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Perspective

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Perspective

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Brandon Dutcher Editor

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The Gift of Peggy Noonan

By Patrick B. McGuigan

Peggy Noonan, one of the great speechwriters of all time, warns that a wonderful speech cannot take the place of wonderful ideas: "Speeches are not magic and there is no great speech without great policy." Ronald Reagan, the great communicator she served so well, always said he was not a great communicator, he merely communicated great ideas.

In the mid-1980s, in the company of Scott Stanley, former editor of *Insight* magazine and *Conservative Digest*, I spent an evening at the National Press Club's Fourth Estate Restaurant with Noonan. Most vivid in memory is her intellectual acuity. Next is her beauty, not only her visage but also her inner peace. She is, like Reagan was, a person full of grace and wisdom.

Later, I coordinated non-government groups in the conservative movement who sought confirmation of Reagan's great Supreme Court nominee, Judge Robert Bork. That battle was lost, and then I was in a kind of despair.

Unbidden, some weeks after that defeat, in the early winter of 1987-88, came a letter from Peggy. She said she was "quite moved not only by the size of your efforts but by the passion with which you worked. When I saw [your words], in the first memo of the battle, 'That for which we exist is upon us,' I thought: 'Oh boy, is this going to be a fight.'"

Then, pointing to a pivotal moment early in the fight, she admonished me: "I'm more sensitive to the rhetorical elements of a fight than the strategic and organizational aspects, and for all the right's complaining about the wild unfairness of Ted Kennedy's speech on the Senate floor ... we may have missed this central fact: It worked."

She continued, "That sound bite of Kennedy's speech was repeated

over and over and nice, average, not-too-political citizens saw it and heard it and the steady drum beat finally convinced them." So, she warned me, "The next time the right should answer in kind, matching tone for tone and blow for blow. I think this is one of those rare cases in which if the left gets mean the right should be just as mean, if not more so. In nice neat soundbites that can be easily cut and used by network producers who want to make tonight's show more dramatic and compelling."

Her wisdom was to consider the Bork fight and its equivalents as "one of those rare cases" requiring blunt-force political action. A time for such action came, four years later, in the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the same Court. Conservatives acted differently, and the outcome was different. Peggy Noonan was among the most influential persons in making the Right better prepared.

Her remarkable eye for truth, and expressing it, abides. Just last month, she wrote, not without sympathy, of a young black U.S. Senator who wants to be president: "Barack Obama is up against a lot of tropes, a lot of assumptions and understandings about what it is to be young, gifted, black and a major political figure. He's not Jesse Jackson, he's not Dr. King, he's not Andrew Young. He's trying to break a mold, make it new, be who he is, anticipate expectations, upend clichés, startle you into seeing him clear." Obama wears, she said, "dignity like a cloak."

But she warns, not unreasonably, that his coolness might be "a plus that carries a minus." That's not mean, it's candid. As Peggy has written elsewhere, "Candor is a compliment; it implies equality. It's how true friends talk."

This is reasonable and restrained commentary, of which we need more. Don't miss Peggy Noonan on April 24. ☪

**“A mind once stretched by a new idea,
never regains its original dimension.”**



Laura Ingraham
2006



J.C. Watts
2003



Thomas Stafford
2007



Clarence Thomas
2000



John Fund
2004



Larry Arnn
2007



Cal Thomas
1999



William F. Buckley, Jr.
2001



Joe Sobran
1998



Newt Gingrich
2006



Stephen Moore
2004



Ed Meese
2001



Michael Reagan
2005



Rich Lowry
2005

**The Oklahoma Council of
Public Affairs encourages you
to hear our special speakers.**



Marvin Olasky
2001



Jeane Kirkpatrick
1997



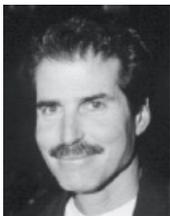
**Our next event is our
Citizenship Dinner on
April 24 with Peggy Noonan.**



Steve Forbes
1998



John Walton
2002



John Stossell
2000



Tommy Franks
2004



Walter Williams
2002



Dinesh D'Souza
2003, 2005, 2007

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Opportunities and Blessings in School Choice: A House Democrat Speaks Out

By Patrick B. McGuigan

During last year's legislative session, with his passionate advocacy of Oklahoma's charter schools and co-sponsorship of a bill to make it easier to support such institutions, Tulsa Democrat Rep. Jabar Shumate drew a lot of attention. Some of it was favorable, some of it highly critical from certain public school advocates.

In a recent interview, he explained his motivations for pushing the new charter law, which he described as "a great opportunity and a blessing in so many ways." Shumate said, "My political mentor and dear friend, David Boren, always modeled for me ways to find the middle ground, to work together with others for the common good. I watched him as a student, then as an employee of his at the University of Oklahoma."

Shumate reflected, "I have always based my politics, my work in public life, on working from the middle. This issue was a chance to do that, to make that real. Both Democrats and Republicans, in my experience, want strong education. I applaud my Republican friends for what they've done in the charter schools area. I must say I have no permanent friends and no permanent enemies in politics. I am results-oriented.

