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# The Lone Star ICONOCLAST

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# U.S. Musicians Rock For Universal Healthcare

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— Dave Marsh

## 'Health Care for All Texans'

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# Open Voting Consortium Endorses VR's Call For 'Verifiability' In Elections

WASHINGTON — The Open Voting Consortium (OVC) has become the first E-vote software developer to call for transparency and verifiability in election systems, according to Brad Friedman, a representative of the Velvet Revolution's Divestiture for Democ-

racy campaign to correct election disparities linked to last year's Presidential election.

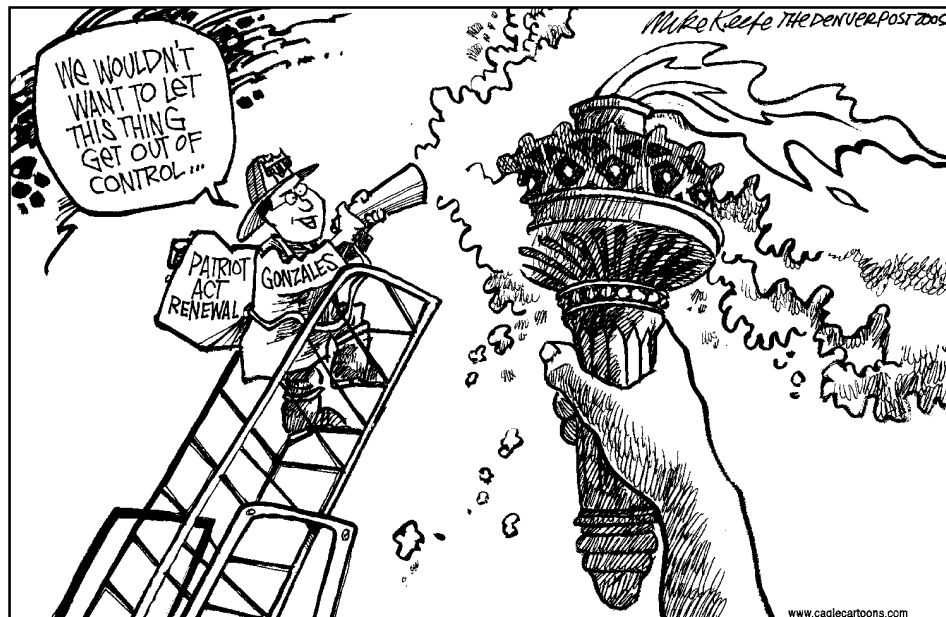
Friedman (who hosts <www.BradBlog.com>) says that VR (<www.VelvetRevolution.us>) received a letter by OVC President Alan

Dechert indicating his group's intentions of adopting the standards set forth in VR's Feb. 21 letter to America's voting machine companies, calling on them to do the right thing for their country by, among other things, voluntarily opening hardware and software for inspection and certification to ensure transparency in our electoral system.

Dechert calls, in his letter, for the voting process to be "clear, transparent, fair, trustworthy, orderly, observable, and auditable." We couldn't agree more. Why so many seem to be frightened by such an idea, is beyond us.

The Open Voting Consortium is a non-partisan group with Republican, Democratic, Green Party and Libertarian Party support.

OVC joins a growing list of supporters to the VR "DV4D" Campaign which, along with over 100 Voting Rights and Electoral Reform groups, also currently includes 23 U.S. House members, and 2004 Presidential Candidates David Cobb (Green) and Ralph Nader (Independent). All of these Americans are now calling for a trustworthy, auditable, transparent and verifiable voting system in the world's most important democracy.



## AG Gonzales Pushing For Patriot Act Renewal

WASHINGTON — If new Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has his way, all the expiring provisions of the USA Patriot Act will be renewed. The anti-terrorism law was approved 45 days after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The law, which many have deemed unconstitutional, allows the government to expand surveillance and prosecutorial powers against suspected terrorists and their associates. Most of the law is permanent; however, 15 provisions will expire in December unless they are renewed by Congress.

According to Gregory Nojeim, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Washington office, the Patriot Act went too far and "it must be

brought back in line with the Constitution."

Some fear that the invasion of privacy capabilities under the law are leading the country into becoming a police state.

According to the ACLU, five states and 375 communities in 43 states have passed anti-Patriot Act resolutions, which is an encouragement to Gonzales to have the issue thoroughly debated.

According to ICONOCLAST sources, the federal government already monitors and records all telephone and internet communiques from everyone throughout the United States. Whenever certain keywords or phrases spark the attention of federal agents, further action is taken.

## Humans Damaging Earth Faster Than Ever

OSLO, Norway — An international report released last week stated that humans are damaging the earth faster than ever, raising risks of disease, deforestation or "dead zones" in the seas.

"Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable time in human history, largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel," the report said.

"This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on earth," it added. More land was changed to cropland since 1945, for instance, than in the 18th and

19th centuries combined.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment's study was comprised by 1,360 experts in 95 nations.

The report said that in 100 years, "global warming" might become the main source of damage to the earth.

"Ecosystems and the services they provide are financially significant and...to degrade and damage them is tantamount to economic suicide," said Klaus Toepfer, head of the U.N. Environment Program.

The study urged changes in consumption, better education, new technology, and higher prices for exploiting ecosystems.

— Reuters contributed to this report.

## More Critics Barred From Bush Events

WASHINGTON — A number of President Bush's supporters are stopping dissent when the president swings into town to pitch his Social Security privatization plan.

Two weeks ago, in Denver, three folks say they were kicked out of a presidential event because their car's bumper sticker expressed distain for the war in Iraq.

Last month, in Fargo, N.D., local Republicans blacklisted more than three dozen residents, including a city commissioner, from a Bush visit.

The White House said only Bush sup-

porters, not the Bush Administration itself, is responsible for their actions. However, all participants are supposed to be screened, and dissenting voices are rare at these events.

Dan Recht, a Denver lawyer, said he might push for legal action for the blocked dissidents for perceived violations of their First Amendment rights. "They were punished for the speech that was on their bumper sticker," Recht said. "It just feels so un-American."

— Knight Ridder Newspapers contributed to this report.



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# U.S. Musicians Rock For Universal Healthcare

## 'Health Care for All Texans' Movement Spreading Statewide

By NATHAN DIEBENOW  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — Austin might not seem like *the* place to go to receive information about healthcare for the average person from New Jersey, but Debbie Hager's time is running out.

Hager is the touring manager for a band called Clueless, made up of two professional musicians, the Pla brothers. Nelson is a studio drummer, and Joseph is a studio guitarist.

Her problem is that the brothers don't have health insurance, and death could be as close as a coughin their future.

"When they get a cold or anything, it's like hold your breath, keep your fingers crossed, and hope it doesn't turn into pneumonia," said Hager.

For the past year, she's been doing research trying to find healthcare coverage for them, but has found little hope.

"I've been able to come up with nothing which they qualify for. Nothing. They're not children. They don't have children. They're technically considered employed because they're working musicians. They own a house, and that house is considered an asset; therefore, they have too much money. It's been incredibly difficult," she said.

She has thought about starting a small business for the brothers to be eligible for health insurance, but that is a difficult task because of the costs involved in setting it up. "You have to get lawyers and accountants involved. It's really daunting. You know, we don't have business backgrounds in that sense," she said.

She has also thought about relocating herself and the band out of their part of New Jersey for insurance coverage, but relocating without knowing what kind of coverage is available would be a gamble.

Hager's time is running out for herself, too. She has health insurance, but it's only valid for another year and a half.

So with the hope of finding more resources, she came to Austin to network with fellow industry professionals at the 2005 South by Southwest Music Conference this last March. At the Healthcare for Musicians panel, she found other musicians in the same boat looking for

healthcare resources, too.

But she also found there is a movement growing among musicians pushing for universal healthcare.

### Healthcare for Musicians

For five years in a row, Dave Marsh, founder of ROCK & RAP CONFIDENTIAL and former ROLLING STONE editor, has chaired this SXSW panel "Healthcare for Musicians" to help point musicians in directions to gain access to healthcare services and to enlist them in the fight for healthcare for all Americans.

Due to a combination of stereotypes, bad business skills, and other unfortunate events, musicians of all ages and backgrounds have long been in the shadows of the healthcare industry.

In the last 20 years, though, various organizations have emerged to offer assistance to musicians struggling with immediate health problems. Unfortunately, they were organized after musicians suffered personal tragedies.

When jazz legend Woody Herman died homeless, MusicCares was established by the Recording Academy

(www.grammy.com) in 1989. The Sweet Relief Musician's Fund (www.sweetrelief.org) was started in 1994 initially to help cover singer/songwriter Victoria Williams' medical fees brought about by her multiple sclerosis. Since then thousands of career musicians have found financial assistance through Sweet Relief while facing illness, disability, or age-related problems.

More recently in 2003, the Alejandro (Escovedo) Fund (www.alejandrofund.com) was created to aid musicians with Hepatitis C.

Other organizations that offer aide for musicians to some degree include the Society for Singers, the Musician's Foundation, the Actor's Fund, and Memphis Musicians (www.memphismusic.org). Problems still remain, though, for the musicians who fall through the cracks.

As a last resort, musicians often perform benefit shows for their fellow musicians. A four-year-old ROCK & RAP CONFIDENTIAL survey found that there are about 1,000 benefits a week by mu-

sicians for musicians who have immediate health problems.

"Most of the time when there's a benefit, the benefit doesn't raise enough money, so the person stays sick and often dies," said Lee Ballinger, associate editor of ROCK & RAP CONFIDENTIAL in an interview with THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. "Even though it's a beautiful thing that people come together and try to take care of their brother and sister, it's beyond their capabilities."

"Musicians are some of the most giving people in this society despite the slanderous media depiction, and we all know that. It's taken for granted," said Dave Marsh. "I mean, people were more confident that musicians would help out with tsunami relief than they were the government, and they had good reason because they did it and quicker."

Even hard rock and heavy metal musicians have heart — especially when it comes to their fans' families.

At the Hard Rock Cafe in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Jan. 20, the members of Poison, Iron Maiden, AC/DC, Danzig, W.A.S.P, Ministry, Guns 'N' Roses, and others performed at a fund-raiser for Raven Nicole Robinson, a child born with a heart defect.

Raven's parents are such heavy metal fans that Raven was reportedly born with Metallica's "Bleeding Me" playing in the background.

### Barriers for Musicians

Jenny Toomey, the Executive Director and President of the Future of Music Coalition (www.futureofmusic.org), said that FMC's research has found that if musicians can't meet a mortgage payment or have healthcare, they quit being musicians.

"There's a dropping off point between 21 and 25 when people first feel the need to get married or have a child, or they want health insurance, and they begin to wiggle away from their artwork and begin to take on other work," she said.

According to a FMC survey of about 3,000 musicians, the musicians were four times less likely to have health insurance than the rest of Americans. FMC also found that those who responded to the survey were "very insurable" — generally young white men under the age 25, "which is about as at

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Dave Marsh, Editor of ROCK & RAP CONFIDENTIAL



Jenny Toomey, Executive Director and President of the Future of Music Coalition



## • MUSICIANS ROCK FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE ... Continued From Page 3

tractive a population as an insurer could want. They're not going to get pregnant, and they haven't yet had the ravishes of age and disease," she said.

