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## Suicide Rate Doubles For Army Soldiers In Iraq

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Army medical experts reported last week that the suicide rate for U.S. Army soldiers in Iraq doubled last year and exceeded its 2003 level.

In 2005, 22 soldiers killed themselves — a rate of 19.9 per 100,000 soldiers.

In 2004, the rate fell to 10.5 per 100,000.

In 2003, the rate was 18.8 per 100,000.

The Army's surgeon general, Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, told reporters that the suicide rates change by year, so interpretation could prove futile.

At a news conference, Kiley noted that the rate for the Army personnel was still lower than that of civilians.

Kiley gave his remarks during the release a study on the mental health of U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

## Cheney To Testify For Defense At Aide's Trial

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Vice President Dick Cheney is expected to testify in the trial of his former chief of staff next month, according to reports.

The attorneys for I. Lewis Libby said they would call Cheney to the stand in order to rebuke the charges.

Libby is charged with five counts of perjury and obstruction-of-justice in a grand jury investigation into the leak of the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame.

Historians and legal experts say that Cheney will be the first sitting vice president to offer testimony in a criminal case.

Cheney's testimony is important in the case

since he participated in the administration's handling of Plame's husband, a former U.S. ambassador who publically criticized the White House of fitting intelligence to its argument to invade Iraq in 2003.

Syndicated columnist Robert Novak, though he failed to provide the source, outed Plame's identity and status in a July 2003 piece. A few months later, a special investigation was called to find if the Plame leak was made in retaliation.

Special Counsel Patrick J. Fitzgerald had not planned to call Cheney as a witness, though he claims that both Cheney and his aide intended to counter the claims by Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV.

## Two More Reports Warn Of Iraq Instability

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two reports released last week warned that Iraq was nearing the brink of disaster.

The Pentagon reported on Monday that violence was at an all-time high and that a local militia had replaced Al Qaeda as the most dangerous organization there.

A think tank called the International Crisis Group suggested on Tuesday that the international community should stop Iraq from falling any further into chaos.

If not, the conflict could bring more war to the region.

The Medic Army militia led by Shiite cleric Montana al-Sadri had not been named by the Pentagon before.

In fact, the U.S. military had preferred capturing suspected militia leader than launched a full-scale attack on al-Sadri's stronghold.

Al-Sadri helped bring Shiite Prime Minister Nora al-Malica to power. Al-Malica has yet to fulfill his promise to stop the militias.

The ICG report offered a different solution than the Iraq Study Group's assessment to the Bush administration's policy problems in Iraq.

The ICG's solution called not for a military but for political compromise between all parties interested in Iraq's well-being. The stage for the compromise must be set in an international conference, the ICG recommended.

The White House has failed to broker such a political compromise, though U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agreed that Iraq's neighbors — Syria and Iran — should sit at the negotiation table.

President George W. Bush has promised to reveal his new plan for Iraq in January.

## Airline Waste Could Replenish Fleet: Study

NEW YORK — A senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) reported that if the airline industry were to recycle the aluminum cans it disposes annually, 58 new 747s could be built.

Sea-Tac, the recycling leader among the 30 airports in the study, has adapted to its coffee-loving consumer environment and, as such, has sent roughly seven tons of leftover coffee grounds generated each month for composting.

At \$60 a ton, the costs, thus, have been cut by 75 percent.

Overall, airports and airlines would save the same amount of energy produced by 20,000 households, if they matched the average domestic recycling rate.

Along with a huge amount of recyclable waste, the industry is away a significant amount of money," said Dr. Allen Hershkowitz.

"And it's not just dollars," he added. "These are resources that don't need to be mined, logged or drilled. And by avoiding all that, you save a lot of energy and avoid a lot of emissions."

According to a new NRDC study, the airline industry disposed about 9,000 tons of plastic in 2004. The paper waste the industry accrued could turn a football field into a 230-foot graveyard.

And the waste generated is only expected to increase. By 2015, U.S. airports could double its 2004 production of waste to almost a million tons.

The researchers found that 75 percent of the waste passengers leave (1.3 pounds of garbage) is recyclable or compostable. The airline industry as a whole, though, recycles less than 20 percent of its waste.

Dr. Hershkowitz said that airport managers are seeing dollar signs attached to this waste.

At Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (Sea-Tac), for example, the cost savings is about \$180,000 annually, according to officials.

## Bush Stops CIA Dissent On Iran Policy, Says Former CIA Analyst

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A former analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency accused the Bush administration last week of pressuring the agency to stop giving opinions that contradict its refusal to open diplomacy with Iran.

Flynt Leverett said he was prevented from stating in an

opinion piece that Iran had cooperated with the United States government in Afghanistan operations after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

The source material of Leverett's 1,000 New York Times article cleared a CIA review board without changes and is available on the Internet, but

the board stopped the publication of the article itself saying it contained classified information.

"The White House inserted itself into the prepublication review process for an op-ed on the administration's bungling of the Iran portfolio," wrote Leverett at the website

talkingpointsmemo.com.

Leverett is a former Middle East analyst at the CIA and the National Security Council who now works at a Washington, D.C. thinktank called the New America Foundation.

In the past, Leverett has criticized the White House for its backing of the military invasion of Iraq.