"As I looked at this issue in terms of my district, I saw charter schools where the lights are on, when children are learning and where they are safe. I was not afraid

at all of fighting for those kids and those schools. I saw too many children in neighborhoods in Tulsa, and elsewhere today, who are going to schools that were not doing them any good. They are not doing those kids any justice, any good in terms of reaching their potential, of finding all their options, of achieving what they can achieve."

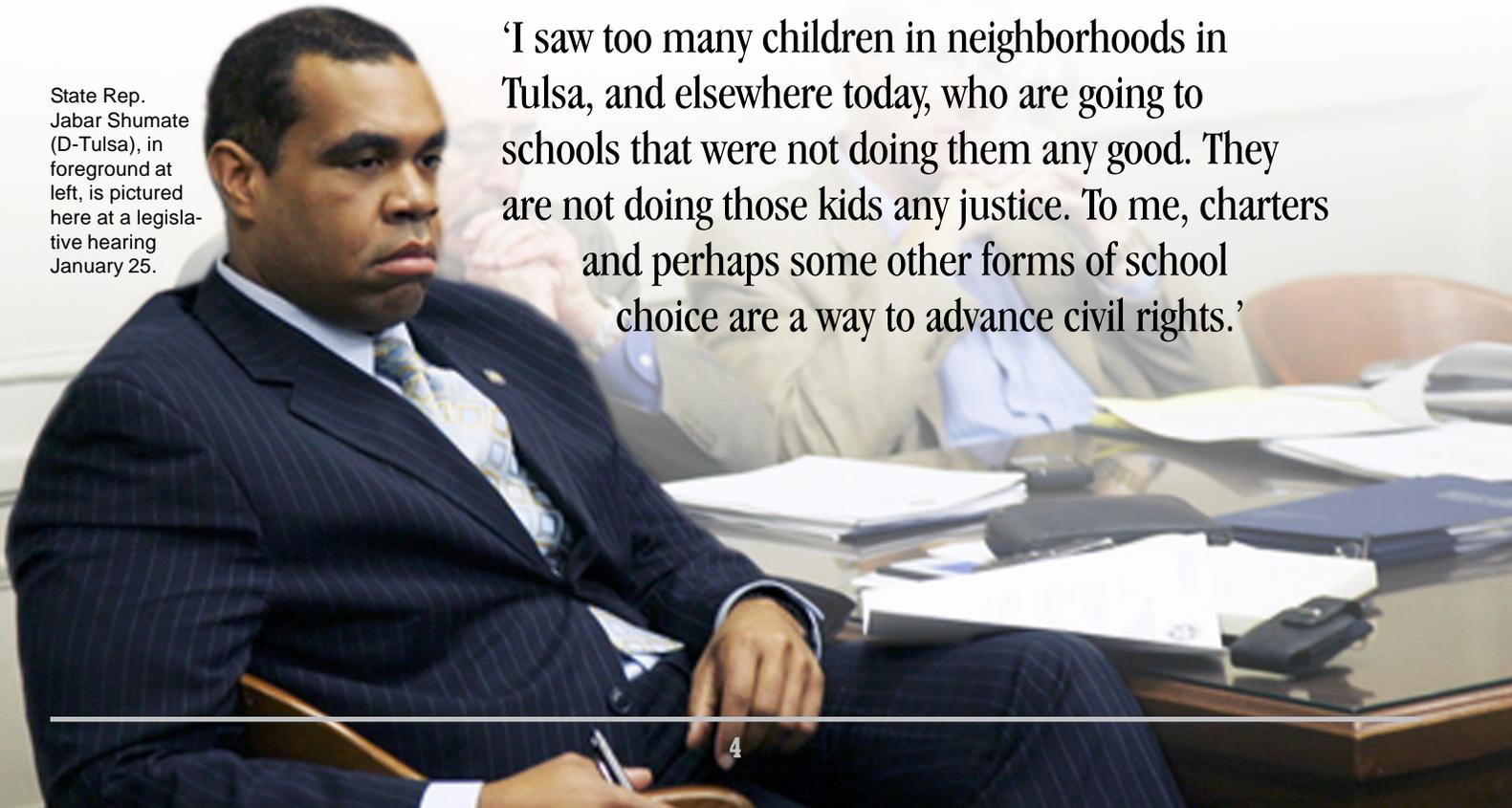
For these reasons, he said, "Honestly, defending charter schools and fighting for that bill last year was a no-brainer for me. It was the right kind of issue for my people in Tulsa, and it was a way to put into motion the things that David Boren taught me."

Rep. Shumate said he was disappointed and upset with the decision of the Tulsa Public Schools system to file a lawsuit challenging that new public charter schools law. He called the litigation "very sad. First of all, the law we passed is perfectly good law. It will withstand this legal challenge. In some ways, this lawsuit will hurt charter schools for a time, because it's a scare tactic and we'll be dealing with question marks about these schools. That's not good. This is the epitome of a frivolous lawsuit. It is ludicrous and ridiculous."

"The folks that lose out are the kids," Shumate continued. "With this lawsuit by the Tulsa Public Schools, there is a law firm that will make a lot of

'I saw too many children in neighborhoods in Tulsa, and elsewhere today, who are going to schools that were not doing them any good. They are not doing those kids any justice. To me, charters and perhaps some other forms of school choice are a way to advance civil rights.'