Another FMC study answered why so few musicians were using the plethora of insurance plans available to them. Posing as a musician, an insurance agent associate of FMC called a number of insurance agencies for a basic rate on an insurance plan for a generic rock band.

"And what we found was nobody answered the phone," said Toomey. "And when they did answer the phone, they didn't have the right answers to the questions. They would direct people to more expensive plans for HMO policies. They didn't have the time or the resources to talk to a confused musician through the basic questions they had.

"Even if musicians reach out for help, they can't get it," she added.

To help musicians receive basic information about finding affordable health insurance, FMC is setting up a toll-free number, which will be available later this year. Along with this, FMC will be collecting data on what types of questions musicians are asking concerning health insurance.

Toomey sounded optimistic about the future role of musicians as activists.

"Musicians are made to fight each other. There's a sense of scarcity and competition that pervades the industry, but what I really like about this movement for healthcare is that musicians will hopefully notice that there is something they can get by working together that they can't get without one another," she said, on the SXSW panel.

### Musicians & Diversity

JoAnne Klabin, Managing Director of the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund, is skeptical that musicians as a group can get their own healthcare plans.

"They're not a big enough, strong enough, wealthy enough group to influence anybody to provide them insurance, so the question is how do we provide healthcare, period. There are a number of solutions to that problem including universal healthcare and other methods," she said in an interview with THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST.

The fact that musicians are such a diverse group of workers is another problem, she said.

"Musicians are not at all assembly line workers. There are so many different ways of being a musician, and it's really hard to qualify or quantify what makes you a musician, and what you would get from being that. How do you standardize that group? That's the difficult thing," Klabin added.

Musicians unions can only serve so many musicians, she said, because the qualifications for the union are a bit beyond most people's means. "You have to keep your dues paid, and a lot of people can't even afford the dues, and you have to do a certain amount of work to stay eligible for the union. There needs to be a new union system that accommodates more types of people," Klabin said.

"One person can't say, I'm a back up singer, and I only do recordings, and the next one says, Well, every now and then we get in a van and go play out at little clubs, and the third person says I'm a star!" Klabin explained. In other unions, for example, the screenwriter's union, it's not a union for anyone who is a



JoAnne Klabin, Managing Director of the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund

writer. It's a union for screenwriters who have produced a certain body of work that have earned a certain amount of money and produced a certain amount of material, she said.

"So if you have a musicians' union, you have to have a threshold, like you have earned this much through royalties, and a lot of those people already have health insurance anyway," Klabin said.

Just going out to get a job as a waiter in a restaurant is not an option for a 90-year-old blues legend with diabetes, she said. "It's like, 'Duh!' It's a very diverse group of people. The guy who plays the piano in your department store has the same profession as the superstar playing to a crowd of 40,000 people. There are huge gradations," she said.

Other obstacles for musicians' access to healthcare include having their royalties taken away or being payed under the table to perform so there is no record of them earning money to qualify for public benefits.

### Cyclone

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 43.6 million Americans had no health insurance in 2002, and, without a doubt, musicians are a part of that group, said Marsh of ROCK & RAP CONFIDENTIAL.

"Even though there are special problems (among musicians), there are some places where in terms of public health crisis, musicians may well be pretty close to the center of the cyclone. But everybody is in the cyclone, and the role of musicians is very interesting," Marsh said, adding that the tide is turning as more and more musicians around the country are hearing the call, advocating for universal healthcare starting through local efforts.

"If you bring them together to use their resources to help each other, that inherently goes toward the whole public notion that we need to be getting a mass movement to end this charade that the healthcare industry is about healthcare, instead of profit," he said.

In the United States, there are many fronts of resistance to the healthcare

industry aided by musicians. A few of the higher profile ones are in Tennessee, California, and Ohio.

In Nashville, Tenn., at the Country Music Hall of Fame last August, RRC sponsored a "Music and Healthcare" forum. There, a new organization was created — Music for Health Care — which brought together musicians, songwriters, and activists faced with the ongoing healthcare crisis in Tennessee over TennCare, the state's healthcare program of last resort.

Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen, a Democrat and a former HMO executive, has announced plans to kick off 323,000 residents, many of them country/western musicians and their families, from the TennCare roles over a 12-month period that started in January 2005.

"Governor Phil Bredesen is doing it with absolute unanimity of the Democratic Party. Not one Democrat in Tennessee nor anywhere else in the United States has spoken out against it," said Lee Ballinger of RRC. "It sets a new standard of barbarity in the medical field which other states are already looking at. It's going to impact the whole country."

Before the forum last year, a series of Sweet Relief benefit concerts drew more light on Tennessee's healthcare crisis.

"Healthcare in general isn't a sexy topic, but when you tie in musicians, you tie in something hip and a brand name, people get excited," said Scott Dudelson, concert promoter and music journalist.

### SB 840

In California earlier this month, the California Health Insurance Reliability Act (SB 840) was submitted to the California Legislature. If approved, every Californian will be covered with comprehensive health insurance and be given the ability to choose his own physician — essentially under a "single-payer" form of universal health care.

About \$8 billion, in the first year alone, is estimated to be saved with this model

in statewide healthcare spending. It is expected to save money for families, businesses, individuals, and local governments.

Susan Martinez, Director of Patient's Advocacy at Oakland Children's Hospital, said that one of the greatest expenses in the California healthcare industry is the cost of those who are working in the industry.

"Pretty soon there's going to be nobody left (working in the industry)," Martinez said.

Last October, yayoJones, a band from Orange County, performed during an event held by Community United for Respect and Equality at Cedars-Sinai (C.U.R.E. at Cedars). During the day's events, 100 nurses from all over California showed their support for nurses working at Cedars Sinai hospital in Los Angeles.

In December 2002, the 1,700 nurses at Cedars Sinai, mainly Filipino immigrants, voted in the California Nurses Association (CNA) as their union. The National Labor Relations Board threw the election out, however, after the hospital appealed.

The video footage from the CURE event was edited into a short film, *Everyone In, Nobody Out*, available from the music activist organization Rock A Mole Productions (www.rockamole.com).

### SPAN Ohio

In Ohio, a coalition of musicians, labor unions, and churches associated with Single Payer Action Network (SPAN) is pushing for a statewide public healthcare system. The goal of the coalition is to gather 97,000 signatures for a ballot initiative, "which they will succeed in," said Ballinger, with the aid of musicians on tour through Ohio.

SPAN has conscripted the likes of Steve Earle, Citizen Cope, Bobby Rush, the Drive-By Truckers, Michael Fracasso, and a string of local Ohio bands in this effort.

"I'm not very political in nature, but I know what's bullshit — the fact that for

**Continued On Next Page**



Scott Dudelson, Concert Promoter and Music Journalist



• **MUSICIANS ROCK FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE** ... Continued From Page 4

people my age it's difficult to get health insurance. I feel that with musicians it is a great way to get the word out," said Scott Dudelson, 26, a concert promoter who guides musicians to nonprofit groups.

Dudelson, who is working with Healthcare for All in California, pointed out that musicians not only can go on stage to promote a cause but also use their snail mail and email lists to spread the word.

"Through a band's mailing list, hundreds of thousands of people can be reached," he said. "If we can get artists involved, those that have name recognition and have large mailing lists, they can turn those fans into social activists through their websites and mailing lists, promoting what they believe and standing for something."

Coupled with peer-to-peer online communities like Friendster and MySpace, activists can reach hundreds of people to form little communities of activists, he added.

"Generally, standing for anything is cooler than not standing for anything at all," Dudelson said.

**Doctors On Board**

Doctors around the country favor universal health care, and for 15 years, the Physicians for Nationalized Healthcare Plan ([www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org)) have advocated the single-payer plan, which is a system whereby the government becomes the sole organizer of healthcare dollars, but the private system of health delivery is retained.

The GAO and the Congressional Budget Office under the President George H.W. Bush estimated that the savings that comes from getting rid of all the

administrative costs and inefficiencies that comes with for-profit healthcare — things like co-payment collections, utilization reviews, sales and marketing — would save Americans about \$350 billion every year.

The single-payer plan takes that \$350 billion per year to cover all the uninsured 45 million Americans and upgrade coverage to everyone else. Everyone gets full comprehensive coverage without raising taxes one dime.

About 13,000 physicians across the United States as well as the former and current presidents of the American Public Health Association and two former editors of the American Journal of Medicine, have endorsed PNHP's Single Payer National Healthcare Plan proposal. The PNHP also has legislation introduced to Congress by Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan). The bill currently has 38 cosponsors.

The idea of national healthcare has not been a solid political option, however. The private insurance companies, of course, lobby against it because they'd be left out to dry. But even President Clinton's ill-fated "Managed Competition" plan — which failed without coming up for a vote — made huge concessions to these insurance firms.

During the 2004 presidential campaign, the only Democratic contender to release any plan resembling universal healthcare was Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio). His plan "Medicare for All" expanded Medicare through a payroll tax to create a universal, single-payer system of national health insurance phased in over 10 years.

**Single-Payer Plan**

The single-payer plan is not social-

ized medicine, which is what countries like England and Spain currently have on the books. Socialized medicine is a healthcare system paid for by the taxpayers and delivered by physicians working solely for the government by salary.

A single-payer plan healthcare system would operate from public funding of private delivery. Under this model, like those in Australia and Canada, citizens pay into the system through payroll taxes, and a governmental agency collects the payroll taxes, disburses fees to private hospitals and doctors, and negotiates with them over the costs of different services.

The billing would be so simplified that one person in the doctor's office would check a box, and the private doctors would receive their paychecks.

For over 40 years, the United States has already been using a single-payer system. It's called Medicare.

Insurance companies have an overhead that averages about 14 percent and can be as high as consuming a third of every health dollar spent. Medicare by contrast operates at three percent, say advocates of universal healthcare from PNHP.

"So it saves an incredible amount of money. Doctors get paid. By in large, this system is successful, and you see that in the political support for Medicare regardless of what side of the aisle the politician sits on," said Nick Skala of PNHP.

**Educating Doctors**

Dr. Anna Malinow, cofounder and chairman of Health Care for All Texans ([www.healthcareforalltexas.org](http://www.healthcareforalltexas.org)), said that even though only a small number



Susan Martinez,  
Director of Patient's Advocacy  
at Oakland Children's Hospital

of physicians support universal healthcare under the single-payer plan, most physicians in Texas and the United States are still disillusioned with the current healthcare system.

"I think much of their disillusionment stems from the inordinate amount of paperwork and loss of control for making decisions about their patients," she said. "But then you ask them what we should do, most of them will scratch their heads."

Dr. Malinow said that a "complete and utter lack of education of the healthcare system in our doctors" is one part of the problem facing the healthcare crisis. She admits that she never had any lectures about the history of the U.S. healthcare system. It was only after all her years in medical school and while practicing medicine that she realized about four years ago how her patients came to find her services through the system. She has been working as a pediatrician at Bentaub General Hospital in Houston for the past seven years.

"And I will tell you that I'm not alone. Most physicians have a very, very vague understanding of our healthcare system, like what is the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, what is employer-based healthcare insurance all about, or what drives the cost of healthcare up," she said. "It's like teaching law students American law and forgetting to tell them about the Constitution. I think it would be very hard to practice law, don't you think?"