## Crawford Peace House Closed Until Dec. 31

CRAWFORD — The Crawford Peace House will be closed for Holy Days until Dec. 31.

Officials at the Peace House invites the public to their fourth annual New Year's Eve Vigil for Peace on Sunday, Dec. 31, at 5:30 p.m.

Theme for the event will be in remembrance of the 650,000

Iraqi civilians who have been lost during the past 3½ years, noted officials, saying, "We wish each and every one of you peace during this time when many different religions take time to give of themselves and reflect on how our own religion or spiritual leanings teach the true meaning of love and peace."



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# Crass Dismissed

## Petition Calls For Scrapping 'No Child Left Behind' Act

### Interview With Dr. Philip Kovacs, Educator Roundtable Organizer

By **NATHAN DIEBENOW**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Dr. Philip Kovacs wants teachers and their school districts to have more control over their classrooms.

Among other things, so do the 20,000-plus signers of an online petition calling for the end of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The petition issued by Dr. Kovacs' group, The Educator Roundtable, has taken on a life of its own in the last three weeks.

Without any mainstream press, the petition grew to over 12,000 signatures in the first week of its release.

Thus far, nine education-based organizations have also partnered with the Roundtable. They include Vermont Society for the Study of Education, Authentic Learning Network, No Child Left, Florida Coalition for Assessment Reform, k4teens, Leave My Child Alone!, Marylanders Against High-Stakes Testing, New Democracy, and Coalition for Better Education.

Since the Act was signed into law with bi-partisan backing in 2002, teachers have grumbled about the lack of control they have endured, while others have been so frustrated that they have left their profession entirely.

As one teacher wrote on the petition: "I am retiring early. We feel we are fleeing a sinking ship, after giving our entire lives to our students and our profession. It is a sad way to end a career."

However, parents are also expressing fear that their children's education has suffered under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

"I feel like my little boy is being groomed for a life on an assembly line rather than being taught how to think and be creative," wrote a parent on the petition.

Susan Ohanian, one of Roundtable's founders, ques-

tioned the federal government's priorities in authorizing NCLB when she put it this way:

"When Congress passes No Child Left Unfed, No Child Without Health Care and No Child Left Homeless, then we can talk seriously about No Child Left Behind."

The Educator Roundtable petition itself states that its signatories accept the goal of teacher and school district accountability but not "the law's simplistic approach to education reform and how it wastes student potential, mis-allocates teaching resources, shrinks the curriculum, and threatens the future of our democratic republic by undermining public education."

With this 16-point petition, the Roundtable is attempting to unite and organize the grumbling teachers and concerned parents to prevent the Democratically-controlled Congress from reauthorizing the Act next year.

The Roundtable maintains that it not a rag-tag group of naysayers but has an alternative to NCLB that calls for "formal state-level dialogues led by working educators, rather than by politicians, ideology-bound 'think tanks,' or business and industry activists who have little or no direct experience in the field of education."

The **ICONOCLAST's** Nathan Diebenow caught up with the lead Roundtable organizer, Dr. Kovacs, while the assistant professor was taking a break from grading papers before the winter holiday at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Here is that interview:

**ICONOCLAST:** What is your background?

**DR. PHILIP KOVACS:** I started as a high school English teacher and went on from there to get my PhD in educational policy studies. I actually did that because of a growing standardization inside of the classroom. No Child Left Behind is sort of



**DR. PHILIP KOVACS**, the lead organizer of the Educator Roundtable, is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

the pinnacle of a larger movement that's bipartisan. Both Democrats and Republicans are culprits in NCLB and the standardization, so as a classroom teacher, I realized that I would have very little (power) to get autonomy that I desire to do different sorts of things for different types of students in my classroom.

I went to Georgia State University and picked up a PhD in educational policy studies which I finished in August. I focused my dissertation on neo-conservative and neo-liberal think tanks and the roles they played in creating No Child Left Behind. That understanding of what those organizations did led to the founding of a counter-organization to try to undo some of their doings, which is exactly what we're trying to do right now.

**ICONOCLAST:** What are you doing right now job-wise?

**DR. KOVACS:** I'm at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. I was fortunate enough to get a job right before completing my dissertation. I'm in the Department of Education and what I do is introductory courses for undergraduates and graduate level curriculum courses.

I also do volunteer work in lo-

ering doing is reducing class time in subjects like history, art, foreign language, even science right now because it's not being tested yet so they can spend more time in math and reading to increase scores there.

Ultimately what's happening to the students there is that they're getting a lop-sided curriculum. And if you believe at all in this notion of democracy, then we have to acknowledge that a part of the process of becoming Democrats is understanding people and each other in a variety of ways and formats. That includes with classes like the arts and science and history and geography and civics which we're seeing disappear nationwide. Again, that's just not my opinion. That's fact, and I can point you to research that backs that up.

**ICONOCLAST:** How new is this Educator Roundtable? How many members make it up?

**DR. KOVACS:** (laughs) That's really funny. It came out of an online listserv on assessment reform. The first email that we have discussing it that I have is dated Oct. 24. I coin the phrase I think on Oct. 27, and I got a domain name, threw up the crumbiest website in the history of websites and just made available to anyone who wanted to be involved.

