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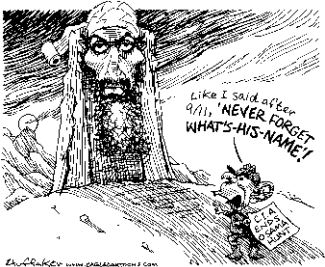
Vol. 7, No. 28

JULY 12, 2006

75¢ Per Copy

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# The Lone Star ICONOCLAST



## Inside The Satirist's Studio

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**MEETING JIM** — After Jim Wallis, the publisher of *Journeys* magazine, recently gave writer Becky Garrison a signed copy of his book *God's Politics* at Book Expo 2006, she gave him a copy of the May/June 2006 *Wittenburg Door* featuring the infamous East-West Social Justice cover pitting Rod Sider against Jim Wallis/Tony Campolo. Their conversation went something along these lines -

**WALLIS:** You guys are always stirring things up.  
**GARRISON:** And you don't? **WALLIS:** Touche.



# Sheehan To Return To Crawford This August

**CAMP CASEY II** — After several months of touring the United States and Europe, peace activist Cindy Sheehan is scheduled to return to the Crawford area this August to rekindle her vigil here the year prior.

The length of Sheehan's stay at Camp Casey II, the site of her month-long encampment to confront President Bush on the occupation of Iraq, is still up in the air, but organizers plan to set up two weeks worth of workshops for budding activists there from Aug. 16 to Sept. 2.

Two weeks ago Sheehan and four other activists sued McLennan County in state district court over an ordinance banning camping and parking near President Bush's ranch. The suit calls for the ordinance to be repealed.

County officials at the time of the ordinance's passing last year said that the law was needed for the safety of residents and protestors along the 14 narrow roads that weave around the countryside a few miles from Crawford. From July 4 to the start of her return to Crawford, Sheehan will participate in a "rolling fast" in order to raise awareness of the current U.S. occupation in Iraq. With her "Troops Home Fast" protest are an assortment of celebrities, entertainers, and political figures, such as Susan Sarandon, Sean Penn, Danny Glover, Willie Nelson, and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

It is estimated that over 3,000 from across the United States and 18 countries have joined the fast.

According to a new Gallup poll released last week, it would seem though that more Americans side with Sheehan's plea for the U.S. government to order its troops home. The poll

conducted in June found that two of three people want troops withdrawn from Iraq. Thirty-one percent say they want it

done fast. Another third of those polled want the troops to "finish what we started."

"Suggestions that the United

States engage in some type of gradual withdrawal increase significantly as educational level increases." wrote Gallup's di-

rector, Frank Newport, in his report.

For more information on the Aug. 16 - Sept. 2 Camp Casey Workshops, visit the Gold Star Families For Peace website.

INFO  
<http://www.gsfp.org/article.php?list=type&type=21>

## C.I.A. Unit Stops Hunting For Bin Laden

**WASHINGTON** — The Central Intelligence Agency unit charged with finding Osama bin Laden and his network was disbanded late last year after a decade of pursuit. Instead, the agency has chosen to redirect its efforts to combat foreign terrorists through different means.

Intelligence officials last Monday confirmed the closure of the "Alec Station" unit and the reassignment of its analysts inside the CIA. The unit's demise was first reported on National Public Radio.

The change shows a re-prioritization within the agency, that bin Laden and Al Qaeda are not seen as a threat to the United States, according to Michael Scheuer, a former senior C.I.A. official who commanded the unit long before the bin Laden became well-known to everyday Americans.

Still, agency officials insist that the pursuit of bin Laden remains a large focus, though the tactics have changed. Officials now feel that their efforts are best trained on regional happenings, not single groups or individuals.



## 100 March Against British Petroleum In Texas City

**TEXAS CITY** — About 100 people concerned about the health and safety of oil refinery workers as well as the pocket books of millions of working families marched in protest of BP PLC in Texas City last Tuesday.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson was at the head of the march calling for an end to oil price, worker, and consumer exploitation at the site of one of the Texas' worst refinery accidents. Last year an explosion at the BP refinery there left 15 workers dead and over 170 injured.

In a speech that was cut short by rain, Jackson mentioned the workers' deaths, adding that he felt the workers' safety is in danger there, even though the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health

Administration fined the company \$21.3 million over safety rules violations after the accident.

The black leaders involved in the BP boycott, one of whom is the Rev. Al Sharpton, singled out because no executive there are black nor are there any black owners in its distribution network. They did so before federal investigators announced that the Britain-based company manipulated prices to drive heating costs up for rural American families.

Jackson told the Associate Press, however, that the effects of oil cross all Americans.

"If you're white, black or brown, we are all victims of the energy monopolization, price gouging and greed. The Ameri-

can public has been too silent. We must fight back to drive down the price of gas," he said.

In a related story, an ExxonMobil chemical plant suffered an explosion that harmed none of the 23 workers there last week. The investigation into the blast and fire might take weeks, a spokesperson for the company told The Baytown Sun.

The explosion shook nearby houses, but no hydrocarbons were released outside the plant's borders, and all the fires were extinguished within 45 minutes, said the spokesperson.

Letters written in English and Spanish from the plant manager were distributed by hand throughout the neighborhood apologizing for the incident.



The Lone Star Iconoclast (USPS 022-833) is published weekly, on Wednesdays, by Smith Media, Inc., P.O. Box 420, Crawford, TX 76638 and 310 W. 5th St., P.O. Box 569, Clifton, TX 76634

Periodicals Postage is Paid at Clifton, TX 76634.

**SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:** McLennan & Bosque Counties, one year: \$40; Elsewhere, one year: \$45. Give old address when requesting change of address.

**POSTMASTER:** Please send address change to: The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 353, Clifton, TX 76634.

**DEADLINES:** 5 p.m. Fridays.

Telephone (All Departments) — (254) 675-3634

Fax No. — (254) 675-4090 • Email: [news@lonestaricon.com](mailto:news@lonestaricon.com)

Web Newspaper: [www.lonestaricon.com](http://www.lonestaricon.com)

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# Inside The Satirist's Studio

## Interview With Becky Garrison, Religion Writer

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

NEW YORK CITY — You can make a solid, be it biblical, argument that God likes laughter.

In the Old Testament, an angel of God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his own son, Isaac, whose very name in the Hebrew language loosely translated means “laughter.”

Case closed, right?

Not quite.

Fast forward to the New Testament when the world is introduced to God's Son Jesus Christ — a real fun guy who was always partying with whores, lepers, and non-Jews (read: non-humans).

Let me tell you, I have yet to come across a single frat boy who could turn water into wine AND still be sober enough to include the nerds in the shin-dig.

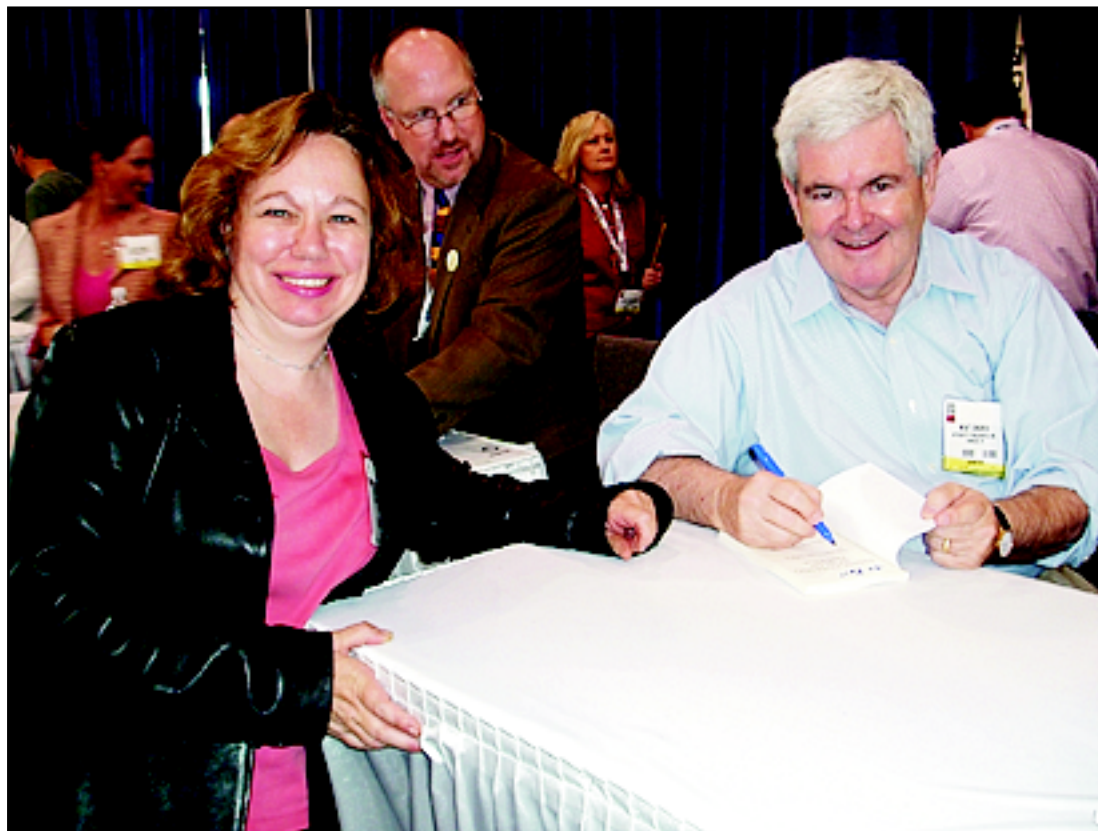
Strange as it all may be two thousand years later, followers of Christ still can't seem to get along to even get along — though most of them agree that God pulled one over on Satan by resurrecting His Boy from the dead.

Well, that's where Becky Garrison enters the story.

Granted, this former debutante from North Carolina is not a character found in the Bible, but her work can be traced to the Dallas-based *Wittenberg Door* — the world's pretty much only religious satire magazine. Over the last 12 years there, she has risen to the position of senior contributing editor, interviewing such figures as Dick Morris, William F. Buckley, Jr., Molly Ivins, and Jim Wallis.

This past April, Garrison came out swinging against not only the Religious Right but also the Spiritual Left in her book *Red and Blue God, Black and Blue Church: Eyewitness Accounts of How American Churches are Hijacking Jesus, Bagging the Beatitudes, and Worshipping the Almighty Dollar* (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

“We're all struggling with the question, “What does it mean to be Christians in the 21st century? I think that's the right question to be asking. I'm not saying I have all the answers. I'm not saying we do everything correctly, but I think that's the question we need to be asking,” she explained. “Don't let other people define what a Christian is. What do we say being a Christian is? How do we go back to



**MEETING NEWT** — Writer Becky Garrison met former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich during his book-signing at Book Expo 2006. “Wonder if he'd be smiling if I handed him a copy of the May/June 1997 *Wittenberg Door*, which contained my interview with Newt's sister and featured Newt in drag on the cover,” Garrison said afterward. “Also, he might not like the May/June 1995 *Door* where I penned the Christian Congressional Prayer Primer after Newt & Co. took out the Contract on America. I revised this prayer primer following the 2004 election and featured it in my book.”

rereading the Gospel, and figuring out what it means to be a Christian?”