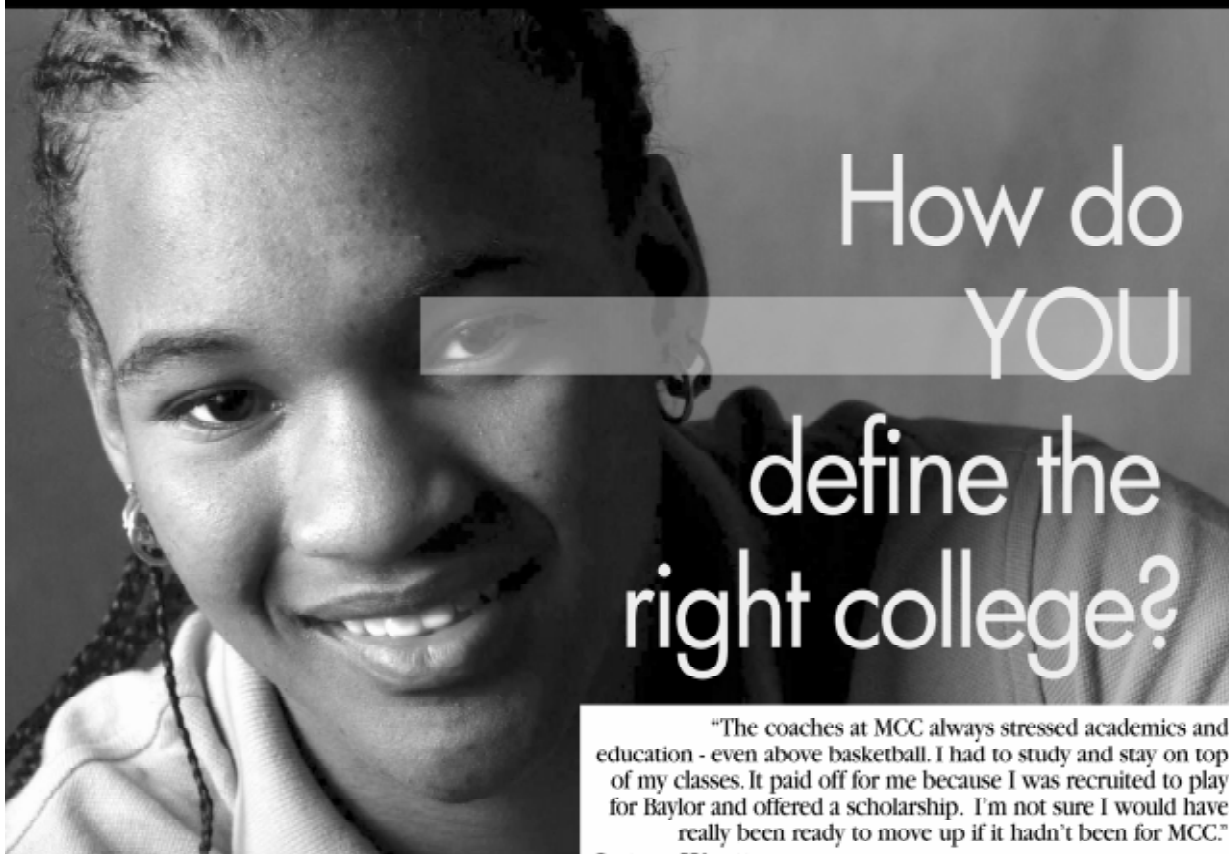
Dr. Malinow said that she had to educate herself in healthcare policy because she found herself helping her patients navigate the healthcare system more than she was using her stethoscope.

"I would spend 80 percent of my time talking to parents about Medicaid and CHIP ... and then 10 minutes doing my physical exam. It was insane," she said. "And then I realized I could be the most brilliant diagnostician. I could come up with this diagnosis, know exactly what medication to give out, and write the prescription, but if the parents could never fill it, what good am I? I might as well come up with the wrong diagnosis or no diagnosis at all."

Dr. Malinow said that at that point, she wasn't a pediatrician anymore. She de

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Congratulations Latoya and the Baylor Lady Bears  
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Latoya Wyatt

'03-'04 Highlassie basketball player • Current Baylor Lady Bear



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## • MUSICIANS ROCK FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE ... Continued From Page 5

scribed herself as a "very well paid social worker, and on the side, I was doing medicine."

However, she wasn't about to give up her day job, she said. Instead, she formed Health Care for All Texans and began teaching about healthcare policy. She is currently an associate professor at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"To me, medicine is really a mission. It's a calling," she said, adding that while some physicians fear that their paychecks will plummet from a change to universal healthcare, what they don't consider is their current situation.

"As it is, they've seen their work hours increase dramatically and their pay decrease dramatically, and yet they still want to hold on to the system. It makes no sense," she said. "Every private physician in the United States has to hire anywhere from 1.5 to three people just to do their billing, and you can be practicing in Seattle and have to deal with like 700 insurance companies."

The American Medical Association, the largest doctor organization in the country, has lobbied against universal healthcare since 1916, including Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s.

**No Middlemen**

The groups that would be hurt in a single-payer system would be the insurance and pharmaceutical companies in the United States. They would go out of business because the government and doctors would negotiate prices.

Right now, under President Bush's new Medicare bill, the government is prohibited from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies for better prices for its citizens.

"Americans spend over \$1.7 trillion every year on healthcare. At the end of the day, somebody takes home \$1.7 trillion, and it's not me, and it's not any doctor I know," said Dr. Malinow, noting that insurance premiums have been going up in the U.S. by 10 or 11 percent, although it's been more like 15-20 percent, particularly among small businesses.

With universal healthcare, the risk is spread over a whole population, not just a set group of cherry-picked insurance holders. "The whole idea of insurance is the bigger the pool, the less each person is going to cost you," said Dr. Malinow.

In Texas, that risk pool would be 22 million people under one policy, she said, adding that almost five million Texans have no health insurance under the current system, and many more are poorly insured.

Currently, Health Care for All Texans is made of 300 members across four

chapters: El Paso, Austin, College Station, and Houston. A fifth chapter will open soon in Galveston.

"If people in Crawford want to start one, just ask," she said. "I will go to Crawford and do a training, and we'll get people fired up. We don't have any money, but we have passion. That's how I've done it all the other places."

Dr. Malinow said that she doubted most physicians would champion universal healthcare, although "it would be wonderful" if they did. "I think it's going to come from the people. It's going to become a revolutionary movement in the United States," she said.

**New Alliances**

Lee Ballinger of RRC said that the opportunities for new alliances between disparaging groups are opening up to fight for universal healthcare for Americans.

"(The Left) is scared to death of the American people. It's messy. Yes, I'm sure you know better than I do, but who else can change it?" said Ballinger. "We live in a fundamentally Christian country, but the Left don't have a strategy working with churches or working with devoutly religious people? I understand why you might not want to, but how are you ever going to get anything accomplished? People are dying right there in front of you. It is a war. We're not here to protest. We're not trying to make a point. We're trying to effect a change."

Ballinger admitted that it's going to take an extremely large and powerful movement outside the Democratic Party to compel a universal healthcare bill's passage through Congress because the healthcare industry won't propel it.

Sue Martinez, Director of Patient's Advocacy at Oakland Children's Hospital, said she felt confident that universal health care could be achieved either by individual states or the federal government, but "I'll tell you it's not going to come out Sen. (Hillary) Clinton's mouth when she runs for president. She won't be talking about public healthcare. You might hear Russ Feingold (D-Wis) talking about it, or truly progressive mavericks. It'll be on their agenda."

Even CEOs of corporations have expressed their distain with the current healthcare system. In 1994, Jack Smith, a former CEO of General Motors, said he "personally favor[ed] the Canadian system."

Because of Canada's low healthcare costs, the Big Three automakers have moved plants to Canada. In the last year, automobile industry executives sent the Canadian government a letter urging Canada to keep its single-payer system,

so the car companies could hold their expenses down.

In 2003, GM spent \$4.5 billion on health care for its U.S.-based employees and retirees, at a cost of \$1,200 per car, according to a GM spokesman.

THE NEW YORK TIMES reported that from 2000-2003, the average U.S. worker's healthcare spending increased by 48 percent. At the same time, the percentage of employers that fully subsidized health care for employees' families dropped from 27 percent in 2001 to 15 percent in 2003.

Martinez, echoing Dr. Malinow, said that educating people about universal healthcare is a top priority. "It's really important to keep positions that healthcare is a basic human right. It's not a luxury," said Martinez.

"So part of the goal of the SPAN campaign is to get that flag up so that we Americans can debate this thing out. I mean, if the people who really think that people are entitled to healthcare if they don't have a lot of money, let them say so," said Ballinger. "Even a city like Montgomery, Ala., that bastion of 'socialized medicine,' is purchasing drugs from Canada for the City because you can't afford to buy them in the United States."

Noting that every poll shows that a minimum of 70 percent of Americans want universal healthcare, Ballinger said that he believe universal healthcare can be obtained faster than any other social initiatives around the country.

"You have to convince people the other initiatives need to be done, and you have to convince them to be active. Okay, that's how it is. So be it. But with healthcare, it's just the opposite. Almost everybody, the majority of Americans, think something very fundamental and radical needs to be done," he said.

"There's so many positive threads of people trying to deal with the healthcare crisis outside of the limits that are set for us, which is great," he said.

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**No Child Left Behind To Undergo Changes**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced last week that No Child Left Behind will be altered to adopt a more workable, common sense approach to reaching the law's mission of raising student achievement in the United States.

According to Spellings, under a new approach to implementing the No Child Left Behind law, states will have additional alternatives and flexibility if they can show they are raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap.

Secretary Spellings said the new guidelines, *Raising Achievement: A New Path for No Child Left Behind*, are a comprehensive approach to implementing the law and she reiterated that "the bright lines of the statute"—such as annual testing to determine student achievement, reporting results by student subgroups and highly qualified teachers—are not up for negotiation.

"We have learned a lot over the last three years as our infant law has matured, and these past three years have helped us be smarter about how this law is working in the schools," Secretary Spellings said. "These new guidelines show us the way forward given what we've learned. They focus on results for all students, the fundamental mission of the No Child Left Behind Act."

"States that show results and follow the principles of *No Child Left Behind* will be eligible for new tools to help them meet the law's goals of getting every child to grade level by 2013-14. It's a shared responsibility," she said.

"In other words, it is the results that truly matter, not the bureaucratic way that you get there. That's just common sense, sometimes lost in the halls of the government," she added.

She said that the new path features four key principles: ensuring students are learning, making the school system accountable, ensuring information is accessible and parents have options, and improving teacher quality.

Among the more controversial measures that have been altered is the percentage of students with persistent academic disabilities that may now take alternate tests

These scores will be limited to 2 percent of all students for accountability purposes; this is a separate policy from the current regulation that allows up to 1 percent of all students being tested (those with the most significant cognitive disabilities) to take an alternate assessment, Spellings explained.

"This new approach recognizes that these children should not all be treated alike. By relying on the most current and accurate information on how children learn and how to best serve their academic needs, this new policy focuses on children. They continue to be included in the accountability system because we know that otherwise, they risk being ignored, as was often the case before No Child Left Behind."