The first thing we wanted to do was list our complaints about "No Child Left Behind," so what we did was throw up a list. Over the course of three weeks, about 35 people got really involved. We just argued essentially online, never on phone. Not one of us has — maybe a few — has met face-to-face. We narrowed it down to 16 points, and got the petition up.

Our official website was launched on Monday night at 4 a.m. It's all volunteer staff, and it's teachers, scholars, activists — there's a former newspaper publisher. It's really a motley crew of different individuals aged 29 to I think our oldest member is 81 — Marion Brady. He's been in the educational reform business for a long time. His first articles are in the 1966 Phi Delta Kaplan.

I guess that's the history of how we came together — completely online without ever meeting. It's kind of democracy at play because I sort of emerged as the director, but everyone is given an equal voice

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before we make any sort of decision.

ICONOCLAST: Can you give me an indication of when NCLB would be up for re-authorization? Will it happen quickly or take place closer to the election season?

DR. KOVACS: There's a couple of competing theories on that, and it depends on who you ask and how you ask it. Some people are saying that it's going to be put off. It's scheduled for re-authorization in 2007, but education is a hot potato. Nobody wants to touch it for one thing. You can't come into office and say schools are okay. You've got to come in with some sort of radical plan or you've got to do something new and exciting; otherwise, it's just status quo.

This is sort of a rambling answer, but there are some Democrats that supported it who don't want to lose face and don't want to vote against reauthorization. There are some newer Democrats coming into office who are against reauthorization, and if I had my whits about me, I'd have those names in front of me.

Some people believe, and this is coming from previous supporters, that it's going to be put off until the 2008 election. We're not holding our breath, and we're trying to get a head start. We want to make sure that when January rolls around, we have plenty of signatures on this petition, and we're delivering them to the right people.

Our goal is pretty lofty. We're trying to get a million signatures, but we got 20,000 in three weeks without press whatsoever. One of the tactics we're going to use to get to that number is on our new website. You can actually download the petition, and there's a sign-up sheet attached, so we're hoping that individuals will print out and actually go out into the community and talk about what's going on and get the necessary signature, so we can deliver boxes of signatures to five Republicans and five Democrats.

Again, this is a bipartisan issue, and we know that there are people on our side from both sides of the aisle.

ICONOCLAST: What committee would this hit up?

DR. KOVACS: In the House, it would be Education. In the Senate, I know the committee is chaired by (Sen. Ted) Kennedy. As far as I know, he is for reauthorization. I'm hoping perhaps

naively that individuals have been sold a false bill of goods. This has happened several times over the past six years, but he was partially responsible for the crafting of the legislation, so I'm not sure.

What we're hoping as well is that people are going to go to the petition and start to read the comments left by teachers and parents. I mean, the most powerful thing now is not the number of signatures but the quality of some comments. Of course, there are some comments that are absolutely ridiculous and some of the spelling is funny, but it is open to the public.

My only real general complaint with the petition at this point is that people seem to think that it's just the responsibility or a result of George Bush, and that's just not the case. Again, the culprits are Democrats and Republicans.

ICONOCLAST: What specific think tanks helped formulate the culture that created NCLB?

DR. KOVACS: American Enterprise Institute, and with them, you're going to have Frederick Hess. He was a big supporter. J.P. Green with the Manhattan Institute. The Manhattan Institute likes to claim credit for being behind this legislation. The Heritage Foundation claims that they were fundamental in getting this legislation passed, especially an individual named Krista Kafer.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation with Chester Finn. He was the Asst. Secretary of Education under (President Ronald) Reagan. They are active in Dayton, Ohio. They really support the legislation, and part of the reason they support it in particular is that they create charter schools. Under No Child Left Behind, a needs improvement public school can be turned into a charter school. This should really trouble genuine conservatives because here's a federal legislation reaching into local communities, and forcing those local communities to change governance of their schools from democratically-controlled schools by school boards to smaller corporate-funded charter schools.

According to American Enterprise Institute's Frederick Hess' own research, one out of four charter school students are sitting in a charter school with the help of either the Gates Foundation or the Walton Foundation. That's a staggering sta-

tistic.

ICONOCLAST: Wow! (laughs)

DR. KOVACS: I know. I know. ICONOCLAST: So Gates and Walton. So basically Microsoft and Wal-Mart. Is that what you're saying?

DR. KOVACS: Essentially, and that's from Frederick Hess himself. He almost giddily supports it. There's a culture or ideology that believes that the market can serve and take care of all of our problems, and the idea here is that competition is going to save the day. Now, what I would really like to do is invite these people into my community, and I'd like to take them less than a mile from my university to my high school. I'd like them to try to convince me that just by turning that over into a Microsoft School or a Wal-Mart School it is going to solve all the problems that are inherent in the community itself.

I think that Americans for whatever reason have forgotten that schools reflect the communities that they're in and any problem in that community is going to be in that school as well. Just privatizing the school or turning it into a charter is going to do nothing about lack of healthcare, or the 68 percent of African-Americans who live with one parent or less, or lead in the drinking water.