State Rep. Jabar Shumate (D-Tulsa), in foreground at left, is pictured here at a legislative hearing January 25.



money. The district's position is one-sided. They're acting in a vacuum and doing this simply because they can. The lawsuit will take money away from curriculum enhancement, from teacher training, from resources and research that could help our kids.

"By definition, the charter school bill is a middle ground, it is a compromise among all of us who worked for it. I think it's a sad day to look at the lawsuit that was filed. The bill would not have passed, it could never have become law without compromise. The district is turning away from that compromise, they have no broad approach to the issue. This is crying sour grapes, for no reason. It was a bill—something everyone could live with. In the end, it will be upheld."

I asked Shumate why, if the focus in education policy should be on children, it is various systems that get most of the attention and time in public discussion and debate. He answered, "That is an excellent question. In educational systems, you have a large fight, you have large fights over dollars. When it's about dollars, and it's about taxpayer dollars, you get into politics."

When that happens, he said, "People resort to name-calling and fall into a mindset of 'I, me and mine.' They disregard or disconnect from what we should be about, which is the kids. A good example is what happened in Tulsa after our discussion and after the new law that I supported. We've got lawsuits over charters and a mindset among opponents of those schools, people who are saying, 'That's my money.'

"We don't think enough about why we have that money. It's not for us, it's not for systems or individuals, it's for the education of our children. Nobody thinks about this. When I hear Tulsa opponents of charter schools say that the charter schools are taking away 'our money,' I point out to them that they should be a lot more worried about Owasso or Jenks, where our kids have already gone."

If one reform other than additional money could be made to empower kids, parents, and schools in public education, I asked, what would that one reform be? Shumate answered, "From the perspective of my legislative district, I would put more power in the hands of principals. I would allow autonomy, strength and the ability to change things for the better at the individual school level."

He elaborated, "As for parents, they need and deserve autonomy. If they are given more power, more control over their lives and over the education of their children, they will have more incentive to get involved. ... I would promote site-based management to give more power to principals and greater support to community leaders and parents to take our schools forward."

Asked for his perspective on other, broader forms of school choice—vouchers, tax credits, and similar

proposals—Rep. Shumate replied, "I'll be frank with you. This is a rough discussion, this issue. As we look at anything beyond charter schools, you almost get a brick wall put in front of you. I am at the point of studying options beyond charter schools. My dilemma is that I don't want to advance things that would lead kids to, in fact, leave our neighborhoods in Tulsa, and not be able to stay at schools there in their, in our, neighborhood."

He continued, "Would I have scads of kids leaving north Tulsa to go to Cascia Hall? If you don't have neighborhoods with schools, then neighborhoods will die. I want kids to be educated within the community, so I'm in a careful and 'studying' approach."

There is new legislation supportive of expanded school choice options, a bill introduced this session by state Sen. James Williamson, a Tulsa Republican, and state Sen. Judy Eason-McIntyre, a Tulsa Democrat (see page 6). Asked to comment on the legislation, Rep. Shumate replied, "I have heard of Sen. Williamson's bill and indeed we have discussed it. It

Bipartisan School-Choice Effort Underway

A conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat are teaming up to help children.

State Sen. James Williamson (R-Tulsa) and state Sen. Judy Eason McIntyre (D-Tulsa) have introduced Senate Bill 2148, the Great Schools Tax Credit Program Act. The bill would allow a tax credit for any Oklahoma taxpayer who makes a contribution to a charitable organization which provides educational scholarships to low-income students to cover all or part of their tuition, fees, and transportation costs at a qualified private school.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, similar scholarship tax credit laws already exist in Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Sen. Williamson, the Senate's Republican leader emeritus, holds a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Tulsa and taught social studies in the Tulsa Public Schools. He also holds a law degree from the University of Tulsa and has practiced law in Tulsa for 28 years.

Sen. Eason McIntyre, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from the University of Oklahoma, worked for 31 years in the child welfare division of the state Department of Human Services. She also served on the Tulsa Public Schools board of education for 16 years, serving two years as president.

—Brandon Dutcher

has piqued my interest. My question to him was: 'How do we not get into a situation where we don't first empower kids to look within their district?' I want to create means to help kids get a good education within our community. I would be concerned if the first result was for kids to leave to get their education. But I am very interested in what Sen. Williamson is proposing."

Some voices, including House Speaker Lance Cargill (R-Harrah), have called school choice "the greatest civil rights issue of our time." Asked to respond, Rep. Shumate replied with laughter: "Actually, I think that Lance Cargill stole that line from me, after I stole it from someone else!"

He continued, "We hope in our educational system to give young people the chance to reach their potential. When we think about civil rights, about a

person's advancement and success in life, much of all that depends on the ability to be, and to do, your very best. You must have the confidence to reach up, youngsters need confidence to reach their potential.

"My response on that issue is that every time we help move a bit further on the march to justice, we have done something good. No one rewards mediocrity or failures. To me, charters and perhaps some other forms of school choice are a way to advance civil rights. Whether kids are rich or poor or have some other circumstance, it seems to me that choice can serve us. Educational freedom and choice represent a great civil rights challenge we face today." ❖

OCPA research fellow Patrick McGuigan (M.A. in history, Oklahoma State University) is a certified teacher with classroom instructional experience in urban schools. He is also an editor at *The City Sentinel* in Oklahoma City.

