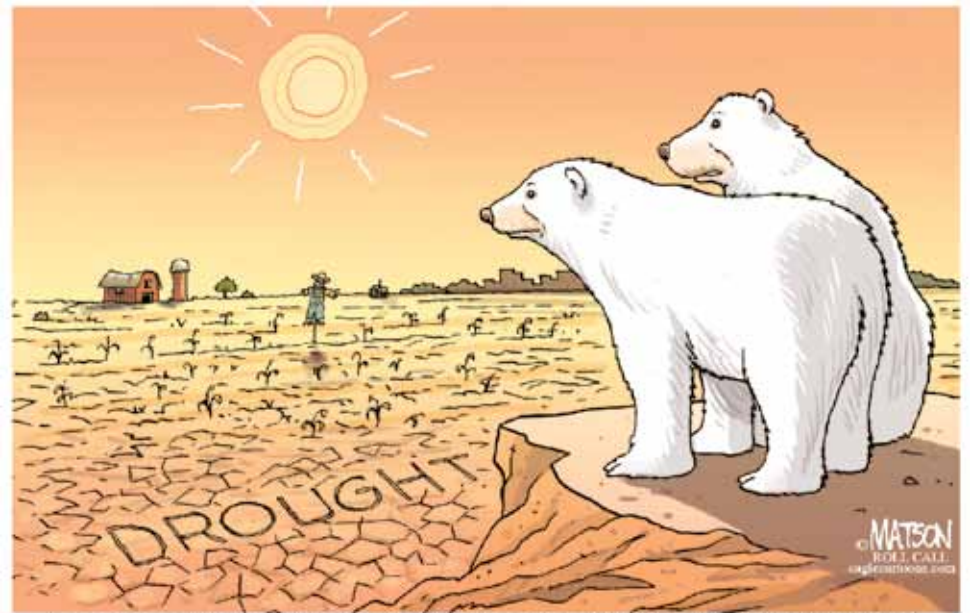
So far, most nations have promised action, but few have met even their own rather modest goals. Some corporations have pledged to help, but much of the rhetoric is hype and greenwash.

**THE UNITED STATES** has exhibited the greatest resistance to collective action, but even it has given formal acknowledgment to the reality of change and even made a few non-binding promises. Lip service is not all bad – sometimes it brings about a real commitment.

According to a recent book, *Climate Cover-Up*, a 2008 Pew Center poll reported, "Among Democrats with a college education, Pew found that 75% believe humans are responsible for global warming. Among Republicans: 19%."

Political attitudes have invaded the consideration of an issue that should be the province of science – deliberating what to do about climate change is a different matter, but deciding whether humans are responsible for global warming

*One of our most precious attributes is our capacity for self-deception. But facts are stubborn, and the fact is that the 1990s were hotter than the '80s, and that the aughts were even hotter, and that 2010 tied 2005 as the hottest on record, and that storms, wind, rain, and snow, have become more extreme ...*



**"I USED TO BELIEVE GLOBAL WARMING WAS A VAST HUMAN CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY THE POLAR ICE CAPS... BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE!"**

should be determined by evidence, not by attitude.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished that global warming and the associated dangers thereof should fade away, and, for the benefit of the planet, I hope they do – but virtually all the evidence points the other way.

One of our most precious attributes is our capacity for self-deception. But facts are stubborn, and the fact is that the 1990s were hotter than the '80s, and that the aughts were even hotter, and that 2010 tied 2005 as the hottest on record, and that storms, wind, rain, and snow, have become more extreme, and that 2010 was the wettest year recorded, worldwide, and that the glaciers, absolutely indifferent to the hullabaloo, continue to melt.

**INCIDENTALLY, MOST CLIMATE HAWKS** do not hold complete confidence in their predictions – only that the likelihood is somewhere above 90%. But as Arnold Schwarzenegger observed, if 97% percent of medical doctors recommended a particular treatment for your sick child and 3% advised ignoring the problem, whose advice would you take?

Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that the globe is warming and that consumption of fossil fuels is a significant, if not dominant, cause.

While I can understand the frustration and anger of many climate hawks, my own reaction is not anger, but sadness.

To think that the species that produced Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Einstein and that has developed the remarkable capacity to explain much of the past and to make respectable projections about the future would care so little!

If we give a hoot about future generations – and we do – we need to accept responsibility for our actions.

– *The author lives in Tulsa*

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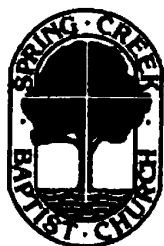
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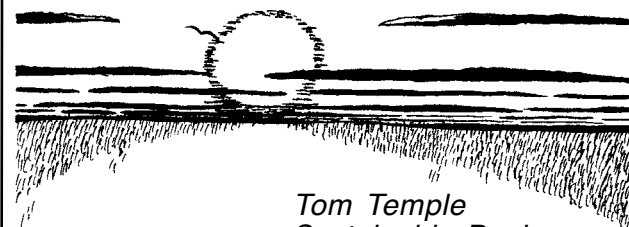
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