Richard Rothstein published a piece called "Proficiency for All - An Oxymoron," which is available online, that poo-poops the idea that competition is going to take care of all these things. Anyone who is really willing to spend a minute to walk into a "failing school" and look around will understand that it's not going to work.

On a whole other level is that "No Child Left Behind" requires that we dis-aggregate data and that we look at all students in different sub-groups, so let's say you have 95 percent of your students making progress, and then two special education students fail to make progress, the entire school is listed as failing. If one student who is a special ed student fails to make progress, the entire school is labeled as failing.

Essentially, the whole act is asking educators to cure mental retardation as well, which is ridiculous. When you look again at the comments on the petition, really the most outspoken folks are the special ed teachers who are absolutely up in arms.

But teachers are traditionally

not a group with any power that anyone is really interested in listening to, and the unions are really doing nothing — oh, this is where I get into trouble. The unions are doing nothing for teachers right now. Both unions support fixing "No Child Left Behind," but our organization is of the opinion that if you fix it, then change the name and get rid of the name and change it back to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The NCLB was just a reauthorization of that act which was passed in I think 1964.

ICONOCLAST: Well, what is the root cause of poor educational development?

DR. KOVACS: Wow, that's a huge question.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

DR. KOVACS: There are multiple causes; therefore, there are multiple solutions, and for me to be sitting here in Huntsville, Ala. and claim I know what's causing problems all over the country, I'd be guilty of what's going on in Washington, D.C.

What we would like to see happen is that local communities identify areas that they need improvement with and that they set up their own plans for doing so. (President) Reagan had block grants for states. Send money to states and let the states decide what would be done with that.

I would love to see us return to where master teachers identified as such by their peers, their students, their community members, would meet and decide how and where money was going to be spent. By some estimates, we're spending \$16 billion a year on tests, and this does not seem to be huge to me. If you take a school with 2,000 students who take tests maybe seven times a year, if we only charge \$40 a test which is a cheap estimate, you can begin to see how many millions and ultimately billions of dollars go into testing. Why can't we do something entirely different with it?

My opinion is that if you're a teacher and you can't tell me from the beginning of the year to the end of the year that a child has either made progress or hasn't made progress without a test that you bought from someone, you're not a teacher. You're something entirely different. Maybe you're a trainer. You're a babysitter. I don't know. But teachers should be able to tell if their students have made progress without testing them

to death.

Now, obviously, I'm not completely opposed to all testing. I'm grading tests right now. (laughs) But I'm also grading essays. I'm also taking into consideration other types of work, so this limiting of assessment to testing is ultimately limiting how we look at our children. They are more than mathematicians and readers. They're more than scientists. They're future citizens in a democracy, and educating them that way requires an entirely different paradigm.

Unlike unions, we're not looking to fix or tweak the legislation. Neither are the 20,000 people that have signed in three weeks again with no advertising. We sort of set it free in school systems, and it's quite amazing how its caught on.

ICONOCLAST: Correct me if I'm wrong, but your petition doesn't mention scraping provisions of NCLB that have to do with the militarization of public schools. Why is that?

DR. KOVACS: Yeah, let me tell you. Big flip on our part. I can't believe that we missed it. We should have been clear on that point.

Seeing it now probably 400 times on the comments has made us realize that what we're going to do — and again this is happening so fast that we can't even keep up with it ourselves — we're going to add another page to our website that says, "This is what we missed, and especially the clause that opens up students to military recruitment." Many parents don't know that they have to contact their schools to pull their children off of that list.

ICONOCLAST: What is the role that public schools should play in our society? I think you mentioned it earlier, but can you expand upon it?

DR. KOVACS: Yeah, there is no way we can have a representative republic if we don't have children who turn into adults who are capable of appropriating, synthesizing, evaluating, and acting on information. No Child Left Behind is not creating those types of children or the environments where those types of children can matriculate.

We're isolating knowledge, forcing it into people's heads, and then asking them to regurgitate it. That ultimately has quite the opposite effect. People will be able to work hard. We have the most productive

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workforce on the planet, but they aren't going to be able to question policy. It would be nice if we worked on democracy in our communities here before we went around the globe spending billions of dollars spreading it to people who don't necessarily want it. That's probably going to get me in trouble as well.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) Well, let me play Devil's advocate: is there anything right about No Child Left Behind?

DR. KOVACS: Any competent educator can walk into a school and tell people what it's doing right and what it's going wrong. To think that we needed No Child Left Behind to tell us that schools were failing is just a flat out blatant lie.

Some communities are failing. Some families are failing. Of course, some schools are failing, but I'm not going to believe it's widespread, not when we're the sole global superpower.

We just took six Nobel prizes in science, and people are trying to tell us that our science program is failing the country widespread? Sorry, no, our public schools have developed an infrastructure that allows us to have amazing scientists, amazing mathematicians.