Education Tax Credits Gaining Bipartisan Support

By Adam B. Schaeffer

A poll conducted in July 2007 by Cole Hargrave Snodgrass & Associates asked 500 Oklahoma voters: "If you had a school-age child and were given a voucher or a tax credit that would cover tuition to any of the following, which would you personally choose for your child?"

Forty-nine percent of respondents said they would choose a public school, while 43 percent said they would choose a private school. Among survey respondents in Tulsa, a full 55 percent said they would choose a private school, while 37 percent said they would choose a public school.

For those parents wanting to choose a private school for their children, Oklahoma legislators can help grant that wish and save money at the same time. How? By enacting an education tax credit program.

Education tax credits are a great way to use private funds to improve education and expand school choice for all families while saving taxpayers money. The credits reduce the amount a taxpayer owes the government for each dollar he spends on education. If a business donates \$4,000 to a scholarship-granting organization, it could deduct \$4,000 from its tax liabilities. Similar benefits for donations can be applied to individuals or to parents on education expenses for their own children.

Education tax credits, in other words, come in two forms. The first, tax credits for donations to scholarship organizations, can help support school choice for lower-income families. And the second, personal-use credits, can help middle-class families.

Tax credits save the states money because the amount spent on each student on average is so much less. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, public schooling in the U.S. costs around \$10,700 per child, while private-school tuition averages around \$7,300.

Three states (Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois) now have modest forms of personal-use tax credits.

Five states—Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island—have serious donation credits. Pennsylvania allows a 90 percent credit for donations to scholarship-granting organizations and Florida allows a 100 percent credit, helping thousands of children from lower-income families attend good, independent schools.

Tax credits have already been expanded in a number of states, with the support of people that you might not expect. Democratic legislatures or governors helped to pass tax-credit programs in Arizona, Rhode Island, and Iowa in 2006, and Pennsylvania expanded its existing program.

In 2007 a unified Democratic government in Iowa increased the tax-credit dollar cap by 50 percent to \$7.5 million from \$5 million. Many prominent African-American Democrats—most notably, Newark Mayor Cory Booker—support tax credits. Even New York's Democratic Governor Eliot Spitzer supports tax credits and proposed an education tax deduction in his first state budget. So there should be plenty of bipartisan cover for Republican and Democrat state legislators to come together and promise to do what's right for taxpayers and children. ❖

Adam Schaeffer (M.A., University of Chicago) is a policy analyst at the Cato Institute.

Government Officials, Not Parents, Making Decisions

By Dan Lips

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has used the power of the state to nationalize the oil industry, squash the independent news media, and control the electoral process. Seizing control of the country's public and private schools is next on his agenda.

Chavez recently announced plans for a new "Bolivarian" curriculum for all of Venezuela's schools. Criticizing the old school model as "colonial, capitalist, and soul-destroying," Chavez promised a new model: "We want to create our own ideology collectively." Education Minister Adan Chavez—Hugo's brother—will develop the curriculum. The new textbooks, Adan promised, will be geared to educate "the new citizen."

Private schools will also be forced to embrace the new curriculum. "Society cannot allow the private sector to do whatever it wants," Chavez explained. "The state has to intervene. They should be subordinate to the constitution and the national education plan." Schools that don't comply will be closed or nationalized.

Exactly what the new curriculum will contain remains unclear, but one can guess it will closely follow Chavez's leftist ideology. The Associated Press recently obtained a copy of a Venezuelan university curriculum; it consisted of required readings from Karl Marx and Fidel Castro and history lessons praising the murderous revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Elementary and high school students can probably expect something similar.

Chavez's move follows in the tradition of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, which used schools to shape children's minds to conform with their vision for society. Totalitarian regimes recognize that education is a powerful tool for controlling the state.

Americans witnessing Venezuela's drift toward totalitarianism should consider how fortunate we are to live in a free society. Yet we should also take a moment to evaluate our own public education system and consider the role that government plays in educating the next generation.

Here in the United States, roughly nine out of ten children attend government-run public schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 74 percent of children attend public schools that they are assigned to by the government. For most American children, important decisions about how they will be educated are largely decided by government officials, not their parents.

Consider the problems that government control of education can cause. It can force schools to choose sides in the culture wars. Reasonable people often

disagree on how to handle controversial curriculum decisions, such as sex education, American history, or evolution. Choosing sides, which public schools often have to do, is divisive. Worse, many parents are helplessly left to send their child to a school that teaches values at odds with their own.

Another problem is the lack of quality instruction in many schools. Because most parents have little choice but to enroll their child in the government-assigned school, there are few consequences for schools that fail to educate their students. The result is that many children attend schools with a poor track record of successfully teaching basic subjects like reading and math.

Of course, some American children are fortunate to have alternatives to the government-run public school system. Six million kids are enrolled in private schools. More than a million children are taught at home. Parents and teachers would protest in the streets if the U.S. government followed Venezuela and seized control of private schools and forced all children into a government-run school system.