Secretary Spellings also announced that she was directing an additional \$14 million in immediate support for these students and that the Department would provide states with a comprehensive tool kit to help them identify and assess students with disabilities.

No Child Left Behind is the bipartisan education reform law that the secretary says is designed to change the culture of America's schools by closing the achievement gap among groups of students, offering more flexibility to states, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works. Under the law's strong accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those with disabilities, achieve academically.

More information about the new policy is available at <www.ed.gov>.



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# Bush Plan Could Harm California Vets

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A Bush administration plan to withhold funds for nearly all veterans could cost California's three long-term care homes for elderly U.S. veterans. Should Congress approve the \$18 million cut, facilities in Barstow, Chula Vista and Yountville would probably be forced to reduce their services.

Under the Bush plans, the feds pay only for veterans whose injuries are directly connected to their military service. Other veterans who are merely

old, infirm, or have no service-related ailments would no longer be served.

Some veterans advocates say that the government should serve every military personnel under the same umbrella assistance. Others, like Peter Gayatan, a deputy director at the American Legion, worried that due to the Bush cuts, "some of (our veterans) could be put out on the street."

About 2.4 million of the nation's 4.4 million military veterans call California home.

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AUCTIONEER'S NOTE: This auction is a blending of the on-site household inventory of the late Mrs. Frances Roberts & several other households of folks that are moving into smaller retirement quarters. It offers a wide choice of nice, clean furniture & homemaking items. "GOOD STUFF" — Roland Reese

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# Texas Voters Want Later School Start Date

AUSTIN — A recent survey shows an overwhelming majority of Texas registered voters support a school start date of Sept. 1 or later and the majority also support school districts having the option to lengthen the school day and shorten the school year.

The Texas Interested Citizens State-wide Voter Opinion Survey, conducted by the Eppstein Group, found that 67

percent of the state's registered voters favor requiring all Texas public schools begin their school years after Labor Day or during the first week in September.

Fifty-four percent of those polled favored allowing local school districts the option to lengthen the school day by 15 to 30 minutes to give students the option of a longer summer vacation or

more flexibility with school breaks.

The survey also shows that Texas voters believe the quality of education in public schools is the single most important issue facing the state.

Tina Bruno, executive director of Texans for a Traditional School year, said that she was not surprised to hear Texans support a Sept. 1 or later school start date. "Survey after survey shows Texans support a later school start date and do not support the trend in Texas to begin school early in August."

The majority of the 42,000 respondents to the web-based school calendar survey sponsored by the School Start Date Task Force also supported a Sept. 1 or later school start date, with the greatest number of respondents supporting a post-Labor Day school start.

A 1999 Texas Poll showed the majority of Texans supported a uniform school start date for all Texas public schools and the majority thought the school year should begin around Sept. 1, again with the greatest number of respondents supporting a post-Labor Day school start.

Currently, Texas law prohibits public schools from beginning instruction earlier than the week of Aug. 21. However, the bill also allowed the Texas Education Agency to grant waivers to districts wishing to begin the school year earlier than law recommends.

The statewide phone survey of 1001 randomly chosen Texas registered voters was conducted Feb. 21-24, 2005. The survey has a margin of error of 3.2 percent.

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## 10th Annual County-Wide Garage Sale Set May 14

WACO — Residents of McLennan County have the opportunity to dispose of or purchase items that might otherwise go to waste at this year's county-wide garage sale Saturday, May 14.

"We believe this project continues to be important to McLennan County," states Parker Willson, Executive Director of Keep McLennan County Beautiful, "as it promotes reuse, which in turn helps to save landfill space and conserve

our natural resources which might otherwise be used in the production of new products."

To participate in the free address listing, call 757-3000. The address listings are due by Wednesday, May 11. Additional information can be run with the address for a minimal cost. For more information, call Keep McLennan County Beautiful, Inc. or visit the website. KMCB, (254) 759-1550, <www.keepmclennancountybeautiful.com>.



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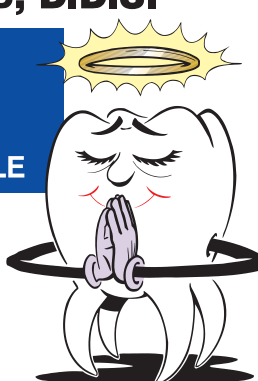
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**Regional Water Planning Group Meets Wednesday**

WACO — The Brazos G Regional Water Planning Group will hold three subregional meetings with the Brazos G Region in April. The meeting in Waco will be held on Wednesday, April 13, at 10 a.m.

The meeting is at the Waco Convention Center's DeCordova Room, 100 Washington Ave. The subregion includes the following counties: Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, Hill, Lampasas, Limestone, McLennan, and Williamson.

These meetings are being held to facilitate input from local entities regarding available water supplies, projected water shortages (needs) and preferred water management strategies to address those needs in the 2006 Brazos G Regional Water Plan.

Draft information for the 2006 Brazos G Initially Prepared Regional Water Plan is posted on the Brazos G website, <www.brazoswater.org>.

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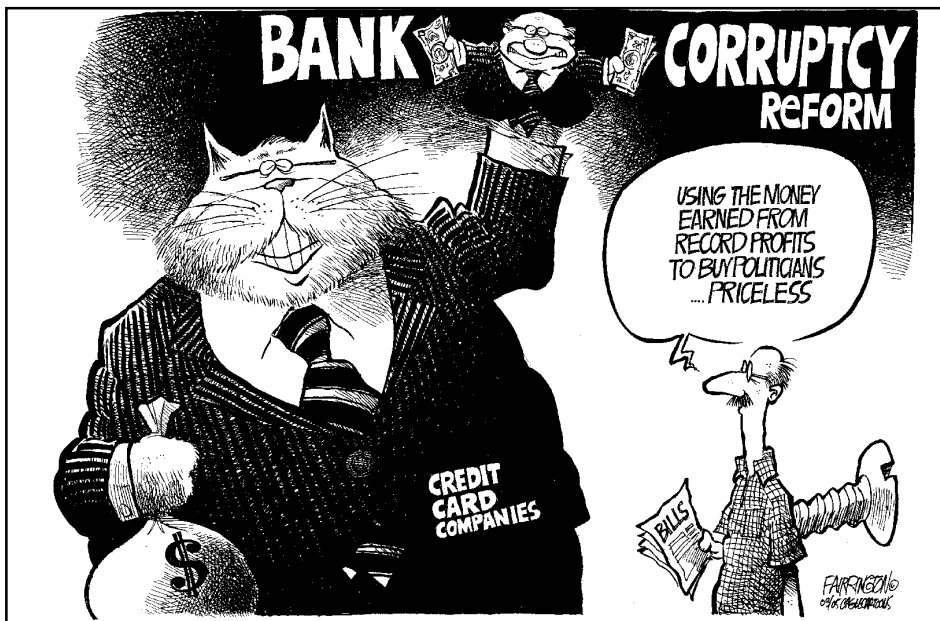


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## Editorial OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

### WTO Says Our Gambling Laws Ain't Legit?

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "It's easy to stop crime. Repeal all the laws."

We just got our butts kicked by Antigua.

Yeah, the guys who humbled the Hun and jumped the Japs just got kneecapped by the Antiguan mob.

Of course they had help from our own Consigliere, the World Trade Organization.

The U.S. used to own the WTO. They were our guys.

They were in on the oil heist, the offshore bank racket and the NAFTA scam.

They've also been on our side in whacking the big Canadian prescription dope cartel and the China Caper.

Now we've been double crossed.

They're trying to give our gambling operations over to some penny-ante Caribbean country with two coconuts and a computer.

Well, maybe three coconuts. Here's the deal.

Back in '95 Big Billy "Kneepads" Clinton cut a free trade deal with the WTO mob that says nobody should oughta interfere with international commerce.

What we meant was, like cuttin' in on the big outfits like the Archer Daniels Midland combine or the Exxon gang.

But internet gambling? Hey! That's our line.

The U.S. has protected *real* gambling with this 1961 law that stops internet gambling. It was originally intended to stop gambling over the telephone, but, hey, you gotta keep up with the times, right. Otherwise we'd still be using Chicago typewriters to get rid of the competition instead of FBI informants and the National Guard.

We always bought off the politicians so's you gotta go to a casino to lose *real* money; what a real live neon package deal with nekkid broads and cheap booze to distract the rubes.

I mean, how's Wayne Newton gonna make a living?

But it's not like Vegas or Atlantic City had a monopoly.

### Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



We even let the Indians in on the act, sorta like makin' up for Manhattan and Cleveland baseball.

But *Antigua*?

They slip this deal in what says they lost money, 90 mil and 4,000 jobs.

They got 67,000 people in the whole country. They countin' the hookers and leg-breakers as employees?

But the WTO went with them, saying our gambling laws that we bought and paid for ain't legit. And it's against Big Billy's free trade agreement to stop foreign countries from gambling on the internet.

Sez there'll be penalties if we don't give over.

*Penalties!* I got your penalties! Talk to Iraq about your penalties!

But they claim they'll bring in the big mobs like China and the EU to back up their penalties.

INTERNET gambling!

Hey, the internet is for wholesome, legit business, like porn and gun sales.

But now we're gonna have to give Antigua a piece of the pie.

I mean, the state lotteries already got to us. Usin' school kids to compete with honest bookies and crap games. Is that fair?

Now we got Antigua on the computer. Who's next? Lichtenstein?

And computer games. Not even real cards you can mark or dice you can load. Just type in a few lines of code and the house gets its haul. Pretty soon we're gonna be runnin' virtual ponies. Won't even have dope bills to pay or jockeys to bribe!

Who's gonna plug a credit card into the computer at 3 a.m. to shoot craps or take the line on Seattle over the Eagles?

Suckers, that's who!

Gambling junkies!

That's *our* territory!

— Editorial —

# Bankruptcy Bill

## Away Goes The Safety Net

The U.S. Senate, with a non-partisan 74-25 vote last week, took a giant step toward removing the bankruptcy safety net that has, in the past, provided a means of survival for individuals who have been victims of unexpected devastation. Senators chose to instead embrace the aggressive missions of gluttonous credit card companies that benevolently fill candidates' re-election coffers with a portion of the 20+ percent interest money that they steal from the public.

This act is but one of several missiles aimed at the judiciary to smear the line dividing the three branches of government — i.e. the checks and balances system that House Majority Leader Tom DeLay so wants erased in order to destroy democracy as we know it.

The guise was to reform the bankruptcy code, propagandizing the lie that too many people use the system to avoid paying what they owe. Rightist senators claimed that bankruptcy has been the pre-destined haven of impulsive shoppers, parents avoiding child support, gamblers, and rich people who outspend their means on purpose, knowing that a bankruptcy sanctuary lies in wait to bail them out.

Not emphasized, of course, was the real purpose of bankruptcy protection, to assist those who suddenly find themselves saddled with exorbitant medical costs, lose their jobs through company mismanagement or greedy "downsizing," or have their pension plans stolen by Republican contributors like WorldCom or Enron. These Americans are those who find themselves living beyond their means or who, from no fault of their own, find difficulty making ends meet while working two jobs, or simply get in over their heads, usually by mistake or due to situations beyond their control.