THE ICONOCLAST'S Nathan Diebenow recently spoke with the one-time member of the Young Republicans, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, and the Junior League to chat about the limits of religious satire, Bush-bashing, conspiracy theorists, and predictions for the 2006 and 2008 U.S. elections.

ICONOCLAST: Your \$22.95 208-page book has been on the bookstore shelves for a couple of months now. What's it like to make money off the Lord Jesus Christ?

BECKY GARRISON: I don't view it so much as making money as fulfilling a calling. That's a question you could ask anyone who is a pastor or anyone involved in any kind of ministry. I view it more as a calling than as a way to make money. If I wanted to be profitable, I could have gone into far more successful forms of Christian marketing and made significantly

larger amounts of money.

ICONOCLAST: I ask because that's a question I imagine Stephen Colbert of Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report* would ask you.

GARRISON: And that's the response I would give. If you really want to make money, you don't do it by becoming a religious satirist and making fun of the very idols that could make you rich. (laughs) You have to pay your rent, but to do something as a calling, you try to find ways to finance it because you love it versus trying to capitalize your gains. I'm never going to hit Joel Olsteen's income level ever. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: Poking fun at someone's beliefs or the assumptions that surround institutions can be risky business. When do you think a religious satirist can go too far? What's the line?

GARRISON: It's one of the most difficult things for me. I get on my knees a lot and pray about “Am I really going after someone who I feel is using re-

ligion as personal gain and profit?” So if I'm going after someone, I'm not going to go after the average person in the pews who might believe, for example, what someone says. I'm going after someone like Benny Hinn who is actually harming people. It's a very fine line. It's an occupational hazard.

ICONOCLAST: But nothing is sacred on earth, right? There's nothing here in the material world that can lead to our eternal salvation — humor included. So you might as well go for it, right?

GARRISON: You also have to bear in mind the fact why someone is believing what they are believing. The average person in the pew, they might, for example, believe in Benny Hinn because of a list of psychological reasons. I don't want to make fun of someone's psyche and put them in a very damaged state.

On the other hand, it's the people that prey on those people whom I'm going to go after. The actual person being preyed

upon, my heart goes out to those people. To be in a situation in which you really believe that Pat Robertson, Benny Hinn, and all these other charlatans are going to be your savior versus the teachings of Jesus Christ, you've got yourself in that situation I feel for you. I really feel for them. But as I said, it's the people who are preying on them that I'm going after.

ICONOCLAST: In that case, was writing your book easy or difficult for you? Were there any challenges?

GARRISON: The challenge was that my publisher gave me three and a half months to write it. That was the first challenge. Basically, you had to clear your whole slate. That would be a challenge for any author to turn out a book that was required to be this researched in three and a half months.

Secondly, I had to be really careful and praying that I was not going after what I considered to be the good guys, the people I thought who were following Christ like me. We're going to screw up because we're human. It's the nature of the beast, but are they on the right path? Are they trying to do the right thing? Or are they following some other god? None of us are exempt from the little wormwood pecking at us, trying to convince us to go the other direction. It's when someone is just choosing to *really* go off the path that I'm going to be liable to slam them.

It's also making sure that you don't do what I would call an ad hominem attack. Are you criticizing Bush for what he did that was really worthy of attack? A lot of these little slams I see which are sometimes attacking him for stuff that he's not even responsible for. It's making sure that you get your facts right and research and make sure that when you're slamming someone, you're doing it justified.

It's also researching and finding people that can shine the light on the Gospel. I mean, nobody wants to read a book that's all full of nastiness and doesn't give them any hope in the end.

ICONOCLAST: So that was the last challenge — giving people hope?

GARRISON: It's a big challenge. A lot of people feel disillusioned, and they read a

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# Inside The Satirist's Studio

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number of books. They've told me this. They'll read an article about how rotten the Religious Right is and they just fall into a state of despair. I don't feel that's a good way to end a book. There is hope here. I have found pockets of hope. Let's try to move towards those pockets of hope. You can wallow in a lot of despair until you just want to become depressed, but that's not a healthy way to move forward.

You can see this back in Jesus' time. I mean, Caesar was no picnic back then, and yet Jesus chose with his disciples to not fall in a state of despair. How do you keep from falling into a state of despair when everything around you looks like it does today?

ICONOCLAST: Throw a party. (laughs)

GARRISON: Yeah, you go throw a party and wake up with a hangover. That might help you temporarily, and if you do that too many times, you're going to find yourself in AA.

ICONOCLAST: Well, the premise of your book is that both the Right and the Left have hijacked Christianity for their own political purposes. You remind all parties to follow the Greatest Commandment and communicate their differences with love, not hate. Why you? Why did you feel you had to write this book?

GARRISON: Because nobody else was writing it. I mean, every other book I was reading was "nasty Bush," and yet they weren't looking at the speck in their own eyes. As I was looking at the speck in my own eye when I wanted to criticize Bush, I realized that I needed to do that.

Also, there was nothing funny. Nobody was writing from a satirical standpoint. You did have the Al Franken's and so forth, but that wasn't poking fun at the Right. Nobody who was a Christian was actually going out and saying, "Bush is my brother in Christ, and I have to love him even though he drives me nuts." Someone had to say it, and nobody was.

ICONOCLAST: What has been the response so far to your book?

GARRISON: Generally, very, very favorable. I've got some conservatives that have liked what I've said, which has surprised me greatly.

I'm starting to get — and as the book continues to get out there — people on the ex-

tremes, especially on the issues of homosexuality and abortion. The moment you do not side with what they believe hook, lock, stock, and barrel, they let you have it. These are what I like to call the Ann Coulter fans. They will rip into you, and there is one of those on the Amazon.com site book review. You have to look at that and take it for what it is.

Some people have said I was too even-handed in my approach. Other people have said I slammed Bush and didn't slam the Democrats. Certain people had certain issues that they said I wish you would have talked more about homosexuality. My response is Jesus didn't talk about it, so I'm not going to.

But overall, if you actually read the book from cover to cover, you will see that I'm trying to suggest that we act like Christians and debate this issue in brotherly love. That message is starting to resonate with a number of people.

I gather that it's selling. My publisher is happy. It's a slow buzz for a first-time author. The buzz is going to continue. There's going to be more press. What made me feel very excited is that I found out that a church in Georgia has been using it as a Bible study. One of the biggest promoters of my book is my improv teacher who just happens to be an atheist. It's one of those things that when you give birth to the baby, you just sit back and watch and see what happens.

You know, there's a whole plethora of books coming out. I'm one of the few authors whose written a book that is bipartisan, that tries to show a different way. I think that once people finish the whole plethora of books like "I hate the Religious Right. The Religious Right sucks. The Religious Right can go bite me," I'd like to think that at the end of the day, they're going to say, "what do we do next?" And I'm one of the ones starting to offer that. I hope I'm getting other authors to think about at the end of this how to give hope.

We do have conservative and liberal Christians who do not see eye to eye on a lot of social issues. They do not worship the same way... but yet we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and whatever we can do to try to get that dialogue started so much the better. That's the dialogue that needs to be happening. We need to turn down the white noise a bit to hear the silent



**RED AND BLUE GOD  
BLACK AND BLUE CHURCH**

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS of HOW AMERICAN CHURCHES  
are HIJACKING JESUS, BAGGING THE BEATITUDES and  
WORSHIPPING THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

**BECKY GARRISON**

Foreword by ROBERT DARDEN, Senior Editor, THE WITTENBURG DOOR

prayer of God.

ICONOCLAST: So what are your predictions for the coming election years? This next presidential election is going to be the first in 50 years in which no vice president is running for the presidency.

GARRISON: I predict that the 2006 and 2008 elections are going to make 2004 look like a walk in the park. Already (Sen.) Hillary (Clinton) is playing the "Jesus card." When they were having the immigration debate, Hillary said that this would criminalize Jesus and the Good Samaritan because both are illegal aliens.

You're going to see the Religious Right — I don't think they're going to die quietly. You can tell that they were very annoyed with Bush. The Democrats I can tell by the e-mails I'm getting, some of these ultra progressive religious movements are starting pretty nasty Bush attacks, and you're going to see a lot of these Religious Right people responding in kind. The rhetoric in my inbox has really

started to heat up, and we haven't even started with the campaign ads.

I think this is going to be pretty darn nasty. I wouldn't want to live in Florida, let's put it that way.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) Oh, geez!

GARRISON: On both fronts, you're going to see it, but who's going to be the peacemaker and say, "We're Christians.?" I ask people, "Would you take communion with Bush?" They tell me no and I'm like, "He's a Christian. How could you not take the sacrament with another Christian who wants the sacrament?" Think about it, you know? It's a struggle because he annoys the heck out of me, too, sometimes with some of the stuff he does, but then again, when I get an e-mail from a progressive telling me that "Bush bites," I'm like, is that any different?

You can't have a values-less party. The question is, how can the church in this whole debate manage to remain a prophetic

voice without being subject to the winds of the political parties? Martin Luther King managed to do this, and I noticed that other people are not able to do that quite as well. I just see too much Bush-bashing going on from the churches that it's really starting to concern me.

There's a difference between saying a certain policy is wrong and that a human being, meaning George W. Bush, is an evil you-know-what who deserves to go to hell. Most religious leaders don't go that far, but I do think that there is this general consensus that wishes that Bush should just vaporize. We have to be very careful when we do this kind of stuff.

ICONOCLAST: Moving on a quick tangent: you served as a volunteer at the World Trade Center site as emergency workers were clearing Ground Zero after Sept. 11, 2001. Did you ever come across a single firemen, police officer, and/or EMS worker who felt that 9/11 was an "inside job," you know the kind of conspiracy that Charlie Sheen and Alex Jones like to harp on and on about?

GARRISON: I think people who do that need to have their psychological priorities reevaluated. I didn't encounter that from anyone. People were pretty much convinced universally that this was an act of religious terrorism. The question is, how do we respond to such an act of religious terrorism? Do we respond hate for hate, or do we do as Martin Luther King, Jr. suggested, respond hatred with love? How to respond when someone attacks you in this nature? That seems to be a question that a lot of people were struggling with.

I think a lot of these conspiracy theories are just Oliver Stone smoking something. I just don't get it. There's no evidence that there was a missile and other kind of hokey. I think it's a waste of oxygen and ink to even give these guys the time of day, unless they want to present some concrete evidence about what they are actually talking about.

This is like, I have known some conspiracy nut people in my life, and I find conspiracy theorist people in general to be very sad, lonely, confused, and at times somewhat deranged people that have no friends.

ICONOCLAST: Ouch! (laughs)

GARRISON: Well, think about it. You know, I feel sorry for

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# Inside The Satirist's Studio

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people who want to live life like this. I choose not to live a life fearing that everyone is out to get me.

ICONOCLAST: It seems like everyone has a favorite sin. You know, Episcopalians, Methodists, and the ELCA have dealt with homosexuality; in recent years, Catholics have had to

deal with pedophiles, while on some other part of the religious spectrum, there are those who believe that God hates shrimp. What's your favorite sin?