In recent years, a growing number of kids are being allowed to use their share of public-funding for education to attend a school of their parents' choice. Thirteen states and Washington, D.C., now have programs to help families choose private schools for their children. And many states and school districts now offer more choice within the public school system through open enrollment policies or strong charter school laws.

But millions of children still lack the opportunity to attend a school of their parents' choice. If all parents were able to pick their children's school, schools would have to offer quality services to attract students. The best schools and teachers would thrive and become models for other schools; low-performing schools would be shuttered and replaced. Controversial issues wouldn't have to be decided by government, since parents would have the ultimate say in how their children are taught.

Universal school choice would address the problems of government-run education. And we can only begin to imagine what types of innovative schools and learning models could be possible if all parents had the power to decide how their children are educated.

Of course, the troubling news out of Venezuela should remind all Americans that we are fortunate to live in free society. But we shouldn't forget that we have a long way to go before our education system is truly free. ☪

Dan Lips (A.B., Princeton University) is an education analyst at the Heritage Foundation and co-author of the OCPA study "The Oklahoma Scholarship Tax Credit: Giving Parents Choices, Saving Taxpayers Money."

Beware the Conservative Entitlement Mentality

Sobering Lessons from the Colorado Comedown

By John Andrews

Which side of the political divide has the entitlement mentality? Democrats and liberals, of course. It's our friends on the left, as everyone knows, who assume that money grows on trees, benefits rain down like manna, risk protection is for worrywarts, hard work and deferred gratification are passé.

While that's often true, we on the right have entitlement egg on our faces today. Ask Dennis Hastert, Bill Frist, and the late Republican Congress. A funny thing happened on the way to that permanent GOP majority—a thing called taking it for granted. Now it's gone.

The great conservative comedown of this decade hit Colorado before it swept through Washington, D.C. Complacency and apathy played a big part.

The entitlement mentality of political success rose up and bit us. As an ally of OCPA since its earliest days (when I was running a sister think tank in Denver), let me suggest some lessons for Oklahomans from our experience.



OCPA wisely avoids siding with either political party. Colorado's Independence Institute does the same. However, Republican election results are still a good gauge of conservative trends. By that measurement, we peaked in 2002.

Gov. Bill Owens, cut from the same cloth as George W. Bush, won reelection in a landslide. The GOP held onto a U.S. Senate seat, gained a congressional seat, and took back the state Senate. William J. Bennett, former education secretary under Reagan, told *National Review* that Owens was "America's best governor." He said Senate President John Andrews was "helping make Colorado the most conservative state in the country."

Flattering, but premature. By the time term limits (which I helped enact in 1990, and still support) ended my tenure in 2004, Democrats were riding high again. Republicans lost both houses of the legislature that year for the first time in four decades. Dems also gained one each in the U.S. Senate and House. In 2006 they recaptured the Governor's office, added another U.S. House seat, and widened their legislative majorities. Grateful party leaders awarded Denver the Democratic National Convention for August 2008.

Elections Have Consequences

How important was all this for Colorado in terms of public policy? The impact has been negative and huge. During the early Owens years, led by the party of limited government and individual freedom, our state saw tax cuts for income, sales, and capital gains; tougher accountability for public schools; expansion of charter schools; education vouchers for the poor; accelerated highway construction; defunding of public employee unions; and a Defense of Marriage Act and defunding of Planned Parenthood. Bennett's appraisal seemed realistic.

But after the reversal in 2004, Gov. Owens finished his term in retreat. Though casting over 100 defiant vetoes of liberal legislation, he pushed through a 2005 ballot issue to increase taxes and spending, gave ground on illegal immigration, and helped defeat my 2006 ballot issue that would have imposed

judicial term limits. The popular congressman running to succeed him took over a divided GOP and lost badly to Democrat Bill Ritter, an ex-prosecutor and pro-lifer.

The party of unlimited government and collective solutions, with Ritter in charge, has romped at Coloradans' expense since early 2007. Mandates for renewable energy, a slowdown in oil and gas exploration, gay adoption, and reinstatement of Planned Parenthood (so much for his pro-life claim) were among Ritter's early moves. In November, bullied by James Hoffa Jr., he decreed collective bargaining for all state employees, a potential 30 percent bump in

pay and benefits.

A universal health care tax, vehicle taxes, and a heavier petroleum severance tax are next on the governor's list. He has a climate task force and wants a Carbon Fund. His education agenda features a mushy curriculum makeover, new obstacles for charters, and preschool for all. He's strategizing to get rid of TABOR, our constitutional tax and spending limit that was weakened by his predecessor.

It's all quite predictable, straight out of the progressive playbook.

So where was the conservative playbook all this time? What in the world was wrong with our side?

Conservative Complacency, Liberal Diligence

If I knew, I'd be the next Karl Rove, and this article would be on Fox News. But my diagnosis of the shocking turnabout in Colorado is not in the realm of tactics and formulas, coalitions and polls. It's in the realm of attitudes. Our problem was the conservative entitlement mentality of being too comfortably on top for too long. Our problem was taking it for granted.

Drinking their own bathwater, as the saying goes, is hazardous to the health of any group, including a political movement. Or believing their own press clips, to put it more politely. (Ouch, I guess that includes Owens and me.) Looking back with newfound humility, Colorado conservatives and Republicans can see that liberals and Democrats in our state were lean and hungry, stealthily planning and on the make, years ago when we were fat and unsuspecting. This didn't happen overnight.