And think about this: when jobs are transported to other countries in order to evolve a global empire, a strategy upon which the federal government languishes under the antics of President Bush's White House, jobs are lost here, setting up individuals for eminent bankruptcy.

According to Professor Elizabeth Warren, Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, the actual number of consumer bankruptcy cases has declined slightly in the past year. She contends, however, that the problems not being addressed lie with companies in Chapter 11 that cancel pension plans and health benefits, "leaving thousands of families economically devastated." Too, she notes that scandals "have rocked the so-called non-profit credit counseling industry, exposing how tens of thousands of consumers struggling desperately to pay their bills and not file for bankruptcy were cheated."

Warren lists these facts:

- One million men and women each year are turning to bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious medical problem and three-quarters of them have health insurance.

- A family with children is nearly three times more likely to file for bankruptcy than an individual or couple with no children.

- More children now live through their parents' bankruptcy than through their parents' divorce."

A major part of the problem lies with credit card companies that have no qualms about issuing credit to virtually anybody. With their aggressive push to garner huge interest incomes through small print and incomprehensible "legalese," they have seen their profits grow by 163 percent, from \$11.5 billion to \$30.2 billion, says Warren.

It has also been suggested that many so-called "identity thefts" may be scams by the credit card companies themselves to bilk those who refuse to fall for their plastic con games.

Much like the No Child Left Behind fiasco, Congress and the President have determined that one size fits all, the heck with circumstances, and to top it off, homestead exemptions in Texas, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, and South Dakota are no longer safe.

Basically, the new law, if ratified by the House, would make it harder for individuals to file under Chapter 7, the section providing them a means to wipe away their debt. Instead, these people would be forced to file under Chapter 13, with a stringent repayment schedule that would result in garnishment of wages for years and little hope of a fresh start.

As a means to slowly twist the fully inserted knife inside a would-be bankruptcy victim, the Senate has added a provision whereby people faced with bankruptcy would undergo a six-month waiting period to first enable their situation's scrutiny and dissection by credit counselors, whom the individual will have to pay for this "service," and the Rightists plan to sell these service contracts to the credit card companies that want to bilk the public out of every penny.

This scam, of course, is another way for credit card companies to impose greater fees on the victim and, if nothing else, drive up interest amounts that will be owed them, prior to the debtor's enslavement by the Chapter 13 prison.

Of course, as with most legislation these days, he who will suffer the most is the little guy, or the small business. The goal is to increase the size, power, and economic strength of big corporations while delivering pressure and impending extermination to those in the middle and lower financial classes.

It isn't enough that if you are late on a payment a couple of months, your interest rate increases 700 percent, or that a multitude of credit card holders pay to finance/credit companies the principal several times over in interest before they are released, or that credit card companies play with due dates and often don't count payments received as present until they are one day past due. The Senate has now provided the House with a blueprint that is destined to ruin thousands of families in America.

Unfortunately, DeLay, the House's highly unethical majority leader, is salivating at the opportunity to reward some of his primary campaign contributors, namely commercial banks and finance/credit companies, with the ability to more easily loot the public. That's what over half-a-million dollars in gifts buys you.

— Written by W. Leon Smith and Don Fisher



# Senate Education Committee Taking Testimony On SHB 2

The Senate Education Committee began taking testimony this week on the Committee Substitute to House Bill (CSHB) 2, the education reform component of the Senate school finance plan. This legislation puts approximately \$3.2 billion of new money into education over

the next two years.

## CSHB 2:

- Creates a statewide property tax at \$1.00 per \$100 of valuation to replace the current maintenance and operation tax levied by local school district at a rate of up to \$1.50 per \$100 of valuation.

- Maintains the same formula and weights structure, but collapses the two school funding tiers into one tier.

- Increases the bilingual allotment, and increases weighted funding for higher grades.

- Increases funding for full-day pre-kindergarten programs.

- Creates a transportation funding system that will allocate more funding per mile based on linear density of the district that will be phased-in over the next 6 years. The linear density structure will benefit rural districts.

- Allows local enrichment with voter approval of \$.015 phased in at \$.05 a biennium and equalized to the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile.

- Raises salaries by \$1,500 for full-time teachers, counselors, librarians and nurses. This amount includes restoration of the \$500 health insurance supplement that is converted to salary.

- Creates two incentive programs that will provide bonuses tied to student achievement.

- Changes terminology in statute from "textbooks" to "instructional materials." Sets an allotment at \$80 per student and the technology allotment of \$70 per student. Maintains textbook adoption process at SBOE but grants districts the authority to order, purchase and select instructional materials and



technology.

While the bill is not perfect, I believe that it represents positive progress towards reforming our education system. Next week, we will continue to deliberate the legislation and will be considering amendments. To read CSHB 2, click here: <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/commit/c530/handouts05/h040505a.htm>

I look forward to your comments regarding CSHB 2, especially how specific provisions will affect your communities and school districts. To help me better represent your interests, please feel free to provide input by replying to this e-mail or contacting Lauren Whelan in my office (512-463-0122).

Sincerely,  
Kip Averitt

## This Hero Wore A Tuxedo

A 23-year-old pianist from Kilgore gave sagging morale back home a badly needed boost by winning first prize at the International Tchaikovsky competition on April 12, 1958.

Van Cliburn was just what the doctor ordered for a country still down in the dumps over the Soviets' Sputnik space spectacular six months earlier. With American morale lower than at anytime since Pearl Harbor, the curly-headed celebrity was Charles Lindbergh in a tuxedo.

In the rush to claim the superstar as one of their own, Texans tactfully ignored the fact that Harvey Levan Cliburn, Jr. was actually born in Shreveport, La. But his parents soon corrected that "mistake" by moving to Kilgore and raising their gifted child in the Lone Star State.

Van displayed a precocious musical talent at the tender age of three. After nine years of professional instruction from his mother, an accomplished pianist in her own right, he won a contest which resulted in his debut with the Houston Symphony in 1946.

Another prestigious award led to highly acclaimed performances with the New York Philharmonic and the civic orchestras of Cleveland, Buffalo, Denver, and Detroit. His phenomenal success pried open the door to the world-renowned Juilliard School of Music in Manhattan, where he began his studies in 1951.

During a visit to Juilliard by Skitch Henderson, Van auditioned for the "Tonight Show." This chance encounter yielded two guest appearances on national late-night television, which Johnny Carson's band-leader later boasted "kept the kid eating for a year."

By 1957, however, the novelty had worn off for a teenaged prodigy in his early twenties, and a drastic decline in bookings cut his annual income in half. Van was reduced to entertaining the dinner crowd at a Kilgore restaurant in order to pay off a loan at a local bank.

At this critical crossroads in his career, his Juilliard teacher encouraged Van to enter the impending competition in Moscow. Knowing he would be pitted against the finest young pianists on the planet, he practiced eight hours a day in preparation for the challenge of his life.

The Moscow gold medal in April 1958 came complete with hugs and kisses from Nikita Khrushchev, the gruff Soviet strongman better known for his belligerent threat to bury the capitalist West. Although cold-war zealots criticized Van for fraternizing with the communist enemy, he spoke only of his genuine "love affair for the Russian people" and avoided any comment on the Soviet system.

Van's ticker-tape welcome in New York City, first ever for a musician, was followed by equally ecstatic receptions

## This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



in Philadelphia, Washington and his native Texas. People, who did not know Tchaikovsky from tater tots, turned out for a fleeting glimpse of the six-foot-four king of the keyboards.

Before his Moscow magic, Van felt fortunate to earn a hundred dollars a night for tickling the ivories. As a household name, he was now able to command as much as \$10,000 a show. The most amazing proof of his popularity was the unprecedented response to his recording of Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1, the first classical LP to sell a million copies.

But his attempt to satisfy the insatiable appetite of an adoring public did have its downside. When antibiotics failed to cure a chronically sore finger, he had to have the bone surgically scraped. For the next six months, the piano was off-limits.

After more than 20 years of nearly non-stop playing, Van decided to take some time off in 1978. Although he planned on returning to the concert circuit in a year or two, the hard-earned hiatus stretched into a decade and rumors began to make the rounds that he had become a recluse.

The 53-year-old resident of Fort Worth came out of retirement for a special performance in 1987. Van accepted an invitation from President Ronald Reagan to play at a White House dinner for Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Anticipating a formal affair, Van presumed he would be shown the door the moment he finished. But after a relaxed conversation with the president, Mrs. Gorbachev requested an encore.

"I said I would if she would help me," Van told a Texas newspaper, "and impulsively I sat down and began playing and singing 'Moscow Nights.' After a minute, the Gorbachevs joined in, and we wound up having a sing-along."

Back at his hotel later that night, Van fretted he had gone too far in letting his hair down. "To be honest, I was horrified at what I had done."

His mother, always his toughest critic, soothed his fears. He had, after all, started out with classical compositions before going off on the folk-music tangent.

Then she added, "But don't you dare do anything like that again!"

"Best of This Week in Texas History" Vol. V available for \$10.95 plus \$3.25 postage and handling from Bartee Haile, 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581.

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# Life Lessons Come In The Blink Of An Eye

My son looked especially small sitting in one of the empty chairs at the vet's office. His legs, normally under the control of a maniacal puppeteer, hung motionless off the end of his chair. In his hands was a plastic toy; "Mike Wazowski."

The little green blob from Monster's Inc.

As we waited, my son sat staring into Mike's one big eye.

The office was empty except for the two of us, and my wife, who was on the other side of the examination room door.

We knew this day was coming. The fur of the spry Siberian puppy I'd brought



By  
**Ned  
Hickson**  
Siuslaw News

home to my wife after moving into our first apartment 15 years ago had gone from sable to silver.

She was on medication for arthritis.

Bladder control.  
Her pancreas.

I once wrote about the challenges of keeping track of her different medications, and how my wife's system of color-coded pill bottles and matching spread sheets would, if nothing else, leave us blind within a year.

We still have our sight, of course, although over the last year Sasha had lost most of hers, along with her hearing. Yet she was there, twice a day, waiting for her cheese ball of medication. Including this morning, on the last day of her life.

It wasn't until my wife emerged from the exam room that my son allowed himself to break eye contact with his toy. He looked to his mother, then to me before returning his gaze back to "Mike," whose big eye he was now absently thumbing open and closed.

Open.

Closed.

In that moment I had a flash from my own childhood. An image of my first dog — a Boxer named Princess — lying on the kitchen floor, and my father trying to comfort her with a blanket as I watched from deep in the living room. It wasn't peaceful. When it was over, my father brought me in. And though he'd done his best to clean up, there was one

tiny spot of red that he'd missed. I remember staring at it, blinking slowly.

Eyes open, then closed.

Open.

Closed.

I looked to my father, who put a hand on my shoulder and told me to be strong. That dying is a part of life, and that Princess had a good one with us. There was more, but nothing that stuck with me like the feeling I had in that moment, staring at that red dot, feeling my Dad's hand on my shoulder — trying to be strong.

When it came time to say good bye, my wife began to weep.

Again, my son raised his eyes to mine. They were glassy and red, but, like his father, his chin was firmly set. He wanted guidance, to know what he needed to do as a man.

Knowing this, I put my hand on his shoulder.

Blinked slowly.

And cried with my son.