We still are the world's sole global superpower. (laughs) And I don't think we could have

19436. Stephen M Evans		
19435. Darnelle N. Ausbrooks		72150
19434. Katina Suggs		37821
19433. Chris Muskus		
19432. Melissa Ward please		93705
19431. Juanita		
19430. kathy vollaro		30528
19429. Suzanne Starks		95966
19428. Shawn Duckworth		
	There is something inherently wrong with laws that penalize Special Education children and the policies for implementing their educational programs. I have seen a distinct backward movement toward meeting their educational needs. I know teachers that have lost their jobs just because they had not completed a specific credential though there is evidence of their working toward earning their credentials. We do not live in a society where adults can afford to go to school without working a job to pay for their lives. Teaching is an extremely challenging and time-consuming profession that does not leave a lot of spare time to take multiple classes simultaneously. The belief that students will rise up to every one meeting proficiency levels at a specific scheduled date in time is absurd. Children do not walk into our classrooms with equal levels of intelligence and exposure to academics. I as a teacher have no control over the ills of society that effect the readiness of every child in my classroom.	
19427. Donna Sweet		
	The failure to develop critical thought as a result of NCLB is woefully apparent in today's students, and this alone jeopardizes the future of our country.	
19426. Gail Cutler		07450
19425. Susan Boyles		87401
19424. Rhonda Warford		72015
19423. Shannon McBride		46552
19422. April Williams		
19421. Jenifer Medina		10977
19420. Tamara Jensen		
19419. Elizabeth Jensen		

**THE EDUCATOR ROUNDTABLE's online petition allows signatories the opportunity to leave their personal comments for Congress to consider before the No Child Left Behind Act comes up for reauthorization next year.**

gotten there or stayed there if the 89 percent of the population that went to public schools are failures.

ICONOCLAST: You mentioned the lack of support from

unions and teacher organizations in scraping NCLB, but how come it has taken this long for movements like yours to get off the ground?

DR. KOVACS: Here, let me

get in trouble again. Someone said to me I guess a year and a half ago that the Left operates as a circular firing squad, and I think what's going on here is that you have a lot of disorga-

nized groups who have not been working together.

Again the two biggest organizations that are supposed to be protecting and helping teachers have essentially rolled over and exposed their belly to the beast. The unions aren't doing anything. We took it upon ourselves. One of our goals is to invite groups who are opposing reauthorization to pull our resources together and make a concerted push in D.C. to end it.

We've only been live with our new website for three days. It's Christmas time. We expect a lull but come Jan. 3 and 4, we're going to press. We're going to be contacting — you know, today was the first day we did a media campaign. We used 30 volunteers to contact newspapers in all 50 states. We intend to use 30 volunteers to generate letters to representatives, and hopefully, we're going to gather, take a little trip to D.C., present ourselves and present our grievances.

I think people have been too scared to oppose the legislation. Who wants to oppose the phrase, "no child left behind"? Who wants to say, "No, no! I oppose that!"? It's like "Enduring Freedom," which people are still enduring. It's very clever wording.

**INFO**  
[www.educatorroundtable.org/](http://www.educatorroundtable.org/)

## 'Shopping for Justice' March Stirs Spirits

NEW YORK CITY — Eighteen days before Christmas, holiday shoppers in Midtown Manhattan found themselves in the middle of a spirited display.

Thousands of marchers stretched for about 10-blocks long mourned in protest of police who killed an unarmed black man on his wedding day.

The police reported no arrests or incidents during the "Shopping for Justice" march, though some tourists and shoppers complained of inconvenience in the two targeted commercial districts.

"We're not coming to buy toys, we're not coming to buy trinkets — we're coming to shop for justice," said the Rev. Al Sharpton, the march leader at a rally. "Our presence is a bigger statement than anything we could ever say with our mouths."

The protest surrounded the death of Sean Bell who died in a lop-sided clash with local law enforcement three weeks prior.

Two of Bell's friends, Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, were also wounded by the 50 police bullets shot at the group of black men after they left a strip club during a bachelor party.

The officers — who themselves are white, Hispanic, and black — said they thought the men had weapons, but no guns were found in the group. Since the incident, vigils have been occurred across the city.

Rev. Sharpton's marchers, though told to remain silent and civil, shouted phrases like "No shopping, no justice" toward the back of the group. Some held signs that said "Stop NYPD Racist Terror."

The mixed bag of opinions that Saturday also included those from Steven A. Pagonis, who told reporters that the march served only to further Rev. Sharpton's agenda.

Pagonis is a former assistant prosecutor in Dutchess County who was falsely accused of being a party to the abduction and rape of a black teenager, Tawana Brawley, in 1987. He won a defamation suit against Rev. Sharpton pertaining to the accusations in 1998.

Accompanying Sharpton in the march were congresspersons, city council members, entertainers, and members and friends of the Bell family and Guzman and Benefield.

## Permaculture Training Seminars Slated At Rhizome Collective

AUSTIN — The Rhizome Collective in Austin recently announced two weekend workshops in urban ecological survival skills in the coming year.

The Radical Urban Sustainability Training (RUST) seminars are intended to help individuals understand the tools to creating autonomous communities within cities through permaculture, a sustainable agricultural system designed to follow nature's patterns.

The workshops will include lectures and hands-on demonstrations of rainwater harvesting, low-tech bioremediation, do-it-yourself air purification, constructed wetlands, biofuels, composting, and more.

The interrelatedness of sustainability and struggles for social justice will be emphasized during the workshops. Teaching tools will come straight from the permaculture systems developed at the Rhizome Collective, a seven-year-old non-profit, urban sustainability and community organizing project.