State Senator Glenn Coffee, John Andrews, OCPA chairman Dr. David Brown, and Jerry Morris chat at an OCPA luncheon in 2005.

In 2000 they ran hard and took the state Senate so as to force redistricting into the courts. That same year they passed a school spending mandate designed to cripple TABOR. We were rolled. In 2002 they snuck a campaign finance scheme into the constitution that hamstrung business and gave labor a tenfold advantage. We were outfoxed again. Using those new rules, they rode a river of money such as Colorado had never seen—much of it from four billionaire ideologues—into their 2004 victories.

Leading those leftist mega-donors was Tim Gill, a gay activist and software tycoon. A long article about him in *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 2007, is must reading for anyone wanting to study how our Colorado experience could impact 49 other states. You can be sure the other side is making such a study; the DNC coming to Denver this summer proves it. How Gill himself sees the future is evident from his own words, quoted in the article's title: "They Won't Know What Hit Them."

Have term limits, taking effect since 1998, cost Republicans a few seats each cycle as popular incumbents retired in demographically shifting districts? Yes. Are the state's media generally friendlier to liberals than conservatives? Yes. Has migration from the coasts (and Mexico) moved Colorado from red toward blue? Yes again.

But does any of this excuse our sad disarray? I say no. I say the fault is in ourselves, not in our stars. We simply coasted too much. We had it easy and we took it easy—too easy. The price finally came due.

Political pendulum swings are as American as apple pie. We need them, human frailty on both right and left being what it is. The concern in Colorado is that we're seeing a long-term sea change, not just a swing. Liberals are entrenching, settling in, while many conservatives remain disoriented and demoralized.

Jon Caldara, president of the Independence Institute (succeeding Tom Tancredo, who succeeded me), reels off the names of 50 organizations on the left in our state in as many seconds—a potent echo chamber of progressive propaganda, ostensibly untainted by partisanship or ideology. Many are funded by Tim Gill, our homegrown George Soros, eager to franchise nationally.

Caldara also laments the way conservatives were taken into camp by Bill Owens and other Republican leaders when times were good, similar to what occurred in Washington under Tom "Nowhere Else to Cut" DeLay and the current president. It made the right keep silent when we shouldn't have. Far better, if one can adapt the old slogan, to let Reaganites be Reaganites: let the voices of principled protest ring

out when politicians start to fold.

Electoral victories and incumbency for their own sake are a false mistress. We need a fixed, unvarying standard of what's good policy. My state and yours should be constantly measured against the "conservative leading indicators" of (1) a constitutional government, (2) a market economy, and (3) a social order balancing liberty and duty—seeking a tone of common life that is (4) culturally cohesive and confident, (5) morally rigorous, and (6) religiously reverent. We should work untiringly for these objectives, and accept no substitutes.

The Scottish historian Alexander Tytler, a contemporary of Adam Smith and our own Founders, observed that nations attempting democracy pass through stages from bondage to faith to courage, then rising to liberty and abundance, then sinking to complacency, apathy, dependency, and finally back into bondage. It's sobering to think where on that circle our country is today.

Within America's larger story there are chapters repeating the same pattern. Colorado was undone, for the time being at least, by complacency and apathy. Now we see a dependency ethic taking over. Sobering indeed. The remedy? Conservatives state by state must stay hungry, stay on offense. "The natural progress of things," as Thomas Jefferson warned, "is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground." Yet this is not inevitable, if we pay what he said is liberty's price: eternal vigilance. ☪

A pioneer of the state think tank movement and a former Nixon speechwriter, John Andrews (andrewsjk@aol.com) served in the Colorado Senate from 1998-2005 and was its president from 2003-2005. He is now a fellow of the Claremont Institute, a *Denver Post* columnist, and host of Backbone Radio.

Oklahomans Still Conservative ... For Now

Oklahoma's political culture is one of the most conservative in the nation. A recent Cole Hargrave Snodgrass & Associates survey found that a full **66 percent** of Oklahoma voters identify themselves as conservative, while only **19 percent** call themselves liberal. Thirteen percent identify themselves as moderate.

The survey, which consisted of telephone interviews of 500 registered voters in the Oklahoma, was conducted December 2-6, 2007. The confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is such that 95 percent of the time results will be within +/- 4.3 percent of the true values, i.e., the results obtained if it were possible to interview all the qualified respondents.

—Brandon Dutcher

Oklahoma conservatives must stay hungry, stay on offense.

How Many Oklahomans Does It Take to Fund One Government Job?

By J. Scott Moody and Wendy Warcholik

It takes 15 Oklahomans in the private sector to fund one Oklahoma state government job. In total, for 2006, there were 83,769 state government workers in Oklahoma earning \$3,519,178,000—or an average of \$42,011 on a per-job basis. As a result, it would take a total of 1,281,682 private sector jobs to fund Oklahoma's state bureaucracy—slightly more people than were employed in the private sector in 2006 (1,266,179).¹

Oklahomans are paying dearly for these 83,769 state government employees in the form of higher taxes. According to recent research by OCPA, Oklahoma state government has 28,748 too many jobs when compared to the national state employment average. Eliminating these jobs would have saved Oklahoma's taxpayers up to \$1,207,715,398 in 2006.²

It takes 25 Oklahomans in the private sector to fund one Oklahoma local government job. In total, for 2006, there were 187,887 local government workers in Oklahoma earning \$7,672,488,000—or an average of \$40,836 on a per-job basis. As a result, it would take a total of 4,768,558 private sector jobs to fund Oklahoma's local bureaucracy—or 3.8 times the people employed by Oklahoma's private sector in 2006.