I can only hope that someday, when it matters most, he'll be able to draw on the strength of that moment.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at [nhickson@oregonfast.net](mailto:nhickson@oregonfast.net), or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439.)

## 'Madness' Is Good For Us

North Carolina defeated Illinois last week, officially becoming the best men's college basketball team in the country and ending March Madness. I know it was already April, but that's the nature of this madness — it's so mad that March can't contain it.

For two weeks, millions of people entered office pools, watched game after game on TV, cheered for colleges they never even heard of, and maybe even went to some games and cheered even louder. And for two weeks, those who didn't care about the tournament just shook their heads and wondered, "How can they care so much about something as insignificant as a game with all the serious problems going on in the world?" Perhaps the reason we care so much is precisely because of the problems in the world.

March Madness is a great escape from the real world. For a little while, people had some relief from thinking about family and work problems, the war, social security, and kids shooting up their schools. Maybe the relief was only for a couple of hours or even just a few minutes at a stretch, but this kind of escape from reality is a good thing for all of us. While you're screaming wildly because some 19-year-old kid jumps over another kid to dunk the ball, it's very hard to wonder if you'll be able to afford medical prescriptions in a few years. When you're watching a player somehow defy gravity and fly across the court to make a steal, you're not worried about that weird kid that's dating your daughter.

Am I suggesting turning away from reality, sticking our heads in the sand, and just not paying attention to things that upset us? Yes, I am. Not all the time. Just now and then, and for short bursts. I think it recharges our batteries and makes us stronger to go back and face the real world. Besides, it's fun.

So many of us had such a good time during the tournament that those who don't care about sports should be able to get the same benefits. Everybody should have their version of March Madness.

It doesn't really matter what you do, as long as you find something that you feel passionately about that you can lose yourself in. Choose something other people find frivolous or just don't get. If the people around you aren't thinking, "You've lost your mind, wast-



By  
**Lloyd  
Garver**

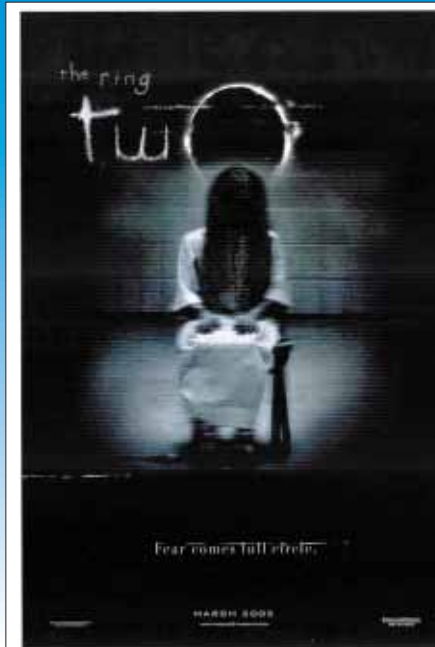
ing so much time on something so unimportant," you probably chose the wrong thing. You might feel passionate about your children, religion, or politics, but you're going to need something else for this kind of diversion. Otherwise, before you know it, you'll be thinking about serious stuff again.

It can be reading, the theater, playing an instrument, sumo wrestling, glass blowing, or pollinating the perfect petunias. But it has to be something that you can't do while you're watching the news on television. Knitting and crossword puzzles are supposed to be good at warding off Alzheimer's, but it's too easy to be distracted by bad news while you're making a scarf or trying to think of a four-letter word for a baby marsupial.

For this to work, you have to get so involved in something that you can't imagine why anyone in the world would dare to call you while you're doing it. You have to get so immersed in this activity while you're doing it that you can't think about anything else. That's why I recommend always turning off the stove before you start doing your thing.

For things like the basketball championship, there can be a letdown once it's over. Right now, many people are feeling lost and asking themselves, "What am I going to act completely irrationally about tomorrow? Will I have to wait another year before I find something to divert me from all the painful things in life?" For those going through this "post-tournament depression," I've got good news: the baseball season started last week.

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier" to "Home Improvement." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's Opinion page and can be reached at [lloydgarver@yahoo.com](mailto:lloydgarver@yahoo.com)



Picking up 6 months after the events in "The Ring", this horror sequel once again stars Naomi Watts as investigative reporter Rachel Keller, who moves with her son from Seattle to a small coastal community in Oregon to escape her haunting memories and start fresh. But evidence at a local crime scene — including an unmarked videotape — seems eerily familiar, and Rachel realizes that the vengeful Samara is back and ore determined than ever to continue her cycle of terror and death.

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# Oh, If He'd Just Go Away

This past week or so I've been doing some studying up on Tom DeLay.

What I've come across indicates that far more people despise the man than admire him. In fact, I could not find one article in which DeLay was actually praised for anything he did.

His detractors far outnumber his supporters. The only positive press he gets emanates either from his own office or "loyal Republican supporters" on the Hill.

After scouring major newspapers across the country, including the HOUSTON CHRONICLE, I was unable to find so much as one quote from any Sugarland area constituent in favor of DeLay.

Not even in any of his numerous self-serving websites.

Let me back up for a moment. Earlier I referred to DeLay's "loyal Republican supporters." This is, by most accounts, an oxymoron when applied to Ol' Tom.

There are some members of the GOP, I'm sure, who are undoubtedly of the same mindset as the Congressional Bossman.

My research indicates, however, that in reality a majority of Congressional Republicans finds it prudent to not displease "The Hammer." Let's face it; he didn't acquire that nickname by accident. This fear of DeLay's wrath and willingness to eviscerate anyone who would dare to disagree with him extends into the Senate, and right up to George W. Bush himself.

However, since his antics, and revelations, of the past several weeks, people like Bill Frist and other seem to be putting some distance between themselves and Ol' Tom.

It seems the only branch of government DeLay can't get under his thumb is the Judiciary — and that infuriates him no end.

His latest tirade aimed at Federal justices following the intrusion into Terri Schiavo's privacy is not the first time he's threatened the Judiciary. In 1997, DeLay was quoted in THE WASHINGTON POST: "The judges need to be intimidated. They need to uphold the Constitution. If they don't behave, we're going to go after them in a big way."

Following the 2000 Presidential Election, it was DeLay staff members who rounded up Capitol Hill aides to go to Miami-Dade County on Nov. 28 and foment a riot to disrupt the recount — at the expense of the Bush campaign. One week later they were back at the elections office and stopped the recount long enough for Karl Rove... er, Bush to get the Supreme Court's lopsided, Constitutionally questionable decision.

Whenever he doesn't like a court decision, DeLay rails on about how the Judges are acting with no regard for the Constitution, and they need to be dealt with harshly. Which is the same reaction of your basic, run-of-the-mill despot.

DeLay's utter contempt for the Courts of this land is nothing less than disgraceful in a member of Congress. Then again, he's a disgrace to Congress in virtually all respects.

Isn't it ironic how those who bully their way far beyond the level of leadership they have any right to achieve attempt to usurp the freedoms of the masses, then invoke the Constitution



Out Of The Blue

By  
**Jerry  
Tenuto**

when things don't go their way?

And from where does DeLay derive his expertise on Constitutional law? It seems to me that any person who rises to the position of Judge in any court, especially at the Federal level, would be a tad more knowledgeable than someone who made his living as an exterminator. Fortunately, Federal Justices are the responsibility of the Senate and not the House.

There is such a laundry list of misuses of office, abuses of power, and just plain shenanigans that I cannot possibly cover them in this limited space.

Here are some of Tom's Greatest Hits:

— 2001 —

- DeLay's daughter was paid nearly \$60,000.00 in "consulting fees," from DeLay political committees, during the latter part of 2000;
- The Congressman used "slush fund" money to attack Democratic Senators who opposed Ashcroft's nomination as Attorney General;
- Judicial Watch announced legal action against DeLay for selling meetings with Bush to GOP donors;
- In recorded phone message DeLay promises small business owners meetings with top Bush officials;
- DeLay follows with the "Physician's Advisory Board" boiler room scam — his people call MDs with the come-on that they've been selected as "honorary co-chairmen" of the board, but the position doesn't exist. The doctors who fall for it throw in \$500.00 to \$1,500.00 each;
- The former exterminator led the march to remove a portion of the education bill requiring schools to notify parents of the use of pesticides;
- DeLay teams with Dennis Hastert to keep "Patient's Bill of Rights," which had already passed in the Senate, from seeing the light of day in the House.

— 2002 —

- The "Physician's Advisory Board" boiler room scam continues without investigation;
- Contributions are floated to DeLay's campaign from Enron and its executives under numerous names and guises;
- Again he teams with Hastert, this time to block campaign finance reform;
- In the absolute height of hypocrisy and arrogance, on April 12, Tom DeLay declares that it is God's will to use him to promote "a biblical worldview" in politics in America. He adds that he pursued Clinton's impeachment because the then President was possessed of "the wrong worldview," whatever that meant. DeLay went on to evangelize that the right way for America was "...only Christianity."

— 2003 —

- He smears, of all people, the president of the International Association of Fire Fighters;
- DeLay and cohorts ram a Republi-



can-friendly, junta-style redistricting plan through the Texas House. When Democrats leave the state to stall the vote, Texas Rangers are sent to Oklahoma to retrieve them. Oklahoma authorities escort the Rangers back south of the Red River. Somehow, Homeland Security forces are utilized to follow the House Dems, while Rangers stake out their families;

- A DeLay fund-raising organization accepts a rather large donation from a Kansas-based energy conglomerate;
- An Enron memo surfaces linking DeLay to the fallen energy giant;
- Bush is steamrolled by his fellow Texan as the House rejects a Senate appropriation for AmeriCorps;
- DeLay holds a vote on Medicare open for three hours, six to eight times the normal length, until he gets the numbers needed to defeat the measure.
- In recent weeks, numerous other unethical and, most likely illegal, acts by Tom DeLay have come to the forefront:
- Three trips abroad, at the most recent count, paid for by private interests, including foreign companies;
- More payments of campaign and political action funds to his wife and daughter, to the tune of \$500,000 since 2001. That's five times what Hilary Rodham Clinton earned from Whitewater, and this wasn't necessarily from rich investors, rather the contributions of hardworking constituents;
- For all his rhetoric about how Terri Schiavo should continue to be fed through a tube, Tom was on the yes side of pulling the plug when his father was debilitated following an accident.

I never cease to be amazed at how this swell leader of our Congress, this sterling defender of our Constitution, every

time one of these questions arises he has an answer. It's the same excuse all the devils who hide behind their oversized Bibles and Christian-Conservative Republicanism use — "They're just out to get me and my family, those leftist Liberal Democrats and their minions in the media."

You know what? We ARE out to get you, because you're bad for the nation.

Chicago Democrat Dan Rostenkowski was terrific to his constituents, beloved by an incredibly large majority of them. All he did was misuse his mail privileges, so you and Newt and company stripped him of his office — then sent him to prison.

Newt couldn't hold a candle to you for sheer chutzpah or chicanery, but he was ousted.

Yet, we're still stuck with you, Tom. Hopefully, not for long.

According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1963 edition, (a resource tool I've relied on for 40 years), the definition of "nefarious" is: flagrantly wicked or impious. It was more easily defined back then, because Tom DeLay has managed to bring added meaning to it since rising to a level of power he never should have achieved.