The two workshops will be held on the weekends of March 24-25 and April 14-15

The Rhizome Collective is located at 300 Allen Street, Austin, TX 78702.

For more information, contact the Collective.

**INFO**  
Rhizome Collective RUST  
[www.rhizomecollective.org/rust.html](http://www.rhizomecollective.org/rust.html)  
[skotty@rhizomecollective.org](mailto:skotty@rhizomecollective.org)  
(512) 385-3695

# Americans Back Bethlehem - But Are Not Sure Where It Is

NEW YORK — Most Americans believe Bethlehem is an Israeli town inhabited by a mixture of Jews and Muslims, a pre-Christmas survey of U.S. perceptions of the town has shown.

Only 15 per cent of Americans realize that it is a mixed Christian-Muslim Palestinian town in the occupied West Bank.

The Zogby International survey commissioned by the campaign organization Open Bethlehem coincides with a separate poll carried out for the same organization in Bethlehem itself.

The surveys have put the spotlight on the plight of the town, which has been fast losing its indigenous Christian population since the construction of the Israeli wall plunged Bethlehem into economic crisis.

The two surveys show that American perceptions of the town are wildly at odds with the perceptions of those who live there.

While the Christians of Bethlehem overwhelmingly (78%) blame the exodus of Christians from the town on Israel's blockade, Americans are more likely (45.9%) to blame it on Islamic politics and are reluctant (7.4%) to blame Israel.

And while four out of 10 Americans believe that the wall exists for Israel's security, more than nine out of 10 Bethlehemites believe it is part of a plan by Israel to confiscate Palestinian land.

The Zogby survey shows strong support for the town in the U.S., where 65.5% of the population want the UN to list it as a world heritage site. Americans are also strongly in favour (80.6%) of Bethlehem retaining a strong Christian presence.

Americans are also ambivalent about the Israeli wall, with 31.5% in favor of it, with another 31.6% opposed.

But more than two-thirds of Americans believe Bethlehem is unsafe to visit, while 80% of Bethlehemites consider their town safe for visitors.

While the U.S. survey showed that Americans are sceptical about Muslims and Christians living contentedly alongside each other — only 17% thought they lived together in peaceful coexistence — the Palestinian survey showed they do: around 90% of Christians said they had Muslim friends, and vice-versa.

The Israeli government could well be shaken by the discovery that Americans' tolerance of the wall would be strained by the discovery that it separates communities and families, cuts Bethlehem off from Jerusalem, and requires the seizure of pri-



vately-owned land.

U.S. Christians, meanwhile, are likely to be shocked by the discovery that seven out of 10 Christians in Bethlehem believe Israel treats the town's Christian heritage with brutality or indifference.

The Bethlehem poll, which was carried out by the Palestinian Centre for research and Cultural Dialogue, shows on the other hand that more than two-thirds (73.3%) of Bethlehem's Christians believe that the Palestinian Authority treats Christian heritage with respect. That result will surprise some who believe that the election of Hamas has strained Christian-Muslim relations in the town.

Leila Sansour, Open Bethlehem's Chief Executive, says: "Our U.S. poll shows overwhelming support for Bethlehem's Christian heritage, yet our survey of Bethlehem's own citizens shows the city cannot retain this heritage and its Christian community while the wall remains.

"The choice is stark. Either the wall stays and Bethlehem ceases to be a Christian town. Or Bethlehem retains its Christian population — in which case the wall has to come down. The international community needs to wake up to what is happening and choose."

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE TWO SURVEYS

1) 59.1 % of Americans thought that the population of Bethlehem was either Muslim or Jewish or a mix of both. Only 15.6 % knew it was a mix of Christians and Muslims.

2) When asked where the city was located 58% of Americans thought it was in Israel while only 26% knew that the town of Jesus birth was located in the Occupied Territories.

3) When told that the population of Bethlehem is a mix of Christians and Muslims 25.1% of Americans thought that they lived together in bitter dispute while only 17% thought they lived together in peaceful coexistence. 26.4 % thought it was neither.

4) In the Bethlehem survey

87.5% of Muslims said they had Christian friends and 92.2% of Christians said they had Muslim friends.

5) The Bethlehem poll shows that 22.4% of Bethlehem residents think their main problem is unemployment, 5.9% think it is emigration, 4.3% think it is the expropriation of their land by Israel and 67.4% think it is all of the above. 38.1% think the key difficulty is the Israeli occupation, 39.7% think it is the Israeli wall and 19.2% think it is the rift within the society.

6) When asked about the Israeli wall in and around Bethlehem 36.9% of Americans were unfamiliar with the fact while an equal number of Americans either supported or opposed the wall. 31.5% supported 31.6% opposed.

7) The American poll showed that 40.6% of Americans thought that the wall is there for Israel's security while 19.4% thought that the wall is there to confiscate land from Bethlehem residents for the sake of Israel's expansion.

8) In Bethlehem 6% think that the wall is a temporary measure by Israel while 91.1% believe that the wall is part of a pre-meditated plan by Israel to confiscate their land. The wall features as a bigger problem for Christians, 42.1% of Christians refer to it as the key problem facing the city as opposed to 36.3% of Muslims.