As with the state government, Oklahomans are also paying dearly for the 187,887 local government workers. Oklahoma's local governments have 37,912 too many jobs when compared to the national local employment average. Eliminating these jobs would have saved Oklahoma's taxpayers up to \$1,548,166,528 in 2006.

Methodology

The average private sector compensation per job was \$40,726 in 2006. Compensation is broken down into wages and salary (\$33,632) and benefits (\$7,093).

In order to calculate the amount of taxes paid, this study utilizes the information provided by "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States," published by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP)—a liberal think tank based in Washington D.C.

Although benefits are not taxable, the study assumes the full \$33,632 in wages and salaries are taxable. ITEP uses a "family income" (FI) concept which is likely very similar to the "adjusted gross income" concept used on federal and state individual income tax forms. In order to derive FI, wages and



salaries were increased by 30 percent to approximate AGI (according to the Internal Revenue Service, wages and salaries constitute about 70 percent of AGI). The resulting average FI was \$43,722 per job in 2006.

The ITEP analysis shows that the effective tax rate for a taxpayer earning \$43,722 is 10 percent—split 6.3 percent for state taxes and 3.7 percent for local taxes. While the ITEP report was released in January 2003, data from the Census Bureau indicate that no major changes in the overall effective tax rate in Oklahoma have occurred. As such, the ITEP estimate is still useful for this application. Overall, the average private sector job paid \$2,746 in direct state taxes and \$1,609 in direct local taxes in 2006.

Dividing the average state government compensation per job (\$42,011) by \$2,746 yields 15 average private sector jobs needed to sustain a single state government job in 2006. Dividing the average local government compensation per job (\$40,836) by \$1,609 yields 25 average private sector jobs needed to sustain a single local government job in 2006. ✪

J. Scott Moody (M.A., George Mason University) and Wendy Warcholik (Ph.D., George Mason University) are OCPA research fellows.

Endnotes

¹ This may appear nonsensical at first glance. However, keep in mind that this counts only taxes that are directly paid by individuals and does not include taxes paid by businesses, taxpayers with higher-than-average incomes, revenue from matching federal funds (such as Medicaid), or taxes paid by non-residents or retirees. In short, this exercise is meant to illustrate the simple concept that all money spent by government must first come from taxpayers and that government employees really are "servants of the people."

² For more information on Oklahoma's compensation and employment ratios, see J. Scott Moody and Wendy P. Warcholik, "Overcrowding on the Government Gravy Train," *Perspective* (December 2007), pp. 4-11.

What's the Matter with Socialized Medicine?

By Donald P. Condit, M.D.

Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall for the decadent King Belshazzar. "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). Socialized medicine deserves similar judgment.

The United States medical system merits description in apocalyptic terms. However, presidential candidates and religious leaders advocating socialized medicine seem blind to the dysfunctional nature of third-party health care. Despite ostensibly compassionate intentions, expanding government control of medical care would result in greater disservice to the uninsured and precariously insured.

Government health care creates a great deal of misperception about who's responsible for paying the bill. Resource consumption increases when people think someone else is shouldering the cost. Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman observed, "Nobody spends somebody else's money as carefully as he spends his own." More than 60 years of "someone else" paying for health care has led to medical expense inflation. Our predominately third-party reimbursement "system," beginning after World War II for employees and after Medicare in 1965 for the retired, has resulted in out-of-control spending. Increasing the role of government will spur unbridled medical services consumption and further harm the underserved. Medical resources are limited. An expanded government role in health care will necessarily lead to rationing, shortages of health-care providers, delay in treatment, and deterioration in quality of care.

Medicaid is a socialized-medicine microcosm. In that system, price controls and bureaucracy result in rationing by deterring provider participation and delaying treatment, with subsequent deterioration in quality of care. Affluent individuals are able to access better health care outside of any government system.

Government health care fails to control expenses. The combination of an aging population, technological advances and unconstrained consumption has led to an unsustainable growth in costs. Paul Starr, in *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (1982), compared United States medical spending before and after President Johnson signed Medicare legislation in 1965. Seven years before Medicare, medical inflation was 3.2 percent. Five years later it was 7.9 percent and now it is approximately 9 percent. The Congressional Budget Office reports that over the past 30 years, in comparison to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), health care spending has more than doubled. Furthermore, the CBO pre-

dicts that it will double again by 2035, to more than 30 percent of U.S. GDP. These trends would improve if medical resources were consumed with more direct personal participation in the cost of those decisions.