GARRISON: You mean a favorite sin for me to participate in or favorite sin for me to trash?

ICONOCLAST: Either way.

GARRISON: This sin that I

struggle with probably the most is the sin of pride. I mean, as a writer, it's glorious to see your name in print and to know you're getting the word out, but it's very easy to get tempted to think that you wrote this without realizing that through prayer this piece came about. Whatever talents I have is designed to give them to God for

God's glory, but then for me to think very full of myself, it's very, very easy to do that as a writer. It's a struggle. Any writer that tells you they don't struggle with that I would question. Humility is a gift that I'm working on in trying to develop.

ICONOCLAST: Continuing on with a shorter version of James Lipton/Bernard Pivot's 10 ques-

tions, "if heaven exists (which we know it does, Becky), what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?"

GARRISON: Woo-ha! Welcome home!

## INFO

[www.wittenburgdoor.com/](http://www.wittenburgdoor.com/)

# Outsourcing Of Public Services Is Not Working

By Celia Hagert

Senior Policy Analyst, Center For Public Policy Priorities, Austin

The state's attempt to change the way Texans in need get health care, food, and temporary cash assistance has been a disaster.

Last June, the state outsourced the enrollment process. As a result, over the last six months, more than 100,000 kids have lost their health insurance. And as of May 9, nearly 7,000 Food Stamp applications were backlogged, leaving thousands of families without food.

Lured by the private sector's promise of saving money, the state signed a five-year, \$899 million contract with a private company, prepared to lay off

2,000 state employees, and launched the new system in Travis and Hays counties.

It all sounded so good. Clients would benefit from state-of-the-art technology and no wait times at overcrowded offices, and taxpayers would save hundreds of millions of dollars.

Unfortunately, this was not the case.

The problems began almost as soon as the contractor took over. Technical difficulties and staff problems arose, and the promised savings never materialized.

Last month, the state postponed extending the new system to more counties and asked 1,000 state workers to stay on the job.

The outsourcing model was flawed from the start. It promised savings not from more effective or efficient ways to help clients, but by replacing trained state employees with fewer, lower-paid, and less-skilled staff.

Admittedly, the old way of doing things had its own problems. For years, state offices have been understaffed and run with outdated technology. But things have gotten worse with the new system.

The rush to outsource misses the point. No matter who runs the enrollment process or how it is structured, the only way to ensure that vulnerable Texans aren't slipping through the cracks is to hire sufficient staff to run the program.

For years Texas has skimmed on an adequate workforce to enroll people in services. Despite growing numbers of Texans in need, the state actually cut eligibility staff by 40 percent between 1997 and 2004. This almost doubled staff workload and compromised client ser-

## GUEST COMMENTARY

ices. Disruptions in benefits were common, often resulting in lawsuits.

Instead of making enrolling

for benefits easier for people, the outsourcing experiment has made it more difficult. As a result, Texas' poorest families won't get health care, food, or temporary cash assistance they rely on.

Gambling with the well-be-

## Mexican Presidential Candidate Asks For Vote Review

MEXICO CITY — The center-left candidate for the Mexican presidency said he would challenge the results of the presidential election late last week after his conservative opponent was declared with winner by a razor-thin margin.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) lost the election by a half of one percentage point to Felipe Calderón of the National Action Party (PAN), 35.88 percent to 35.31 percent.

These results were accounted for by a recount of the ballot re-

turns from Wednesday to Thursday. The recount process itself was administered by Mexican citizens, independent election officials, and political delegates.

López Obrador can present his appeal to the Federal Elections Court, an option provided for by Mexican electoral law. Then the court has until Aug. 31 to rule. In that time, a ballot-by-ballot recount could be called by the federal tribunal.

López Obrador, who had declared himself the winner, though not all the ballots were tallied, is claiming that "a fraud" was made

ing of the 4 million Texans who are depending on public services is financially and morally reckless. It's time for Texas to hire enough staff to do the job right and focus on helping low-income families for a change.

in the electoral process. Election officials and European observers have noted that Mexico has exemplary voting practices and have questioned why Obrador would lose faith so quickly.

About 42 million of the 70 million Mexicans registered to vote did cast their ballot in this year's election on Sunday, July 2. The total population of the country is 103 million.

The final winner of the election will have a tough job of governing the Mexican Congress since there is no majority party in which to take the lead on directing legislation.



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## THE FAST & THE FURIOUS: Tokyo Drift



The latest installment of this franchise takes us to the sexy, colorful underground world of Japan where drift racing is the latest car craze. Lucas Black plays a troubled youth who, in order to avoid a jail sentence, goes to live with his estranged father, a career military man who is stationed in Tokyo. There he falls in with the wrong crowd and is introduced to a new art form in auto racing called drifting.

PG-13

Runtime: 1 hour 45 minutes



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**Sun., July 16**  
7 p.m.

COMING SOON: Click, Superman Returns, Pirates of the Caribbean III



## Summer 2006 U.S. National Park Report:

# Visitor Safety, Resources, Services Now 'Seriously Compromised' As Result Of Cuts

*37-Park Review by Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (CNPSR) Finds Nearly All Parks Suffer From Reduced Law Enforcement, Emergency Response Personnel; No Longer Able to 'Hide' Service and Maintenance Woes From Public*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Visiting a national park this summer? If so, you should expect reduced law enforcement protection, longer emergency response times, fewer lifeguards, scaled back water and trail safety patrols, dirtier campgrounds and other visibly deteriorating facilities and resources, according to a major new report based on a 37-park review by the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (CNPSR), an organization of more than 515 former NPS employees with an accumulated 15,000 years of national park experience.

Entitled "Reality Check: What Visitors to America's National Parks Will Experience During Summer 2006," the CNPSR report concludes: "Despite 'happy talk' assurances from political appointees at the Department of the Interior and National Park Service, all is not well this summer in America's national parks. A Coalition of National Park Service Retirees analysis of the status of 37 national parks finds widespread evidence of major problems that will be evident this summer - including decreased safety for visitors, longer emergency response times, endangerment of protected resources, and dirtier and less well-maintained parks - and that the problems will only grow worse in the coming years."

Bill Wade, the former superintendent of Shenandoah National Park and chair of the Coalition's Executive Council, said: "The budget crisis in our parks is real and it will be felt keenly by park visitors this summer. Nearly all surveyed parks will have fewer law enforcement rangers on the job this summer to protect park visitors and park resources. Our intention here is not to be alarmist, but to ensure that American citizens and lawmakers know the facts: Forget about cutting the flesh or any 'fat.' We are now cutting deeply into the sinews and bones of our national parks. Congressional budget increases of recent years have been welcome, but these modest hikes have only succeeded in bringing some parks out of the depths of the financial abyss — and back to its brink. The sad fact is that these budget add-ons are the proverbial drop in the bucket of at least

\$600 million in operations funding deficits and an enormous maintenance backlog of up to \$7 billion."

Bill Supernaugh, the former Superintendent of Badlands National Park and a member of the CNPSR Executive Council, said: "It is important to understand that there is more to the problems this summer in national parks than a higher level of risk posed to visitors and resources.

Effectively, there is no meaningful preventative maintenance program today in the NPS because very few parks now have the resources to carry out such a program. Unfortunately, today's preventative maintenance deferral turns into tomorrow's increase in the already multi-billion-dollar NPS maintenance backlog. Reduced seasonal employee hiring contributes directly to increased maintenance backlogs, increased resource crimes, and the increased prevalence of the already shameful number of shabby and ill-kept national park sites and facilities."

#### OTHER KEY FINDINGS

In addition to the findings about extensive law enforcement and other emergency response personnel cuts, the CNPSR report also found:

- \* Visitors to parks this summer will see evidence of deteriorating park operations resulting from reduced preventative maintenance, in terms of scheduled custodial checks, roadside litter pickup, and grounds and buildings maintenance.

- \* Widespread cuts are putting national parks in an almost purely "reactive" posture, falling far short of the law and Congressional intent to protect the resources for future generations.

- \* The national park maintenance backlog has increased - rather than being reduced, as promised.

- \* National park budget shifts are taking place largely at the expense of leaving key staff positions unfilled.

For full report findings go to <http://www.npsretirees.org> on the Web.

The CNPSR report is being released in the wake of the National Park Service mounting a major "National Parks: The Place to be for Family Fun in 2006" promotion campaign that makes no reference to budget-

related problems in terms of visitor safety, reduced emergency response capabilities, service cuts, at-risk natural resources, and crumbling facilities.

#### ABOUT THE COALITION

The more than 515 members of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees are all former employees of the National Park Service (NPS) with a combined

15,000 years of stewardship of America's most precious natural and cultural resources. In their personal lives, CNPSR members reflect the broad spectrum of political affiliations. CNPSR members have served their country well, and their credibility and integrity in speaking out on national park issues should not go ignored. The Coalition counts among its

members five former directors or deputy directors of the National Park Service; 24 former regional directors or deputy regional directors; 31 former associate or assistant directors at the national or regional office level; 68 former division chiefs at the national or regional office level; and 128 former park superintendents or assistant superintendents.

## Whose Bottom Line Is It Anyway? Wading Into Texas' Biennial Budget

By **BYRON SCHLOMACH, PH.D.**  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

More than 30 years ago a U.S. senator asked how much the president knew and when he knew it. The senator knew there was a bottom-line answer, whether he got it or not. It was, after all, a simple question. Ask a similarly simple question about the budget of Texas (or that of just about any government for that matter) and you are no more likely to get a simple, bottom-line answer than did that senator.

With relative ease and simplicity any taxpayer should be able to find the answers to some pretty basic questions regarding what government is doing with his or her money. How much money has been, or will be, spent? What has or will it be spent on? Who is spending it? What is it accomplishing?

The current Texas state budget runs almost 900 pages and just a quarter inch shy of two inches thick. It documents the almost \$140 billion appropriated for fiscal years 2006 and 2007, of state, federal and some local (from school districts) funds.

Much of the volume of the state budget is made up of "riders," special, detailed instructions the legislature gives to the 188 separate agencies, including universities, to which these funds are distributed.

Additionally, the budget contains lists of "outcomes" and "efficiencies" - measures supposedly there to answer at least a couple of the questions mentioned above. Whether accidentally or on purpose, though, these measures do not really tell us very much.

For example, under the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, there is an "outcome/impact" measure for the "Percent of Identified Noncompliant Sites and Facilities for Which Appropriate Action Is Taken." This measure, a goal really, is set at 85 percent. Why is it not 100 percent? Or how about the "Percent of Inspected or Investigated Air Sites in Compliance," with a goal of 98 percent. While it is an admirable goal to have all

air sites in compliance, could not this measure create a perverse incentive to inspect and investigate sites in compliance and ignore violators?

### GUEST COMMENTARY

In the budget, no history or context is given to any of the outcome and efficiency measures. Central missions and goals go unstated. Ultimate results seem, well, ultimately unimportant. This is true for all state agencies. It is only with rare exception that one can trace any specific program's expenditures back even five years (though never in the budget and only with a great deal of sleuthing), much less gauge its successes or failures.