9) In the last five years about 400 Christian families left Bethlehem. When asked for the reason 45.9% of Americans said it was the rise of Islamic extremism and 7.4% attributed their exodus to the Israeli occupation.

10) In Bethlehem 78% of Christians said they were leaving because of the Israeli occupation while only 3.2% said it was the rise in Islamic movements. 12.5% attributed it to both.

11) 75% of people in Bethlehem said they are very depressed or somehow depressed by family members moving abroad. Among those who chose to stay 20.5% said inability to leave work or family behind were the major deterrents.

12) 63.2% of Bethlehem Christians said they have at least one relative who has emigrated. Muslims 32.8%. When asked about many: Christians were 20.1% to 5.4% among Muslims.

13) 50.7% of Bethlehem Christians have thought of emigrating against 43.6% among Muslims.

14) 15.7% of Bethlehem Christians said they are in the process of emigrating — against 8.3% among Muslims — also

19.2% of those are young and 36% have BA degrees or above. 72.45% in the process of emigrating are male.

15) Americans think that more Muslim lands than Christian lands have been confiscated by Israel: Muslims 18.4% Christians 3.6% Both: 34.5%.

16) 54.7% of Bethlehem Christians said they had relatives whose land was confiscated by Israel. 41.7% of Muslims said the same.

17) 65.3% of people in Bethlehem said they have had family members or friends arrested for political reasons. (74.5% muslim, 59% Christian)

18) 41.5% of people in Bethlehem said they had either a member of their family or a friend killed by the Israeli army- 53.9% muslim, 32.9% Christian

19) 65.9% of Christians in Bethlehem think Israel treats Christian heritage with either brutality or indifference. (rising to 76% for the over 60s)

20) 73.3% Christians in Bethlehem believe PA treats Christian heritage with respect. 21) 86.1% of people in Bethlehem think churches should do more to help the city. 74.7% think the world knows little about situation.

22) 43.1% of people in Bethlehem see "Fear of the pro Israeli lobby" as the key factor behind the lack of action among international community while 14.2% think it is lack of understanding. 17.9% attribute it to general indifference.

23) 53.2% of people in Bethlehem believe that international pressure is key to resolving the situation while 18.9% think that the solution will come through a change in Israeli politics and only 7.6% trust that help will come from Arab countries.

24) 75.7% of people in Bethlehem thought that most people in the world would like to visit Bethlehem while only 17.1% of Americans said they are likely to do so.

25) Americans saw the major interest in Bethlehem in the following order:

- 59.6% Visit the church of the Nativity
- 44.9% Walk the biblical route of the Holy family
- 36.8% experience the life of the local community
- 30.7% Visit Solomons pools
- 29 % Visit Desert monasteries
- 26.8 % Visit Shepherds Fields.

Majority 60.4% said they wanted to visit Bethlehem for historic nature of the city while pilgrimage was at 30.8%.

26) A 69% majority of Americans thought Bethlehem was unsafe and saw safety as a key deterrent to visiting while 81.3%

of people in Bethlehem believed that Bethlehem was either very safe or somewhat safe.

27) When asked about what factors would make them less supportive of the wall in Bethlehem Americans put their reasons in the following order of importance:

1- the wall hurts the life of communities regardless of their faith or ethnic background 48.7%.

2- The wall separates some Bethlehem families from one another 40%.

3- The wall requires the seizure of privately owned land 38.7%

4- The wall separates Bethlehem and Jerusalem, two cities that have been historically interlinked and interdependent. 36.6%

5- The wall jeopardises the sustainability of Bethlehem's Christian community. 30.5%

6- The wall has been condemned by local and International churches 25.8%

7- The wall has been condemned by the international court of justice. 25.2%

28) 74.4% of Americans thought it was necessary to protect the rights of Christian communities wherever they are. 71 % either strongly or somewhat agree that preserving the Christian community in Bethlehem will help strengthen the Christian heritage of Bethlehem, with 42.8% saying they either strongly or somehow believed that preserving the Christian heritage of Bethlehem will strengthen Christian communities worldwide.

29) 84.5% of people in Bethlehem said they were proud of being Bethlehemites and only 4.8% said they would have preferred to come from somewhere else.

Brief analysis from Leila Sansour (CEO of Open Bethlehem):

"This is the first time that such surveys have been carried out. The findings are of great importance to us. We know that Bethlehem is very isolated from the world and that little is known about us, but after the survey we are confident that more can be done to bridge this gap. It was obvious from the two surveys how many misconceptions Americans have about our city, but also encouraging to learn that they care most about those issues that concern our own citizens: community, faith, property and, above all, our heritage. It was, perhaps, sobering to contrast our certainty, here in Bethlehem, that the world is desperate to visit our city against the fact that so few

Continued On Next Page

# Squamous Cell Carcinoma On First Lady Brings Attention To Skin Cancer Prevention

NEW YORK – With the announcement from the White House that First Lady Laura Bush recently had a squamous

## BETHLEHEM POLL

From Previous Page

Americans are actually tempted to do so. We understand that the impression of lack of safety is a major deterrent. We also know how forbidding the wall appears, when one approaches our city. We need to work hard to send out our message how safe and welcoming Bethlehem is. It was particularly encouraging to learn that Americans would cite their main reason for opposing the wall as the fact that it hurts the life of communities regardless of their faith or ethnic background. This is how we want to think of ourselves. Our community has embraced diversity for centuries. It is a place where Muslims and Christians lived together in harmony and continue to do so, despite the increasing polarisation of our modern world whose mood occasionally influences even our own environment.