His impiety increases exponentially with declarations such as he's going to make the United States into the type of Christian country that God wants Tom DeLay to make it. Guess what, Tom? The first half of the Bible belongs to the Jews, and was written 2,000 years before Christ's arrival. There's room enough in this country for everyone.

Tom DeLay represents approximately two-tenths of one-percent of our Nation's population. The time has come to break his stranglehold of terror over the other 99.8% of Americans.



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

President Bush continues to embarrass anyone with a brain who is not in a permanent vegetative state. After sending our troops to Iraq to be killed, based on phony claims about WMD, he went on to say that he would do anything to protect our troops, except, apparently, provide them with properly armored vehicles and protective vests, that he is just now getting around to expediting, but only after being publicly called to account by our troops. Soldiers have died as a direct result of Bush's negligence. Then there is his record from Texas where he mocked someone on death row before sealing the person's execution.

So what did he go to great lengths to emphasize in the Terri Schiavo case? That we should "error on the side of life."

What disgusting hypocrisy.

Joel Brainard, Niskayuna, NY

To The Editor:

*Saving Social Security*

Has anyone considered diverting 5-percent of the total budget slated for the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict and "restoration" towards saving the Social Security system?

*Public education's responsibility*

I've long pontificated that if the state doesn't want to assume its constitutional responsibility to provide a quality education to every child, then legislators need to change the law. Lawmakers appear to be looking at doing just that.

If legislators want to privatize education, that's fine only if taxpayers don't have to foot the bill for it. Otherwise, legislators simply want to cover their own butts for not providing adequate financing during the past decade. Case in point: It is the legislature that created the current emergency plight of public education by having set up a financing system that ensures educational inequality among economic classes and is doomed to fail.

Furthermore, if privatization of public education is our next step, legislators had better put into place a regulated system of tuition and finance costs. We need only observe what has occurred under the recent deregulation of higher education tuition costs to note the critical nature of this issue. Privatization of public education brings along a whole set of other issues and problems. Ongoing legislative inept short-term thinking is incapable of determining and implementing an entirely new educational system. In addition, operating two parallel educational systems under the state rubric, public and private, is doomed for failure. If the state cannot successfully manage one system, how is it possible for it to manage two?

However, if the real concern is to educate every child equally (which it isn't) then privatization is not the educational road to recovery. Privatizing education will merely ensure the inequality between the "haves" and the "have-nots" within our society.

Privatizing education is another misguided special interest notion legislators have selected so they don't have to

assume the constitutional responsibility they have been diverting for the past decade. Isn't it clear yet to everyone that legislators are not the group needed to develop a quality functional public school system? They have proven beyond a doubt that they are incapable of doing so.

Peter Stern, Driftwood, TX

To The Editor:

We are now witnessing an epidemic of corruption in U.S. defense/rebuilding contracts. According to the CPA's latest report, 38 potential criminal cases associated with the Iraq contracts are still under investigation, while 75 had been closed or referred to other investigative agencies. The Defense Criminal Investigative Service had 16 open cases as of the beginning of October.

Some members of Congress believe the corruption has become enough of a problem that it is time to establish a special oversight committee. A bipartisan coalition of Senators led by Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, and Larry Craig, R-Idaho, introduced a resolution in September to re-establish Harry Truman's famous WWII committee on war profiteering.

The litmus test of the proposal will likely come when the Bush administration is expected to push for another appropriation.

Before the end of World War II, former president Harry Truman chaired a non-partisan committee while he was in Congress which monitored defense contracts necessitated by the war and essentially avoided the kind of massive waste, fraud and abuse we're seeing reported in the contracts to first devastate, and then rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, today's GOP-held government branches will take on these problems just about the same time that pigs sprout wings and begin to soar. It is beyond coincidence that their methods of offshore banking and tax shelters were secured into place by the neoconservatives well before the invasion, methods which permitted profiteers to re-route their "booty" while avoiding all monitoring by the Fed and dodging corporate U.S. taxes.

But is it possible that the neocons designed their war machine with the specific ability to feed cash directly from their profiteers into their political crony's offshore accounts? Well, when former Texas GOP Senator Phil Gramm was Chief Legal Counsel at the Senate Banking Committee for years he actively blocked efforts to stem Enron's drain of their massive trust fund account while simultaneously thwarting U.S. intelligence efforts to trace bin Laden terrorist funding prior to 911. Coincidence or not, it appears that he abruptly retired from his long and illustrious career in Congress only to take a position with UBS Warburg International Bank where he could help his international corporate clients reroute windfall profits from their "emergency" and "pre-emptive" invasion of Iraq. As it turns out, there were no WMD, and there was never a pending threat to the U.S. Yet their "emergency/pre-emptive" defense contracts had been technically justified and a tsunami of war contracts slammed

into place without the regulation of normal competitive processes. Now we may never know how much profiteering money gets grafted back into our political system, or even trace where the cash actually went, because today's GOP has decided to put a moratorium on virtually all investigative arms of our government regarding Pentagon contracts now that the neoconservatives hold the reigns of office.

Was it due to rampant graft or simply Congressional incompetence that they never mentioned Condoleezza Rice's failure as Bush's chief of the Iraq Stabilization Group when they approved her for Secretary of State position? Remember when Bush made his National Security Adviser head of his spanning new committee? Few reported that as NSA chief she was automatically exempt from all Congressional oversight. What her "stabilization" group physically did with our budget appropriations today gets very little press coverage in the U.S., possibly because large portions of it resides in the offshore coffers of those who legislated it to her in the first place. The \$8.8 billion reportedly missing has yet to be found, and, funny thing, it appears that no one is really in charge of even looking for it.

Is it just a coincidence that Rice's neocon - contrived "Group" apparently produced exactly the opposite effect of Harry Truman's WWII Committee?

Coincidence or not, it was either another colossal U.S. Defense mistake, or else it's evidence of rampant cronyism which was contrived by those who are still running the show. Either way, the GOP supports their every move, no matter how bad, by essentially eviscerating Congress' long-standing ethics standards.

In retrospect it is now blaringly apparent that horrendous mistakes were made by the U.S. media regarding Cheney's Iraq invasion. The result has allowed rampant cronyism and continued mismanagement of our defense/rebuilding contracts. During the runup to the war, and now during the execution of the occupation the U.S. media's inattention and lack of professionalism has not only cost us greatly in both lives and human suffering, it has taken a huge toll on American media's credibility. Across the country, we, the people, are waking up to the Iraq scam thanks to email and the independent news sites on the internet.

It's too late for an apology or even an explanation from anyone in the established media about how the neocons pulled this whole thing off and remain in control. I'm just wondering what you, as a bona fide member of the U.S. media, intend to do about this continuing situation?

P.M.

Dear Editor,

Re: Letter from Frank Bernabei

Once one gets by the "there is nothing more radical than a convert" factor of Mr. Bernabei's letter about Darwin, it is frightening to learn that he (and presumably others) take at face-value opinions proffered by "creation scientists." It is worth repeating that, with religion and unlike science, beliefs can be quite different from knowledge. We may believe as strongly as we want that "one" is "three" or "red" is "blue" or the world is flat, but that belief does not make it so. And neither do polls!

It would be appropriate for Mr. Barnabei to discuss and research his Bible-centric approach to evolution in

the context of his church or its meetings - and leave the teaching of scientific facts to the qualified at our educational institutions.

Respectfully,

Thomas F. Parker, N.Y. City

To The Editor:

I am writing to congratulate the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST and its staff for your wonderful and courageous journalistic work "deep in the heart of Texas." I first learned about your publication today in an excellent article in THE TIMES OF LONDON newspaper. It's a real shame one has to turn to a foreign publication to learn about your newspaper's fine work.

I applaud your courage in exercising your First Amendment right to disagree with President Bush and his policies in (or near) his own hometown of Crawford, Texas. Your publication embodies the true spirit of Texas "hell raising" that has traditionally been a hallmark of your state.

I was disgusted—though not necessarily surprised—by your publication's appalling treatment by local citizens after your editorial staff, led by Editor-in-Chief Leon Smith, endorsed Senator John Kerry in last year's U.S. presidential elections. I, too, live in an area of our country (northeast Louisiana) that is a bastion of Bush support. Consequently, I know first-hand the harassments that are frequently directed these days against anyone who dares to speak out publicly against President Bush and his administration's policies. You are not alone.

I phoned your offices today and subscribed to the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST's online edition, and I look forward to reading your newspaper each week. Keep up the good work and your faith in principled journalistic dissent. You are our country's true patriots in what is still, after all, the land of the free and the home of the brave. Let's all work to make sure it stays that way.

With best regards,

M. Cregg McCullin, Esq.

Honorable President Bush,

On behalf of the immigrants in Dallas, North Texas, Texas, and throughout the United States, it is my honor to address you.

First of all, let me extend our appreciation to you for the interest you have shown in negotiating with the president of Mexico, the Honorable Vicente Fox. Immigrants throughout the United States are pleased to see that you are working with him to address the situation of immigrants here by providing immigrants with legal status.

Secondly, let me express our profound concern about the REAL ID legislation passed by the United States House of Representatives. Frankly, we believe this is a REAL BAD IDEA. Forcing undocumented immigrants further into the shadows by denying drivers licenses will only worsen the situation in the United States for both citizens and immigrants alike.

Finally, in our years of work with and for immigrants we continue to see that the best solution for immigrants in the United States is to grant permanent legal status, that is, amnesty, for all immigrants living and working in this great country.

I look forward to hearing from your office. I wish you the best in your efforts to provide legal status to immigrants in the United States.

Sincerely,

Mario Fernandez  
President, Center for Human Rights



# 'What Does It Mean To Be An American?' Documentary In The Works

SANTA FE, N.M. — Steve Jones is on a mission — to learn what Americans think it means to be an American.

To that end, he is traveling throughout the United States on a roadtrip designed to capture on tape the impressions of Americans from numerous walks of life and to present his findings in a documentary that he hopes will see wide distribution once it is completed.

Jones, a native Oregonian, says he was sitting in a cafe in London, just after the recent Presidential election, asking himself this question:

"I was at a table outside, on a cold November morning, enjoying the fresh air, reading some of the foreign press covering the election results back home. I put down the paper and said to myself, genuinely confused, 'What the hell does it mean to be an American, anyway?'"

Jones says he based this confusion on the observations of what he had seen in the media over the past several months of the campaign and it got him thinking, "I seems as though everyone has his own idea about what it means to be an American, and about what is right — and wrong. I'd listen to one person articulate his viewpoint, while his ideological opponent dug his heels in further, then fired back with equal contempt. It seemed like it was all just one big argument. And I wanted to have a different conversation, one that actually led somewhere. One that might require us to shut up and listen to each other."

So Jones sold his loft in Portland, put his pos-

sessions in storage, packed himself and his dog into a newly acquired 12-year-old 34-foot home and hit the road, to talk to Americans about America.

He began his journey in Washington, D.C. with the presidential inauguration. While not able to visit all 50 states, he is intent on covering a lot of ground and was in Central Texas last week.