There is more information available in agencies' Legislative Appropriations Requests, but few of these are available online. What's more, the history these documents do give leaves a gap in every agency's actual spending history because of the way these standardized documents are arranged.

Studying the state's budget and trying to get answers to basic questions is a little like a physicist studying the big bang. One answer seems only to lead to a half dozen more questions.

But the Texas state budget is not the cosmos.

Currently, individual programs are almost impossible to identify in the state budget. That must be changed, making it more accessible and useful. Additionally, generally accessible documents clearly detailing the strategic plans for each program should be produced, including sound measures for defining success at the end of each year and over the course of the program.

Taxpayers need to know what is really being accomplished with their money. If such answers cannot be had, then that taxpayers' money should stay with the taxpayers.

*Byron Schломach, Ph.D., is the chief economist at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan research institute based in Austin.*



# Department Of Labor Awards \$4 Million In Funding For Faith-Based And Community Organizations

DALLAS — The U.S. Department of Labor has announced a \$75,000 grant to Alamo Labor Properties (ALP), San Antonio, to help hard-to-serve populations prepare for and succeed in employment opportunities. A total of \$4 million in grants to 55 faith-based and community organizations were funded through this competition.

"This administration appreciates the effectiveness of faith-based and community organizations in helping workers find jobs and build a brighter future for themselves

and their families," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "The grassroots projects funded through this \$4 million initiative will reach out to those most in need by providing guidance and support in making use of employment services available through local One-Stop Career Centers."

The ALP project is designed to help individuals that are currently unemployed or employed below a livable wage. The Alamo Labor Properties project services include (1) workforce development; (2) leadership

development; and (3) employer relations development. These services are provided through a community network who assist clients in gaining workplace skills; ESL, GED, literacy training, and citizenship classes.

"Faith-based and community organizations reach into communities, connecting individuals with barriers to employment to the resources available through local One-Stop Career Centers," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training Emily Stover

DeRocco. "These organizations often provide the bridge to assistance that changes lives and contributes to the stability of families and communities."

These grants are part of the Department of Labor's ongoing effort to partner its existing programs with effective faith-based and community organizations to better serve the needy. Today's awards more than triple last year's funding and will allow recipients to expand services into their respective communities.

"We can always do better for Americans in need when we

work together with every willing partner," said Jedd Medefind, director of the Labor Department's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. "The personal involvement and caring touch of faith-based and community organizations often make the critical difference between recurring struggles and new beginnings."

For more information on the Department of Labor's employment and training programs, visit [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov).

## Campaign Launches To Keep Partisan Politics Away From Churches

AUSTIN — A group of clergy from various religious stripes has launched a campaign to keep candidates for political office in Texas from promoting a partisan agenda in houses of worship prior to the November 2006 election.

"Dragging churches into partisan politics endangers

the integrity of our houses of worship and is disrespectful of the faith and beliefs of all congregants," said Father Samuel Hose, pastor of St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Round Rock in a statement.

The Respect Our Faith campaign sponsored by the Texas Faith Network already has more than 100 Texas

clergy in its ranks. Though campaign poo-pooes partisan politics in church, clergy and laypeople can still promote civil responsibility to their congregations.

"This campaign is not intended to make houses of worship 'politics-free' zones," said Rabbi Neal Katz of Congregation Beth El in Tyler. "The goal

is to stop politicians from using our sacred spaces to divide people of faith for partisan political gain."

In recent years, groups like the Texas Restoration Project have recruited churches and their pastors to sponsor candidates and single-issue campaigns above others.

Four months ago, the Internal

Revenue Service found that charities and churches have steadily increased unlawful political activities such as pastors endorsing candidates of both right and left persuasions from their pulpits.

**INFO**  
Respect Our Faith website  
[www.respectourfaith.org](http://www.respectourfaith.org)



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## Impeachment Teach-In Day Set For July 19

FORT WORTH — A teach-in to discuss the impeachment process for President George W. Bush will be held at 1919 Hemphill in Fort Worth on Wednesday, July 19, from 7 - 9 p.m.

The teach-in will include a short documentary entitled *How To Impeach A President* that features the legal case for the impeachment President Bush developed by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), a nonprofit legal and educational organization which filed a case against the president for his warrantless wiretapping program.

Copies of the Center's handbook *Articles of Impeachment Against George W. Bush* will also be made available. The book not only explains the legal arguments for impeachment and their historical precedence but also details the evidence against President Bush in four

separate charges — warrantless surveillance, misleading Congress on the reasons for the Iraq war, violating laws against torture, and subverting the Constitution's separation of power.

Only three U.S. presidents have had articles of impeachment on them: Presidents Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Bill Clinton.

The 1919 Hemphill teach-in is one of hundreds around the nation in collaboration with Melville House Books and progressives across the United States.

For more information on the national teach-in, visit the Center's Articles of Impeachment website. For more information on the Fort Worth teach-in, visit 1919 Hemphill's website.

### INFO

[www.articlesofimpeachment.net/](http://www.articlesofimpeachment.net/)  
[www.1919hemphill.org/](http://www.1919hemphill.org/)

## Bush Instructed Cheney To Discredit War Critic

WASHINGTON — President George W. Bush instructed Vice President Dick Cheney to take the lead on countering a critic of the administration's intelligence on Iraq prior to the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion, according to a weekly political magazine last week.

The National Journal reported that Bush was personally involved in the mending of his office's credibility which was broken by former U.S. ambassador Joseph Wilson. To do so, the president ordered the vice president to discredit Wilson by disclosing classified information.

President Bush admitted to his role in a July 24, 2004, interview with special prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald, the chief investigator into the name leak of the CIA agent, Valerie Plame-Wilson.

Plame-Wilson's identity as a CIA agent was leaked to the press after her husband Joseph reported that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had not attempted to purchase bomb-making uranium from a North African nation as the president had claimed in his 2003 State of the Union Address.

President Bush told the special prosecutor, however, that he never ordered the disclosure of Plame's name, nor was he aware that Cheney told his chief of staff to leak that information

to the press. The administration has the authority to declassify information.

Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, is charged with five felonies in connection with lying about his role in the CIA leak.

President Bush's role in this case comes when he has criticized media outlets such as the New York Times for compromising the "war on terror" by revealing the administration's secret domestic spy program and the CIA's surveillance of international wire transfers.

## Enron Founder Dies At 64

HOUSTON — The founder of Enron Corp. Kenneth Lay, 64, died of a heart attack on vacation in Colorado last week, a month after being convicted of perhaps the biggest business fraud in U.S. history.

Lay's sentencing was set for Oct. 23. He faced life in prison for defrauding investors and employees by hiding his company's finances months prior to filing for bankruptcy at the end of 2001.

Lay, who was convicted with former Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling on May 25, came across as arrogant and argumentative on the witness

## Foster Children Death Rate Up 60% In Texas, Says Strayhorn

AUSTIN — Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn has released information found during her investigation into possible Medicaid prescription drug fraud and abuse about the deaths, poisonings, rapes and pregnancies of children in the state's foster care system that shows a significant death rate increase for foster children — 60 percent.

"In April 2004 I said I would give our forgotten children in foster care something they need — a voice," Strayhorn said. "I have been and I will continue to be their voice. This Governor's Health and Human Services Commission continues to stonewall my investigation and this Governor continues to hide the truth.

"In October 2004, I urged Gov. Perry to immediately create a Family and Protective Services Crisis Management Team by executive order to finally take serious steps to save children's lives. Now it is June 2006. Gov. Perry's failure to act is unconscionable."

Strayhorn found, from information provided by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, in Fiscal 2003, 30 foster children died in Texas' care; in Fiscal 2004, 38 foster children died; and in Fiscal 2005, 48 foster children died.

Data shows that while the number of foster children in the state's care increased 24 percent from 26,133 in Fiscal 2003 to 32,474 in Fiscal 2005, the number of deaths increased 60 percent.

"If you compare the number of deaths of children in our state's population to the number of deaths in our state's foster care system, a child is four times more likely to die in our state's foster care system," Strayhorn said.

Based on Fiscal 2004 data provided by the Health and Human Services Commission, about 100 children received treatment for poisoning from medications; 63 foster children received medical treatment for rape that occurred while in the foster care system; and 142 children gave birth while in the state foster care system.

"When I called on Gov. Perry in October 2004, to create a Crisis Management Team I said the crisis was minute-by-minute and child-by-child," Strayhorn said.

In Fiscal 2004, four-year old twin boys living in the same foster home received medical treatment in the hospital for rape. A five-year-old boy in the same foster home received medical treatment in the hospital for rape two days later.

A 15-year old girl who was not pregnant when she entered the state's foster care system in May 2002 gave birth in February 2004.

"The state is supposed to be protecting our forgotten children, but in all too many cases these children are taken from one abusive situation and placed in another abusive situation," Strayhorn said. "Many children are in more abusive situations now than they were before the state intervened. Children are being neglected,

abused and are dying."

As reported by the media, a 12-year-old boy died in December 2005, while in the state's care at a facility that treats children with learning disabilities and emotional problems. The boy suffocated while being restrained from behind by an employee of the facility. Another boy in the state's care at the same facility died May 30, after drowning in a creek during a May 6 bicycle outing.

A three-year old was treated for poisoning from an atypical, mind-altering antipsychotic drug. These drugs are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for children under the age of 18 years old, noted Strayhorn.

Strayhorn launched her investigation in November 2004, after her report, *Forgotten Children*, uncovered the fact that large numbers of psychotropic drugs are being prescribed to children in the foster care system, even though, according to the FDA, some of these drugs are not approved for children and have serious side effects such as suicidal tendencies, diabetes, and cardiac arrhythmia.

"Since that time, repeated and continuing roadblocks and stonewalling have been encountered by me and my staff in attempting to secure basic and necessary data from the Health and Human Services Commission," Strayhorn said. "It has been 19 months and 25 letters, emails, meetings and phone calls since I first requested foster care and corresponding Medicaid data from HHSC. The Commission finally provided Fiscal 2004 data. But, 10 months into Fiscal 2006, we have yet to receive the Fiscal 2005 data, which we know has been available for months and months.

"In March 2006, I requested all of the same data for Fiscal 2005. Claiming confidentiality, the Commission to this day refuses to cooperate and provide the Fiscal 2005 data needed to complete my investigation, despite that the statute requires that they cooperate and the Court of Appeals ruled on June 16 that HHSC's view about the confidentiality of its records is clearly wrong.

"What I have found from the information that was made available should be and is of grave concern, but the picture painted by Gov. Perry's Health and Human Services Commission's secret 2005 data must paint an even grimmer picture on all fronts," Strayhorn said. "The people of Texas can handle the truth. What they will not tolerate is this Governor's callous indifference in hiding the truth and placing our forgotten children at high risk."

"With every breath of air in Carole Keeton Strayhorn's lungs, I will continue to be the voice for these forgotten, neglected, abused, and dead children," Strayhorn said.

"Gov. Perry is hiding the truth. And in hiding the truth he is jeopardizing our forgotten children's lives. That makes me one heartbroken Grandma."

stand.