Government health care elsewhere is inadequate. Canada and the United Kingdom provide contemporary models where rationing occurs by bureaucracy and delay. Disease-specific outcome comparisons discredit studies that report greater satisfaction with socialized health care despite lower relative spending. Morbidity and mortality are worse. For example, a five-year survival rate for prostate cancer of less than 70 percent in the United Kingdom is objectionable compared to a greater than 95 percent survival rate in the United States. A 2006 Frasier Institute study reported that the average waiting time between primary-care referral and specialist treatment increased to 17.8 weeks in a Canadian survey. The average delay between referral and orthopedic surgery was 40.3 weeks. Wealthier Canadians commonly travel to the United States for care. The majority cannot.

Single-payer advocates argue health care is the right thing to do and government ought to fulfill this duty. However, given finite medical resources, fulfilling all health-care demand is impossible. Moral theologian Fr. Thomas Williams, in *Who is My Neighbor?* (2005), distinguishes between moral and civil rights. Moral and civil rights differ with respect to their demands upon government protection. We can agree upon a moral duty to make health care accessible to all citizens and work toward that goal, while disagreeing about the obligation of government to provide complete health services to everyone via socialized medicine.

The common good would be better served by market-oriented reforms for elective and extraordinary health care coupled with compassionate subsidization for the needy, rather than socialized medicine. Tax law changes could help improve insurance portability and affordability.

Patients paying for health care at the point of service would be more prudent consumers than those perceiving health-care benefits as an entitlement. People might take better care of themselves. With improved alignment of responsibility for personal health choices and medical-care consumption, scarce health-care resource allocation would improve. We cannot expect this much from government. ☸

Dr. Donald P. Condit is an orthopedic surgeon specializing in hand surgery in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He also holds an MBA degree from the Seidman School of Business at Grand Valley State University. This article was distributed by the Acton Institute.

The Effectiveness Quotient

By Brett A. Magbee

It's always been the express purpose of OCPA to be effective. So to a great degree, effectiveness is "Job One" for OCPA. It was Walter Savage Landor who wrote: "People, like nails, lose their effectiveness when they lose direction and begin to bend." That's rather profound—a caution against forgetting your purpose and where you are headed.

So just how does OCPA measure its effectiveness? Here are 10 ways.

We know we are being effective when:

1. We have big-government proponents shooting at us each time we release a study which questions the need for higher taxes.
2. Special interests cry foul on our policy ideas and exert more energy on *ad hominem* attacks than on challenging our arguments.
3. There is an effort by our opponents to label the nationally respected experts we use as "extreme,"

"radical," or heaven forbid, "conservative."

4. Liberals, conservatives, and libertarians initiate dialogue with us to search for common ground on important issues.

5. National speakers *call us* seeking placement on our calendar of events.

6. Top business leaders and opinion leaders come to hear our special speakers.

7. Policy-makers from both major political parties seek our advice and counsel on the principled free-market perspective.

8. Endorsements of our work are provided by prominent national and state figures.

9. Members of the media regularly contact us for interviews and commentaries.

10. More and more of our fellow citizens tell us to "keep up the good work" and then support us in our efforts. ☺



In one of the many meetings at our headquarters, OCPA president Hopper Smith makes a salient point about the crucial policy issues the organization must keep focused on during the year ahead.



OCPA's new Student Services Center staff members for this semester—from left to right: Travis Hughes, Melissa Mulkey, Elizabeth Patton and Daniel McCormack—deliver OCPA materials to policy-makers at the state capitol building. All are students at Oklahoma Christian University.



State Sen. Brian Crain (R-Tulsa) discusses OCPA's forthcoming health care proposal with lead author Tom Daxon and OCPA vice president Brandon Dutcher.



OCPA's first Board of Trustees meeting for 2008 packed the Avery Boardroom as members reviewed the successes of the organization in 2007 and looked ahead to the exciting plans for 2008.



“The family is the corner stone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitude, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled. So, unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together, all the rest—schools, playgrounds, and public assistance, and private concern—will never be enough.”

Lyndon Baines Johnson

“There’s a group out there that thinks all you need to be a teacher is a bachelor’s degree, a background check and to pass a computerized test, but you know they’re not going to send them to

Or Give It to Oklahoma City, Either

“There’s an awful lot to be said about not being in the bubble,” former California Gov. Gray Davis said in the November 15 Sacramento Bee. “In the bubble, your world is aides and speeches, and you’re not living a real life, and it’s very hard to understand how real people feel about things. I’ve yet to find a single person, from a busboy to a janitor to a middle manager to a partner in a law firm to a CEO, who wants to give Sacramento disposable income. Not one human being.”

teach where the wealthy folks are. They’re going to send them to teach where Ray-Ray, Little Willie, Little Man, Too-Sweet, and Chiquita are in the classroom.”

Reg Weaver, president of the National Education Association, engaging in some shameless stereotyping November 1 in Tulsa

“I’ve talked to staff at OSMH who have told me about late-term abortions for minor fetal anomalies, mothers harangued by doctors until they gave in and had an abortion they didn’t want, and babies born alive after abortions who were simply exposed and left to slowly die, sometimes over a period of hours.”

Pro-life state Representative Rebecca Hamilton (D-Oklahoma City), in an October e-mail to pro-life supporters. Thanks to a new state law pushed through by Rep. Hamilton, Sen. James Williamson (R-Tulsa), and others, Oklahoma taxpayers will no longer have to pay for abortions at Oklahoma state hospitals.



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