"My mission is to capture and understand as many viewpoints as possible, necessitating a journey north, south, east, and west," he said. "One that includes conversations with seven-year-olds, 70-year-olds...white, black, red, blue, and purple... Republicans and Democrats. After all, is being an American a partisan issue, or is the meaning of America something that transcends party lines?"

The website <www.shutupandlisten.us> outlines the project's mission, chronicles the experiences on the road through photography, video clips, and journal entries, and encourages site visitors to provide their own perspective via the website on what they think it means to be an American.

Jones says the film should be complete this summer and he hopes to include the soundtrack of local musicians discovered along the journey, adding another layer of texture into the film and providing exposure to the musicians contributing their original work.

Jones told to The Iconoclast last Friday that his travels thus-far have produced some interesting perspectives on the meaning of America, which is making his expedition worthwhile.



STEVE JONES has been traveling the United States collecting input from all segments of the population in search of what it means to be an American. He hopes to compile the videos into a documentary that is projected for completion this summer. More on his journey is available at the website <www.shutupandlisten.us>.

## Wet Work — Part 2

We have a big, white bull calf that should have gone to the auction last month, but he gave us the slip. During the last two weeks, he has proved to be Big Bag's latest and possibly best protégé. He has given new meaning to that saying about grass being greener on the other side. There he was with the

herd (that day I had opened up the wheat field, wearing one dry shoe and one mushy one). And he somehow felt compelled to push out of the safety of the exterior fence to sample the wild onions in the bar ditch along the road. I hope they gave him wicked indigestion. I have named him "Hamburger," for obvious reasons.

Perhaps you saw this white calf calmly

grazing the roadside last Thursday through Sunday? He escaped five times in three days. We'd get a call, put him back, do a quick and dirty repair job, and before we turned around, he'd be out again. He found every weak spot in that old fence, and I could just imagine Big Bag coaching him from the sidelines.

Two Saturdays ago was our first real opportunity to do serious damage control. We were furiously fencing in the rain, clearing brush and trees, running new wire, pounding T-posts, clipping and stapling it all in place, twisting on staves (one of the most ingenious inventions of all time, if you ask me). I think we changed into dry clothes three times before 4 p.m.. The weather wasn't quite as bad that Sunday, thank goodness, because we put in many hours then as well.

This past weekend, there was no sun, so we were just damp instead of soaked. Hey—I'm not complaining. Things could have been much worse! (Like lots of other folks, we have done this in rain AND both freezing and/or windy conditions). We have gone through a lot of work clothes and boots in the last couple of weeks. There are several pairs of wet gloves and boots on the front porch, the back porch, in the library, in the bedroom, in the kitchen, in front of the old Dearborn heater. With no sunshine, things just aren't drying. One pair of boots has mildewed. Or maybe that's a salt stain. Who can be sure?

Even after the stuck shoe episode last week, I apparently wasn't finished getting wet. Because of all the rain, standing and flowing water, Zack had been forced to serve the cows' dinner one afternoon in a rather out of the way spot. There the land was still high and dry enough for the tractor. Now cows are creatures of habit. They were accustomed to eating in certain places. Unless they hear the tractor and follow that bale of hay to a different spot, they never think to look

## Rustic Ramblings



By Gene Ellis

Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

somewhere else. By the next morning, the herd hadn't found those bales, and they were starting to complain.

My mission was to lead the cattle to the hay before they broke another gap or went through more fence. This time I smugly congratulated myself on remembering my waterproof boots. No more wet feet for me! Those lace-up, Gore-Tex, camo boots had kept my feet warm and dry all winter as I waded through creeks and streams all over this ranch. I love them!

Stinky the dog and I walked toward the hay, probably a half-mile from the house, calling the cows behind us. It worked like a charm, like something from *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. But the hay was beyond the same creek where I'd almost lost my shoe a few days before, and the water was much deeper this second time. Stinky swam and I walked.

We led the cattle to the bales of Sudan, and walked back to the house, mission accomplished. All that day, the hay kept their little bovine minds off of green wheat fields and tender, new rye grass. They stayed put and ate. And ate. And ate. The white bull calf didn't even seem to miss his wild onions. And I learned a very interesting fact that day about my favorite waterproof boots and that whole warm / dry thing. It only works when the water isn't deeper than the boot is tall.

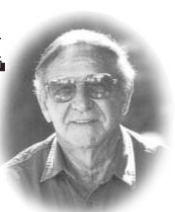
## THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

### COWBOY CORNER



Come along, boys, and listen to my tale,  
I'll tell you all my troubles on the ol' Chisholm Trail.  
Come a-ti yi yippee yippee yea yippee yea  
Come a-ti yi yippee yippee yea

By Billy Cate



& Jack Carlton

An estimated 25,000 to 35,000 men trailed six to ten million head of cattle and a million horses northward from Texas to Kansas and other markets between the end of the civil War and the turn of the century. Judging from the literary remains housed in range archives and libraries, memories of the experience lingered far longer in the minds of the men and boys involved than did the tracks of the longhorn cattle hooves upon the landscape of the great plains and beyond.

Besides drudgery and hardship, the long drive promised excitement and danger for some; for many, a trip across the prairie behind a herd of Texas longhorns was the most unforgettable experience of their lives. Years later, memories of raging rivers, unpredictable stampedes, and sudden violence still stirred the blood of these now older

and wiser men as they clustered together at old settlers' days and county fairs recounting days that would never pass again and yearning for a simpler life in a world grown complex.

"Cowboys," observed one novelist descended from a long and distinguished line of Texas cowpunchers, "are romantic, extreme romantics, and ninety-nine out of a hundred of them are sentimental to the core. They are oriented to the past and face the present only under duress, and then with extreme reluctance." The trail drivers of Texas were no exception, as their numbers steadily declined, the history and folklore created by these drovers threatened to disappear as well. (Excerpts from *The Trail Drivers of Texas*.)

We will keep the cowboy alive in our minds forever, here on the Chisholm Trail. *That's the Cowboy Way!*



The Lone Star **ICONOCLAST** Entertainment

# 'Tunes, Not Tolls' Concert Planned In Austin April 21

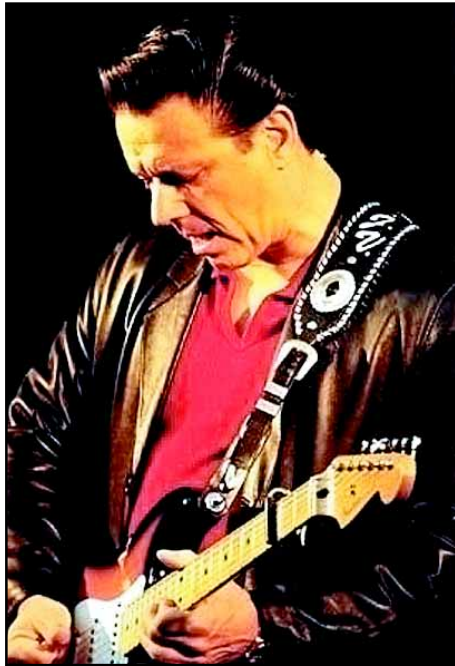
AUSTIN — Jimmie Vaughan, Grammy award recipient and international roots-blues rock sensation, is among the headliners at an upcoming concert benefitting a movement to prevent toll roads in Texas.

The Austin Toll Party and People for Efficient Transportation will hold the concert on Thursday, April 21, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Austin, with advance tickets available at \$25 each.

According to Sal Costello, founder of People for Efficient Transportation PAC, all proceeds will go to the legal costs of preventing tolls placed on roads already paid for with taxpayer dollars. He notes that the costs of tolls for the average person per year is estimated at \$2,000 to \$4,000.

"While currently the toll focus is on Central Texas, it is urgent to alert the people that this region is merely a 'pilot program' for the rest of the state. If tolls happen here on already paid for roadways, they will happen elsewhere. The time to stop unprecedented toll plans is now," he said.

For ticket information, log on to



Jimmie Vaughan

<[www.austintollparty.com](http://www.austintollparty.com)>.



Los Lonely Boys will be coming home to San Angelo

## Los Lonely Boys Due In San Angelo For 'Cinco de Mayo' Celebration

SAN ANGELO — Grammy Award winning Los Lonely Boys take their Brotherhood Tour with Ozomatli and Calexico to their hometown of San Angelo, Texas for a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration at the San Angelo River Stage on May 5. All tickets, designated general admission, are on sale at the San Angelo Convention Center for \$26 for an

outdoor, all ages show at San Angelo's River Stage, a scenic venue on the banks of the Concho River.

Fresh off their win for Best Pop Vocal Duo or Group in the 47th Annual Grammy Awards, Los Lonely Boys kicks off the Brotherhood Tour with fellow Grammy winners Ozomatli and Calexico on May 3 and land in San Angelo on May 5 to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* with their hometown fans.

Los Lonely Boys are a family tradition. Hailing from San Angelo, Texas, the three Garza brothers, Henry, Jojo and Ringo, have been making music together since they were small children and have more than a decade of professional experience under their belts. Los Lonely Boys write, sing and play music drawn from diverse sources, blending them into a seamless style that pays homage to influences that include Tex-Mex, country, blues and rock pioneers. Los Lonely Boys has developed a reputation as one of the most exciting live acts in Texas.

"The people of San Angelo are excited to welcome Los Lonely Boys home for this special *Cinco de Mayo* engagement," said Pamela Miller, vice president of the San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The San Angelo River Stage is the perfect outdoor venue for enjoying the sights and sounds of Los Lonely Boys, Ozomatli and Calexico. We encourage fans to make the road trip to San Angelo to enjoy the concert and take in all that the city has to offer while here."

Tickets can be purchased at the San Angelo Convention Center, Elite Physique or Blair's Western Wear or by calling 325-653-9577. Information

about lodging, dining and activities in San Angelo can be located by contacting the San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau at 325-655-4136 or at their website: <[www.sanangelo.org](http://www.sanangelo.org)>.



Steel Train

# Steel Train Releasing Debut Recording

## *Twilight Tales From The Prairies Of The Sun*

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. — New York City based quintet Steel Train is

set to release their full-length debut *Twilight Tales From The Prairies Of*

*The Sun* on Drive-Thru Records on April 19.

*Twilight Tales* was recorded with producer Stephen Barncard (Grateful Dead, Crosby, Stills and Nash) at the legendary Prairie Sun Studio in Northern California.

The sprawling open-air ranch was the perfect backdrop for Steel Train to explore their unique style of music that effortlessly flows from rock, country, bluegrass, funk, Latin, and jam. Steel pedal pioneer Gene Parsons (Flying Burrito Brothers, Byrds) and famed mandolinist Dave Grisman (Grateful Dead) are special guest performers on *Twilight Tales*. The lush album artwork by John Craig (Smashing Pumpkins) completely captures the whimsy of the recording and the beauty of the music.

Steel Train formed in 2002 when Jack Antonoff (vocals, guitar, piano) met Scott Irby-Ranniar (vocals, percussion) and the two become friends and collaborators. They eventually enlisted the talents of Matthew Goldman (guitar), Matthias Gruber (drums), and Evan Winiker (bass) and the band was formed

with the vision of creating timeless music. The release of *Twilight Tales* is the anticipated follow-up to 2003's *For You My Dear* and 1969 EPs. Steel Train's music is marked by exquisite guitar work and sweetly insightful lyrics.



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