He explained that "it was difficult to turn off that lifestyle like a spigot" when he defended spending \$200,000 on yacht for his

wife's birthday, through he had accumulated \$100 million in personal debt.

Lay and Skilling had said that Enron fell due to negative publicity that spooked

their investors. At the height of Enron's power in 2000, the energy and trading company hold the No. 7 spot in the Fortune 500 and brought in \$101 billion in revenues.





## Child Poverty Rises 5 Percent Since 2000: Report

AUSTIN — A new national report on child poverty shows that the rate of children living in poverty in Texas increased by five percent since 2000.

Other factors contributing to children's health have decreased over the last six years, according to the KIDS COUNT Data Book, a report released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Data Book, whose full findings will be published this fall, also indicates that from 2000 to 2004, the percentage of children living in poverty in Texas increased from 22 percent to 23 percent. The national average of children living in poverty is 18 percent.

To be considered living in poverty in 2004, a family of three would have to make less than \$15,219 per year, according to the report. Children living in extreme poverty in Texas (50 percent of the poverty level) increased by 10 percent since 2000. Also since 2000, Texas has seen a nine percent increase in the number of children in low-income families (200 percent of the poverty level).

When it comes to the immunization of two-year-olds in Texas, only 75 percent of them in 2004 were given their shots, down from 78 percent the year prior. Only Nevada trailed Texas with 71 percent of their children immunized in 2004.

Texas ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the percentage of low-birthweight babies with an increase of seven percent from 2000 to 2003. Texas dropped from 9<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> in its national ranking of its infant mortality rate. The rate jumped increased 16 percent from 2000 to 2003.

"Texas needs to get serious

about fighting poverty and its siblings—low birthweight, high infant mortality, and low immunization," said Frances Deviney, the director of the Texas

KIDS COUNT. "How can we continue to believe Texas is the greatest state in the country to live when we can't take care of the most fragile among us?"

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# Ken Lay Would Make A Great Texas Governor Providing, Of Course, That He's Really Dead!

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If a man wants something that nobody with any sense would want, you orta be careful about lettin' him have it."

First, I want proof that Ken Lay is really dead.

Like a DNA test from somebody who's never voted Republican, hates money and who's got no family and ain't afraid to die.

Second, I want to know why all these people are running for governor.

And what's wrong with them. For those of you who either don't live in Texas or are part of the Stupid Majority who usually vote in this state, allow me explain why no one but a con artist or a lunatic would want to be governor of Texas.

It is a powerless job.

Only one former governor has gone on to higher office, and things aren't really working out for him, are they?

The governor of Texas can pardon criminals and issue clemency.

We don't reelect people who pardon criminals in Texas.

No matter how innocent they are.

The last governor who pardoned criminals was impeached.

Of course he *was* selling pardons.

But that is irrelevant to impeachment in this state.

The state constitution,

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



amended 439 times and requires an index 10 times longer than the entire text of the U.S. Constitution, does not state why the governor can be impeached; only how.

The governor can be impeached for being an ass; although there is certainly no precedent for that.

**The governor of Texas can veto legislation.**

He even has a line-item veto. But a simple majority can override.

Unless he vetoes after the biennial legislative session ends, which means nothing gets done on that issue for two years.

Unless he calls a special session.

**The governor of Texas can call special sessions of the Legislature.**

Not that the Legislature has to do anything besides stay in session for a month.

The current governor just called three special sessions in a row before the state got an education finance bill, and only

got it then because a federal court order threatened to shut down the schools.

**The governor of Texas proposes the state budget.**

But the Legislature doesn't have to pay attention.

So it doesn't.

Unless it's what they wanted to do anyway.

**The governor of Texas can hire people.**

But he can't fire them.

**The governor of Texas can make speeches.**

Which is where the only power he can muster comes from.

He can lie and con with impunity in the State of the State address, and he can suck up to the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor, who rule their respective houses through a set of draconian rules that would embarrass Joe Stalin.

And he's dead.

So if the Texas governor cannot stump the state and control the politics that controls the Legislature, he can't even control his bowels.

However, he does get a \$115,345 per year salary, a two-story house in Austin, a limo, a private plane, a round-the-clock security detail and a staff of 200.

Just to do all that nothing.



## NCLB Should Not Be Reauthorized In 2007

The No Child Left Behind Act has been a five-year debacle of unaccountability and wasted prospects, proving that the federal government does not have the capabilities to handle something as complex as the education of our children.

Its heavy-handed intrusion into public education with a testing system has done nothing but politicize education while robbing from educators their abilities to comprehensively teach.

Although it is expected that NCLB will be renewed, perhaps with some revisions to entice the general public to shy away from yelling "Uncle" just yet, the continued power sweep of the feds into our classrooms would be a dangerous mistake.

The nature of the problem of lifting minorities and the poor to higher educational standards remains misunderstood in Washington, since the life issues behind these problems are not being addressed, and, in fact, are being expanded upon as the gap between economic classes grows.

One size does not fit all, which probably depicts the greatest blunder, but also harrowing is the insane idea that teaching to a test defines education and the best tools of enforcement are threats to decrease funding if certain irrational mandates are not met.

It is also a matter of priority. Outside of education, look at how Congress and The White House has spent the money of taxpayers, which does not set a good example for students of economics.

With poverty and its tributaries key issues that play into the lack of resources column, which deeply impacts education, Congress chose instead to provide excessive no-bid contracts and invest in war, while carrying the U.S. deeply into debt.

It was a choice. Proponents of NCLB have been grappling with identifying what some have perceived as an achievement gap and redefining it, whittling down comprehensive education in the process. Students are being terrorized and dumbed down to fit into a society that is being dumbed down economically.

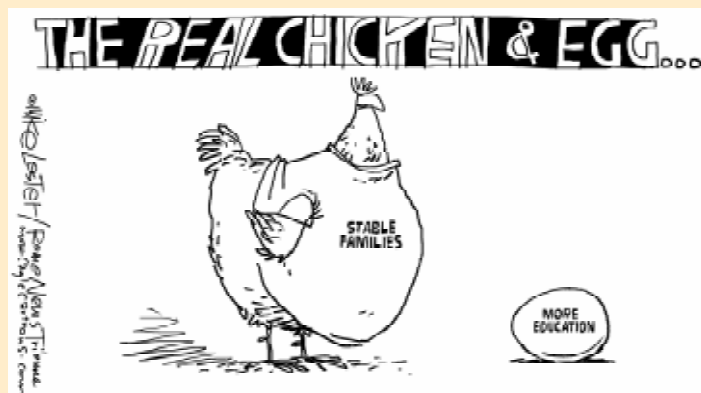
The premise behind NCLB was that public education was broken, requiring the federal

government to whip it into place. The ultimate goal, of course, is to make it necessary to privatize public education.

NCLB has failed our students and our nation.

Its renewal would be a vote against our states, our school districts, and, most important, our future generations of Americans.

— W. Leon Smith





# Having A Hot Time In Texas — Until I'm Extinguished

At this very moment my family and I are on vacation somewhere in Texas. More than likely, we are wearing cowboy hats, wandering in and out of shops, and carrying on with the kind of loopy, carefree attitude one expects in a family of tourists suffering from heat stroke. Six of the hottest cities in the U.S. are located in Texas, which is why, on an average day, an estimated 15,000 armadillos attempt suicide on Texas highways — in many cases, by strapping a Dixie Chicks CD to their backs in order to increase their chances of being run over.

My wife and I actually lived in Texas for six years. We are familiar with its July atmosphere. Which is why we have been preparing our children by having them breathe directly from the end of a hair drier each night for the last six weeks. Both of them can now last a solid 15 minutes on "high heat," which, during an average day, is longer than most Texans spend breathing air that isn't being piped through some type of cooling system. In fact, the majority of hustle and bustle in down-



## Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson  
Siuslaw News

town Dallas isn't caused by a steady exchange of commerce interacting to sustain a thriving economic base. No. It's actually made up of people frantically hurrying from one air conditioned building to another, trying to avoid prolonged exposure to the sidewalks, which could potentially melt the soles of their Justin ropers, and reduce their \$800 ostrich skin boots to a pair of decorative shin guards.

So, knowing all this, why did we choose Texas as our vacation destination? For the same reason many of us find ourselves doing things we wouldn't normally do, at least not without liberal amounts of beer or the promise of buried treasure (Or, as is often the case, both): I'm talking, of course, about *Family*.

Dallas and Waco, two of the six hottest cities in the U.S., are home to members of my wife's family, all of whom have been asking us to visit them since the 90's. And by that I mean the last time it got below 100 degrees. You see, we coastal Oregonians put on flip-flops and tank tops once the temperature reaches 65 degrees. At 75 degrees, we instinctively move to a shaded area and remain there, in a fetal posi-

tion, until help arrives. Several years ago it actually reached 85 degrees along the Oregon coast. As expected, many people panicked and dozens were treated — mostly for frostbite — after climbing inside the freezer displays at local supermarkets. To this day, I still can't reach for a frozen Popsicle without the image of Bill and his...

Well, never mind.

All that matters is that he is now happily married to Annette, who proposed right there in the freezer aisle.

Yesterday, my brother-in-law called from Dallas to confirm our arrival time, run through a list of things we could do during our visit, and, most importantly, let us know it was 104 degrees which, after factoring in the heat index, meant he needed to hang up because his pool was boiling over.

Like most Texans, he met this crisis with the concerned demeanor of someone reading the ingredients on a bag of flour.

My theory is that heat is the main reason for the distinctively slow Texas drawl; when it's that hot, even your mouth is too tired to do anything but look for shade.

That isn't to say we haven't been looking forward to this trip. In the end, no matter how hot it is, paying a visit to our family in Texas is long overdue.

The trick, of course, will be making it back before we're overdone.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439, or visit his website at [www.nedhickson.net](http://www.nedhickson.net))

## Amusement Park Diplomacy



## Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

ballpark hotdog and an American beer?

For tough cases, I'd take foreign leaders to some of our natural wonders — the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, or Hawaii's surfing beaches. Show them that America is not just a country of big cities and traffic jams, and people rushing to make as much money as possible.

If those excursions don't break down their resistance, I'd go for the big weapon, and take them to the city of pure Americana, Las Vegas. Show them the ridiculous replicas of the Eiffel Tower and the New York skyline. Let them witness people screaming with delight when winning a ten-dollar jackpot. And take them to see a shark reef in the middle of the desert. After seeing the sights of Vegas, they'll either be so enchanted or so appalled that they will no longer be able to hold onto their previous views of America. And of course, if they actually start to sit down at the tables and gamble, we'll have them hooked.

So, whether it's something like Pike's Peak, Sea World, or the Great Smokey Mountains, let's try this "Tourism and Amusement Park Diplomacy." Nobody ever declared war after going down a waterslide. Nobody ever called a foreign leader the "devil" after seeing a mountain sunset. And nobody ever hated an entire country after seeing a little girl with cotton candy all over her face.

Maybe this is a naive, simplistic suggestion, but why not try it? What have we got to lose? It can't have any worse results than what we've been doing.

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 a weekly column for SportsLine.com. He can be reached at [lloydgarver@yahoo.com](mailto:lloydgarver@yahoo.com)

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Greetings, from the bottom of the birdcage!  
Hatch an egg to see what's inside...



# King George, We're Takin' Our Country Back

Let's assume that you want your Country\* back.

(\*Just to be straight, we ain't talkin' music genres here.)

You'd have to be a damned fool to think "no" at this point.

I know I want my Country back.

As do the majority of my family, friends and acquaintances.

According to the polls, the greatest number of American citizens, people I've never met, would like to have their — *our* — Country returned to us.

With our rights intact.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of 70%, at last count.

This includes a sizeable contingent of those good folks who allowed Rovian tactical maneuvering to hornswoggle them into buying the fantasy that soon-to-be King George was just another "good ol' boy."

Those hard-working, salt-of-the-earth, sweat-dripping-from-the-brow people you see every day going to their jobs, the supermarket, Little League and soccer games bought a pig in a poke in 2000, then didn't have enough sense or guts to bail the U.S.A., and the rest of the Planet, out when November, 2004 came around.

People we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with in church, synagogue, and check-out lines; folks who make "Superman Returns" a hit, "The Break-Up" a flop.

Of course, lowlife political shenanigans in Ohio and Florida, combined with voting machines of no demonstrable numeric verification — courtesy of Diebold CEO and Bush fundraiser Walden O'Dell — rendered the 2004 count moot.

Well, the trouble isn't in the big cities. Generally speaking, large metropolitan areas, with their wide diversity of ethnicities and myriad eclectic variances, vote Democratic in presidential elections. The "blue" states are the more industrialized, densely populous areas.

As Meredith Willson put it in "The Music Man," the trouble, my friends, is right here in River City, his ideal for pig-headed, stubborn, narrow-minded small town middle-America (Iowa, to be precise).

Howard Dean has a good idea. Actually, it's a fantastic idea. How am I so sure the concept is fantastic? Republican mouthpieces and pundits have been knocking it, that's how.

He's not concentrating on a few key states for this year's mid-term elections. The Democrats are wearing out shoe

leather and New Balance composite soles, walking sidewalks and rural roadways, making personal housecalls door-to-door-to-door in all 50 states. For homes where there's no answer, the Democratic volunteers have a very short, succinct tri-fold pamphlet that hangs quite conveniently on the doorknob.

It's an old technique that pre-dates all the computerized bean counting and data gathering, the mumbo-jumbo of the psychologists and market researchers and people "experts" who study up, down, left and right how human beings are going to think. Of course, none of these schmoees who study people ever took any time as adults to spend any time one-on-one with regular people. As a doctor, Dean does know people; his care about and concern for human-kind is clear in the persona he presents to the public.

This grassroots approach is precisely what the Democratic Party needs to defeat the money-grubbing, fear-spreading, war-mongering, non-governing Neo-Conservative Republican Party of Herr Oberst Karl Rove. RoveCo's sole interest is in mega industry profitability.

We must get out and vote. We need to vote as many Republicans out of the Senate and House of Representatives as we can.

These crumbums took over control in 1994 when Newt Gingrich led the charge against "rampant Democratic corruption." The handful of Dems that went down in flames had pulled off but a modicum of the illegal activities and pirated merely a smattering of ill-gotten gains compared to the monumental, cancerous conglomerate constructed by Smiler Tom DeLay and his K Street Hooligans, all paid for by you and me — the American taxpayers.

How ironic that Newtie was the first casualty of GOP malfeasance.

So far this Millennium the only GOP member who's been convicted is Duke Cunningham, in part because he was unable to lie as convincingly as the "evangelical" DeLay. From where I sit, it seems rather apparent the Dukester was a liability to the K Street Hooligans and thus sacrificed to the media feeding frenzy ravenous for a goat.

Yet, for all the under-the-table millions that can be traced directly to Smiler Tom, Inquisitor General Alberto Gonzales has elected to put the full force of his FBI minions onto Democrat Wil-



## Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

liam Jefferson. The Congressional Representative from New Orleans was caught with \$90,000 in his freezer of an alleged \$100,000 bribe. I doubt that Smiler would bother to even come to the phone for such a miserly pittance.

Denny Hastert, the shill hand-picked by Newtie to replace him as Speaker now has some fancy footwork to perform in order to explain the humongous profit he and several other investors will make from an insider land deal in Central Illinois. Yeah, despite his protestations I'm *sure* Denny and his pals knew absolutely *nothing* about the new highway coming through.

Next up — DeLay's would-be hand-picked replacement as Majority Leader. Upon his arrival in the Beltway, Roy Blunt of Missouri was brought into the K Street machine personally by Smiler. He was taught how to become rich and powerful the DeLay way, Amen, and subsequently created his own mini-organization.

Under Smiler's tutelage Blunt put together a political machine with such heavy-duty clout that he managed to bring his son, Matt, in from left field during 2004 and unseat Missouri's Democratic governor.

However, with DeLay no longer the schoolyard bully of the House, Blunt was passed over for the leader role in favor of John Boehner of Ohio.

Some folks think we need to fix the two-party system. They often see the Dems and GOPers as no different from one another — more interested in self-preservation and garnering enough votes for the next election than working at anything substantial. The politicians have to pander

to the corporations and special interest groups in order to get support for those votes. Every election cycle the wheel of ass kissing just goes around and around and around.

Meanwhile, those of us who have mortgages or rent to pay, car payments to make, college tuitions to cover, grocery and utility bills get left behind in the clutter.

It could be that they're right. During the last decade of the Millennium just passed we had a President who gave a damn, a guy who grew up in the most modest conditions. He was a brilliant man, yet flawed.

Unlike the current Fascist Regime, most of what his administration attempted to accomplish was positive and for the good of the man, woman or child of average circumstances.

I'll take a real individual who can think like a regular person, warts and all, before some schmuck from Connecticut who affects a bad trailer court Texas accent so's folks thinks he's "jes' a good ol' boy."

As for a third party, I see nothing wrong with that. But it isn't going to happen overnight. It's most likely not going to happen in an election or two, or even three. At least not without a major groundswell.

The trouble with trying to bring a new party along too fast is running the risk of losing progressive thinkers' votes that might have gone to Democrats, thus allowing GOP candidates to win.

There's already a ridiculous 97% return rate for members of Congress. That's why nothing ever changes or gets done.

For a third party to really happen, it's going to take time. Serious, dedicated people will have to organize and work at it. The effort may even take a generation before there are enough voters and viable candidates to make headway.

When John Hancock, Ben Franklin, Tom Jefferson and the rest of those guys got so hot, sweaty, and uncomfortable that summer of 1776 in Philadelphia,

and whatever it was they were smoking and drinking got them to thinking "the king's a horse's ass — let's have a revolution," there were no Democrats or Republicans. These guys were basically Libertarians.

(Were there swimming trunks or shorts and tank tops, we might be Canadians.)

All they wanted was Liberty.

Right now the only shot we Americans have at regaining the Liberty we once knew and loved, but under-appreciated, is the Democratic Party.

Keep the Republicans in power and not only will it be two more years of the same crap, but things will most likely get worse.

Herr Rove, much like Heinrich Himmler did to Germany from 1933 to 1944, in cahoots with Dark Lord the Dick Cheney have been orchestrating the systematic dismantling of one Constitutional Right after another. Our freedoms are being eroded faster than the polar ice caps. They're spending our money at a rate that it will never be recouped — except for the tens of millions the West Wing insiders and their cronies are stashing in goof-proof hide-aways.

The most positive thing each and every American can do is register to vote, then go to the polls this Nov. 7 and vote for any and all Democratic candidates listed.

Once we take over the Senate and House, we can start to clean up the messes of Herr Oberst Karl Rove, Dark Lord Cheney, their puppet King George XLIII, and the rest of the Fascist criminals who illegally commandeered our White House and shanghaied our Government.

If you want Libertarian or Green Party or Draculan or whatever other party candidates we can begin to work on that once the blackguards are gone.

One word of warning: Be careful what you wish for, 'cause you just might get it. Lest we forget all the backbiting and infighting that went on among the Ross Perot bunch and the Green Party...

Up the Dems!  
Shalom, Friends of Liberty.  
(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service in the U.S. Army, he holds a BS and MA in Communications from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Depending upon your taste in political stew, you can either blame or thank Jerry for his weekly "Out Of The Blue" feature in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. Visit his blog BLUE STATE VIEW at [illinoiscentral.blogspot.com](http://illinoiscentral.blogspot.com))

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# Bush League Media & Sins of Intermission

## Covering Up The Democratic Senate Hearing On Pre-Iraq War Intelligence Radical Roots: Congressional Oversight Showdown, 11/3/05

By CAPTAIN ERIC H. MAY  
SPECIAL TO LONE STAR ICONOCLAST

### GUEST COMMENTARY

The Senate Democrats took a great step towards acting like senators November 2, 2005, when they used a bit of parliamentary footwork to shut down their house of Congress, and went into closed session to demand answers on the “misinformation and disinformation” that led to the war.

The corporate media folks who helped to sell the war were quite alarmed as they stood outside those doors that night, wondering what new lies to tell the public — or whether it wasn't too late to tell more lies at all. They wore “We're busted!” expressions as they waited for the awful reality of Congressional oversight to break forth from the sealed Senate chamber. Having so well kept the public in a state of ignorance, they were rightly afraid of the effect the revelation of the systematic manipulation of media would have. They realized how hard a sell it would be to say that they were King George's “embedded media,” but didn't really mean to get into bed with him. Arguing that you're just a bit embedded is very much like arguing that you're just a little bit pregnant. Even the Fox news take on things boded nothing but ill for the pro-war Establishment: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,174187,00.html>.

Senate Republicans, led by Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts of Kansas, ended the impasse by pledging a hearing on the prewar intel to get things moving again — and have stonewalled the issue ever since. Mainstream “Journalism” pledged to pursue the story — and have been running away from it ever since.

#### Ignorance Is Bliss — So Keep Ignore the 6/26 Hearing!

The sin of commission (i.e., *lying*) is still a favored trick of the meretricious media..., but it isn't necessarily their best trick. For that, my vote goes to their capacity for sins of omission (i.e., *not telling the truth*). “Mary Tricks Media,” the Internet Underground's nickname for the mainstreamers, is living up to its reputation: They are willing to move and moan for money, but would prefer to “just lie there” as George has his way with them, then afterwards say that their hearts weren't in it.

The most recent sin of omission of note is the failure by any of the mainstream media to re-

port the 6/26 Senate Democratic Policy Committee meeting on prewar intelligence, held in a partisan Democrat setting because of the continued unwillingness of Senate Republicans to live up to their November promise to hold hearings on the lead-up to the war — and the media failed to remind the public of the promise.

C-SPAN, granted, thought the matter of the meeting important enough to warrant late-night airing on the day of the hearings, (Monday, 6/26) — then rebroadcast on a weekend afternoon (Saturday, 7/1): <http://inside.c-spanarchives.org:8080/cspan/cspan.csp?command=dprogram&record=546878130>. Alas, that was the extent of the mainstream coverage for a hearing that held the keys to impeachment — and possible imprisonment — of both Bush and Cheney. We can see it for ourselves in the C-SPAN version, of course — for a mere \$90 bucks. So much for the free press.

Some will remember the “Downing Street Hearings” of Rep. John Conyers, which were largely ignored by the media. If anything, the 6/26 prewar intel hearings were even more damning — particularly as they included the Downing Street memo reportage as an “encore” to the testimony of Bush League insiders who were willing to recant their role in the war set-up in public and reply to questions.

#### The Naked Emperor: Lies & Coercion; Conspiracy & War Crime

*Daily Kos* writer David Swanson wrote notes about the particulars of the two-hour hearing: <http://fishgrease.dailykos.com/storyonly/2006/6/26/19142/7905>. The notes themselves are part of the lamentable tale: Swanson didn't even stay until the end of the hearing, and neither he nor *Daily Kos* did an actual story on the biggest intelligence story of the year! It's a sad reality of the current state of the nation that such media as *Daily Kos*, set up as an alternative to the mainstream, have become a wishy-washy “mainstream alternative.”

In the hearing, one former Bush League *apparatchik* after another lamented the collective failure to get the truth out, pointed fingers at the media and

the Congress for being complicit, and condemned the White House. They affirmed that, indeed, “cherry-picked” intelligence was used to back policy (i.e., the Bush League lied); and that the reason for the willingness of the intel community to go along could be summed up in three words: *the vice president*. They self-absolved themselves even as they self-condemned themselves, a bit of ambivalence that passes for high virtue in the political warehouse of current Washington, D.C.

Most importantly, before it was all over, they affirmed that the *Downing Street Memoranda* of 2002 were in line with what they had seen from the front lines of the infowar against truth by the White House; that the decision to go to war was agreed upon in a nefarious deal by Georgie Porgie and Tony Baloney; and that the twisted trail to the war fit the definition of war crime. Needless to say, there was plenty there for “King George” headlines — except that the previous king by that name had a greater regard for the rule of law than the current one, and had a free American press to contend with.

Nowadays the rest of the world laments that U.S. media are much more interested in Oil and Israel than Honor and Integrity. Those outcries, though, are like the intel hearings: muffled by non-coverage (a lie of omission), or dismissed as anti-American anti-Semitic nonsense (a lie of commission). There's still another variant of how to kill the truth, though, which is a lie of *intermission*: just bury the real story beneath another story altogether!

The trick of lying by intermission worked exceedingly well in the Jessica Lynch farce, which distracted the popcorn-munching war fans of April, 2003 from the Battle of Baghdad, in which the U.S. 3rd Infantry, 101st Airborne and Marines engaged in a brutal fight that began at Baghdad Airport on April 5 and was only ending on April 9, as the media/military propaganda machine set up the “toppling of Saddam” shot by..., well, *toppling Saddam* (the statue, that is). That biggest story of the war would have been buried altogether, absent the efforts of



Captain May

Internet activists: <http://www.nationalvanguard.org/printer.php?id=6479>.

#### Shades of Orwell and Huxley in NY and DC

This time, the lie of intermission started with the *Three Amigos* of the NY TIMES, LA TIMES and WALL STREET JOURNAL, all of which were, no doubt, as aware of the pending

prewar intel hearing as the Drudge Report — though the Drudge Report was the only one that reported the pending hearings with it's June 23 notice: <http://www.drudge.com/news/82774/senate-dems-hold-iraq-hearings>.

The Three Amigos, though, were intent on giving Bush Leaguers a softball to hit, so they “broke” the story that will frame the “free press” debate of the pending elections: bank transfer snooping! Granted, juxtaposed against the claims of top intelligence officials that the the war lies amounted to war crimes, this is pale stuff — but there *was* no juxtaposition, of course!

The sorry story they ran allowed everyone involved all the comforts of hypocrisy. Republicans were able to pose as guardians of the public's *safety*, and the Democrats were able to pose as guardians of the public's *rights* — as both parties lead the public to World War. The media was able to pose as a critic of the Bush League with “exposure” — on a topic that the Bush League has been airing for years. It was a nice touch for the TIMES to link their “revelation” story to the NSA story of last year — which they suppressed for a year so that the public wouldn't be troubled by it until *after* the elections of 2004. THE TIMES even used the same reporter, Eric Lichtblau, who received the Pulitzer Prize for the year-old “news” of the NSA scam — more evidence that the Pulitzer Prize is this brave new Bushworld's Order of Lenin, given to such titans of TIMES integrity as Judith Miller. Miller received her prize for lying us into a war — with the assent and encouragement of the TIMES. THE LA TIMES joined the NY TIMES is editorializing on their lofty news coverage, while the WALL STREET JOURNAL editorial section condemned its own news section.

All this dog and pony show because both parties and all the lapdance prostitutes are impli-

cated in low-down acts that — according to the prewar intel witnesses — might be construed as war crimes by an objective and informed American People. Leading a country to — and then keeping it in — a world war plan touted as a “global war” is serious business — in a republic, that is. The parties and the press reckon that they would invite a “constitutional crisis” by telling after kissing the boy king, though. If the American People knew all the stuff that goes into the sausage of Mary Tricks Media and the Cowards Congress, they rationalize, it would retch and puke. Ergo, it can't know, it's that simple — in a dictatorship, that is.

Occasionally someone like NY TIMES reporter David Rosenbaum forgets the rule and pays the price. Rosenbaum was a TIMES D.C. political reporter whose last article, published Dec. 24, 2005, pointed at then-nominee Sam Alito's 1984 decision in favor Reagan administration wireless wiretaps — something that touched closely on the Bush League NSA domestic spying. Rosenbaum died of a “fatal mugging” two weeks later on the streets of D.C. last winter. Fatal muggings were, of course, a favored assassination technique of the old Soviet Union, against whom I fought my Cold War in Army military intelligence. The U.S. Media didn't miss a beat as it parroted the official story of a random act of violence, but the Internet grapevine saw it differently and truly: <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=m19465&l=i&size=1&hd=0>

Orwell said it all before most of us were born, but it's worth stating over and over: *He who controls the present controls the past; he who controls the past controls the future.* The Bush League has decreed — in deeds that silence words — that it controls the present debate, past history and future course of the USA. The aim, King George never tires of telling us, is a generational war in the Middle East, something that simply can't happen without a draft (never mentioned); the use of nukes (seldom mentioned); and the complicity of an embedded media (not mentioned since the days when it was proud to call itself an embedded media).

The reality of a criminal cabal that sent us off to a criminal war is something that must be suppressed at all costs, and the em

Continued On Next Page



# Will Rick Perry Have A Bad Reelection Hair Day In November?

## Will Gov. Perry Take The Ferry?

Look, I know I've been writing a lot about the governor and how during the past 5 years of his reign he mercilessly and maliciously has "flim-flammed" the good people of Texas.

But I've only been writing my Blog for two weeks now. <<http://pstern.statesmanblogs.com>> You're lucky if you haven't been reading the stuff I've published the past five years on "Mr. GoodHair!"

I know you folks out there must be saying, "Wow, this guy really has a vendetta against the governor."

You know what? **You're correct!**

Unlike the famous "Mafioso" saying from TV Soprano's mob boss Tony Soprano, it's **NOT "just business."** For me, it's **personal!**

But that's what happens to me when someone in power with political muscle and clout abuses and takes advantage of hardworking Texans.

And that's exactly what Perry has done since the first day he took over George Walker Bush's place in the Governor's Mansion when Bush evacuated Texas for Washington D.C.

During the 5 years Gov. Rick "Special Interest" Perry didn't lift a finger to help hardworking Texans. In fact, he did a lot to hurt them — where it **REALLY** hurts — **in their wallets!**

So, you may say, "What did Perry do that was so bad?"

Well, here you go!

· Perry promised to help homeowners get relief from high taxes; however, during the past six years property taxes have sky-rocketed **more than 800 percent** in some districts

· Perry promised to help Texas homeowners with high insurance costs; however, two years ago home insurance premiums doubled overnight due to lax legislation and officials looking the other way

· When home insurance premiums doubled, the governor and [at that time] Texas Insurance Commissioner Jose Montemayor and current TDI Commission Mike Geeslin promised to force the insurance industry to reimburse homeowners at least 10 percent of the recent 100 percent jump in costs — **has anyone gotten a check back from an insurance company — except maybe our special interest officials?**

· The governor traveled around Texas pushing legislation to eliminate "frivolous" medical malpractice lawsuits with the promise that doing so would lower medical and health care costs; however, after voters took him for his word and voted for the legislation costs are still



### Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

high and are continuing to rise

· Two years ago Perry cut important social services, including children's healthcare, to balance the state budget; one year later, he replaced some of the funding for these programs boasting that he increased health care tax dollars for more Texas children

· During his gubernatorial career Perry resolutely proclaimed that public education was NOT in crisis — two years ago he admitted there was a financing problem and called for two special sessions on public education that went nowhere; part of the reason that nothing was accomplished was Perry's poor leadership

· Perry wanted to finance public education with taxes on "Gentlemen's Clubs" and neither Republicans nor Demo-

crats voted to do so

· Now Perry wants to finance education with cigarette tax increases emphatically stating that he didn't single-out any specific population — then why DIDN'T the governor tax ALL tobacco products?

· And why did the governor decide only to increase the tax on buying USED cars and trucks? Why not ALL vehicles new and used? Hmmm, could it be another special interest power-play?

· Now Perry promises that ALL businesses will pay a fair tax for public schools, but the truth is that the governor wants to finance education with a modified Business Tax that once again enables his BIG Business campaign contributors to circumvent paying their fair share.

· Perry, legislators and others are instituting a Teacher Incentive Plan to focus on getting students to pass the state exam(s) as the measure of success; our children are NOT commodities on an assembly line and such a ludicrous piece-work pay incentive is an insult

to teachers and their honorable profession — furthermore, if you'd give teachers a professional and reasonable salary and benefits there would be no economic reason to provide extra salary dollars for an incentive program.

· After forcing teachers to accept pay cuts and lose many of their health and retirement benefits, Perry and officials are returning some of that money and are calling it increasing teacher pay an average of \$2,000 per teacher.

· Perry lobbied for deregulating higher education with the promise that it would lower tuition costs; after the legislation was passed by voters, UT immediately raised tuition and currently is doing so again.

· Perry campaigned around the state to deregulate electric companies promising that doing so would make costs to consumers more competitive and affordable — Texans are feeling the heat from that fiasco since summer electric costs have skyrocketed.

· Perry continues to promise Texans "NO NEW TAXES," but

what are toll roads if not new taxes?

Overall, Gov. Rick Perry has been "a VERY bad man" for most Texans and their families. His wealthy campaign contributors and big business constituents have made higher profits and more money by abusing the pockets of average Texans.

Currently Perry is supporting and approving all sorts of positive things, e.g., more affordable low income housing, freeing up some tax dollars so low income folks can get homes, creating some jobs here and there, etc.

"So," you may say, "what's wrong with that?"

Well, I'll tell you — *The former comedienne and actress Mae West once defined "a Fox" as... "a Wolf bringing gifts."*

This definition may be applied to our governor's late efforts for the people.

Remember, this is a reelection year for Gov. Perry. With only 4 months left of his 5 years as governor, before the November election, he has nothing to lose and only has everything to gain by leaving this "Good Governor" impression in the people's minds just before the election.

The circus magnate P.T. Barnum stated that, "There's a sucker born every minute."

That's what our governor is hoping... **that the people of Texas are suckers.**

In November voters need to make a strong statement to the governor. We know what he's done during his miserable 5-year reign.

We know all the promises he's made to us and how few he has honored.

We know how his poor leadership of the Texas Legislature has hurt hardworking Texans and their families.

But most of all, our strong statement declares that we are NOT suckers!

We must NOT permit Perry to scam another 4-year term that will cause further harm to future generations of Texans.

So, say it loud and clear on Election Day with your vote against Perry!

**Make Gov. Perry take the Ferry!!! [from office]**

*Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas, a former Director of Information Services, University Professor and Public School Administrator, is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He is a Disabled Vietnam Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees. You may contact Peter Stern at: <[psstern@austin.rr.com](mailto:psstern@austin.rr.com)>.*

### CAPTAIN MAY... From Previous Page

bedded media is eager to oblige, knowing full well what the Whitewash House means when it orders them to stay *under cover*. After all, they reckon, this troublesome war crime angle is most inconvenient, as it brings to mind other folks who were once heralded for their capacity to "distill truth" for their countries, little-

mentioned people who went by names like Goebbels and Riefenstahl. So under cover they stay, scratching at sheets of poor print, wishing they could be as natural when they faked it as Judith Miller, the high priestess of prostitution, and earn the proud Pulitzers the way she did.

*Captain Eric H. May, a former Army intelligence and public af-*

*fairs officer, is the founder of Ghost Troop, which was formed in response to the Battle of Baghdad Cover Up (BOBCUP) in 2003. He has published a four-volume report to Congress on the cover-up at <[www.ghosttroop.net](http://www.ghosttroop.net)> — a report still ignored by Congress, avoided by the media, and relished by the Internet.*

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# Phony Millionaires Spend Themselves Into Poorhouse

A Gainesville jury tried to decide on June 30, 1967 whether Ernest and Margaret Medders were a couple of folksy con artists or bumbling bumpkins caught up in an incredible charade.

The strange saga began in 1961 in Memphis, Tennessee, where the impoverished parents struggled to support ten children. Ernest was a fourth-grade dropout, who worked days as a mechanic's helper and peddled vegetables out of his station wagon on the weekends. Margaret, a practical nurse, pulled 16-hour shifts at a local hospital.

Then one day an attorney informed Ernest that he and his many kinfolks were among the 3,000 plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit challenging a petroleum company for the rights to a Texas oilfield. At stake was an estimated \$500 million in royalties.

In their ignorance and desperation, the wishful thinkers jumped to a preposterous conclusion. They convinced themselves the suit would succeed and that every last cent would go to Ernest.

The jubilant nurse naturally shared the wonderful news with co-workers. In no time flat, the Medderses' good fortune was the talk of the hospital, which happened to be run by a religious order called the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph of the Perpetual Adoration.

## This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



The Sisters were, in fact, far from poor and always on the lookout for well-heeled benefactors. Viewing the Medderses as potential contributors, the order lent them money to cover household expenses and legal fees.

When the generous loans started to exceed \$60,000 a month, Ernest and Margaret moved to North Texas. They purchased a 185-acre farm near the small community of Muenster and built a 15-room residence. The total tab for the new homestead was a whopping \$307,000.

Margaret enrolled her daughters in Hockaday, an exclusive girls' school in Dallas. To spare the little darlings the indignity of dormitory life and to improve their social standing, she presented them with a \$40,000 home away from home.

By 1965 Margaret was eager to rub elbows with the high-rollers of Big D society. She threw a party for a thousand people in their brand-new rodeo-size barn dubbed "the coliseum."

A slick public relations specialist hired for the occasion smooth-talked the Dallas media into covering what he billed as

the social event of the year. For once his hype proved to be no exaggeration.

Guests within a hundred-mile radius came in buses, while others flew chartered airplanes to Gainesville and completed the trip by helicopter. Guy Lombardo and his band provided the musical entertainment for the truly memorable night.

The spectacular shindig opened a lot of doors for the ecstatic hosts, most notably the one leading to the pinnacle of power. Following visits by Congressman Graham Purcell, Gov. John Connally and Attorney General Waggoner Carr plus substantial donations to the Democratic Party, the Medderses attended a presidential ball in Houston on April 28, 1966.

At the personal invitation of President Lyndon Johnson, the couple went to Washington six days later for a reception at the White House. Since LBJ was returning to Texas the next morning, he asked the dazzled duo to accompany him on Air Force One.

Soon after the Potomac adventure, the Poor Sisters finally turned off the tap. However, the publicity shy nuns hesitated to press criminal charges even though Ernest and Margaret had taken them for a two-million-dollar ride.

The Medderses might still have made it had they come to their senses. The long-shot lawsuit had been thrown out of court the previous year, but they could have lived comfortably on the income from their cattle business.

Stubbornly refusing to give up their millionaire masquerade, Ernest and Margaret borrowed \$730,000 from obliging banks in Muenster, Wichita Falls and Memphis. They shot the whole wad on lavish parties, including one for psychic Jeane Dixon, and in a matter of months wound up flat broke.

Meanwhile, Ernest's relatives suspected he had taken off with the entire pot at the end of the rainbow. Upset over his apparent refusal to share the proceeds from the lawsuit, they sued to force him to reveal the source of his income.

Ernest candidly confessed in open court that his ship had never come in and the \$500-million bonanza had been lost at sea. For five fantastic years, his clan had lived high on the hog off other people's money, namely the Poor Sisters and a bunch of gullible bankers.

Ernest and Margaret Medders eventually lost everything except their freedom. No jury had the stomach for putting

them behind bars, and bankruptcy enabled them to give creditors the brush-off.

The Medderses resurfaced in Memphis in 1973. In the last chapter of their bizarre rags-to-riches-to-rags story, they were surviving on Social Security.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

To The Editor:

Everybody from President Karl Rove, Emperor George Bush, "Shotgun" Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condo Rice who had anything to do with ordering the illegal war in Iraq, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 2,500 of our brave troops who were wrongfully ordered to "fight for OUR freedom" plus thousands of innocent Iraqi women and children, should be held accountable for their participation in these crimes against humanity. Our brave troops are efficiently fighting the war which they were ordered to fight by their commander in chief, just as we were ordered to fight in Vietnam for The Dragon Lady and for General Ky to remain in power, by Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnston and Nixon.

George Bush should not be allowed to use the lame excuse of "Establishing a 'democracy' in Iraq." The "establishing a democracy" excuse started only after no weapons of mass destruction were found. If he is truly concerned about establishing a 'democracy' why not respect America's existing Democracy, which has been around since 1776? Or what about Bush-Family-oil-business-associates in Kuwait Royal Family who continue treating women even worse than their dogs?

George Bush Sr and Jr are fully aware of the 'sex-slave human-trafficking' from other countries in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and other Arab countries, why not push them to establish 'democracy' in their countries?

Placido Salazar

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GUEST COMMENTARY

# Endless War

By **MIKE WESTERGREN**  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

As we approach the 5th Anniversary of 9/11, I believe it is time to question the concept of Endless War.

You probably haven't heard the government use this phrase but let's examine why it is a perfectly appropriate term. The government has very effectively convinced us that we are at war with a bunch of terrorists. Since terrorists have been around for a long time and will likely be around until the end of time, it follows that a war against terrorism will last a long time—hence endless war.

Clearly we should not be willing to so freely give *Carte Blanche* power to a government not known for competence as we so painfully learned last hurricane season. Perhaps we would have more to fear from a competent one.

I would suggest that things like the Patriot Act, widespread phone tapping and tracking of our phone calls are really just a symptom of this huge grant of war power. Ap-

parently as indicated by recent polling, the President has lost the confidence of the public which is most unfortunate but perhaps due to many of us having second thoughts about fighting an endless war.

Although the Bush Administration might be able to make a case for operational secrecy, the debate about what I have suggested in this essay has never taken place, certainly not in the place where it must—the Congress. Until that occurs we shall flounder in a general malaise that places us on a yo-yo course between inaction and over reaction.

So if you accept this premise, of what should the debate be about?

I would suggest that the first part of the debate should be about identifying the enemy. This may seem strange to some but it is essential if we are to arrive at a consensus concerning the nature of the powers we should be willing to confer on the government in order to prevent the reoccurrence of events like 9/11. Wars are declared against nation states not individual or groups of individuals.

This is not to say that because the enemy is not an organized nation state, it is not a grave threat. When you attempt to go to war against a mere group of individuals, you have elevated them to a status to which they are not entitled.

But this doesn't tell us anything about who the enemy really is. For that I would suggest that you read or go see the recent best seller, *THE DA VINCE CODE*. In this seemingly unlikely source for this discussion you will find a profile and character study of the enemy, you need only substitute Islam for Catholic Christian, but the resulting personality type is the same. There you will find the foot soldier, Silas and the leader Aringarosa. Fanaticism has universal components, one of which is the ability to pervert a perfectly good and righteous belief system to a single purpose objective that can justify anything for the cause. In this connection some level of competence is to be expected but only so far and it is their very obsession that should be viewed as an opportunity to seize control. Their obsessive nature should be a means to



Mike Westergren

undermine them if we could only devote resources in that direction. Their peculiar habits should if properly studied lead us right to them. The debate should at least ask if this is being pursued. This is apparently exactly how they were able to find and kill al-Zarqawi. We may still need to ask the question—are they doing this enough.

The next phase of the debate should turn to what is being done to protect the nation from further attacks? It is very unlikely that the same type of attack will happen again. The enemy's competence includes a certain level of creativity—so the next attack will likely be something completely different. Since they have followers all over the world, it is likely that the next wave of perpetrators will not be Arab. So how will the next attack come? We must be equally creative in figuring out what it will be. The debate should certainly include at least a general discussion of what is being done to figure out what they are up to. This is not an easy subject but it should at the very least include the funding of think tank efforts at profiling the

enemy, a data base of all prior terrorist plots whether carried out or discovered and anything else that a serious discussion can lead us to.

This debate must occur before we can be restored to our rightful place as a truly free country. The idea that the government knows best and will above all protect us is really nothing more than a sheepish acceptance of **BIG BROTHER**.

*Mike Westergren is currently serving as In House Counsel at Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, Texas. Previously, he was Visiting Judge, 2001-August 2004; District Judge, 214 District Court, Nueces County, 1984 to 2000; Nueces County Attorney, 1977-1983; Justice of the Peace, Nueces County, 1973-1976; Assistant Nueces County Attorney, 1970-1971; Adjunct Professor of Criminal Justice, Texas A&M at Corpus Christi; Editorial Board Member, Corpus Christi Lawyer; former President and a Board Member, Children's Heart Institute; former Vice President, Nueces County Historical Society; received Juris Doctorate, University of Texas School of Law, 1970; Bachelor of Arts, University of Texas at Austin, 1967. He has been married since 1971, and is the father of two adult children*

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