"It is also encouraging to discover that despite the current situation in Bethlehem a slight majority of Bethlehemites (53.8%) remain optimistic about the future of our city. It was also gratifying to learn that 44.1% of Americans would contribute to help preserve the heritage of Bethlehem. We will continue working with the knowledge that we have friends and potential allies in the States. As more American learn about our situation, this can only improve the hope for peace.

"Our U.S. poll shows overwhelming support for Bethlehem's Christian heritage, yet our survey of Bethlehem's own citizens shows the city cannot retain this heritage and its Christian community while the wall remains. The Israeli blockade and the land annexations by Israel are strangling Bethlehem, forcing its Christian population to seek livelihoods abroad.

"The choice is stark. Either the wall stays and Bethlehem ceases to be a Christian town. Or Bethlehem retains its Christian population – in which case the wall has to come down. The international community needs to wake up to what is happening and choose."

cell carcinoma (SCC) removed, one of the world's most prevalent cancers is suddenly very much in the public consciousness. The second most common skin cancer, it afflicts more than 200,000 Americans each year and claims as many as 2,500 lives a year.

"First Lady Laura Bush was fortunate because it was detected and treated very early," said Perry Robins, MD, President of The Skin Cancer Foundation. "Left untreated, SCCs eventually penetrate the underlying tissues and can be disfiguring. And in some cases, they metastasize to distant tissues and organs and can become fatal."

### What Causes It

Chronic exposure to sunlight causes most cases of SCC. It arises from the epidermis and resembles the squamous cells that comprise most of the upper layers of skin. SCCs may occur on all areas of the body, but are most common in areas exposed to the sun, such as Mrs. Bush's ankle.

Lesions may also occur where skin has suffered certain kinds of injury, burns, scars, infections, or long-standing sores, as well as at sites previously exposed to x-rays or certain chemicals. In addition, chronic skin inflammation or medical conditions that suppress the immune system over an extended period of time may encourage the development of SCC. In some cases, SCC arises on what appears to be normal, healthy, undamaged skin. Some researchers believe that a tendency to develop this cancer may sometimes be inherited.

### Who Gets It

Anyone with a substantial history of sun exposure can develop SCC, but people who have fair skin, light hair and blue, green or gray eyes – such as First Lady Laura Bush – are at higher risk.

### How It Is Treated

After a physician's examination, a biopsy will be performed to confirm the diagnosis of SCC. This involves removing a piece of the affected tissue and examining it under a microscope. If tumor cells are present, treatment (usually surgery) is required.

There are several effective ways to eradicate SCC. The choice of treatment is based on the type, size, location and depth of penetration of the tumor as well as the patient's age and general state of health.

Treatment can almost always

be performed on an outpatient basis in a physician's office or at a clinic. A local anesthetic is used during most procedures. Pain or discomfort is usually minimal with most techniques, and there is rarely much pain afterwards.

For more detailed information on treatment options, see [www.skincancer.org/skincancer/squamous-cell/squamous-cell-carcinoma\\_3.html](http://www.skincancer.org/skincancer/squamous-cell/squamous-cell-carcinoma_3.html)

### Will it Recur?

Anyone who has had one SCC has an increased chance of developing another. That is because the damage the skin has already received from the sun cannot be reversed. Having had

a basal cell carcinoma (the most common form of skin cancer) also makes it more likely that an SCC will develop, because both types of skin cancer are usually caused by excessive sun exposure. Even though an SCC has been carefully removed, another may arise in the same place or nearby. Such recurrences typically occur within the first two years after surgery. Should the cancer recur, the physician may recommend a different type of treatment the second time.

The Skin Cancer Foundation has just published a new book on SCC called *Understanding Squamous Cell*

*Carcinoma: What You Need to Know*. To order, visit [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org).

About The Skin Cancer Foundation The Skin Cancer Foundation is the only global organization solely devoted to the prevention, detection and treatment of skin cancer.

The mission of the Foundation is to decrease the incidence of skin cancer through public and professional education and research.

For more information about skin cancer and to learn more about how to protect your skin, visit [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org), or call 1-800-SKIN-490.

## Stem Cell 'Seed' To Harness Nervous System

HOUSTON — An embryonic stem cell research grant to a Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) scientist aims to target nervous system cells and, ultimately, better understand human diseases.

The Tilker Medical Research Foundation's \$25,000 Seed Funding Award was awarded to Dr. Thomas Zwaka, assistant professor of molecular and cellular biology in the Center for Cell and Gene Therapy at BCM, to study nerve cell development. His hope in the short term is to isolate specific human stem cells and study their mechanisms.

"We want to study differentiation from one stage of development to the next and isolate cells from each step," said Zwaka, co-founder of BCM's Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine Center. "We will find out a lot about the development of the nervous system, and when we learn about differentiation events, we may become more effective in purifying the cell types."

Zwaka will pursue generating a stem cell line capable of producing large numbers of differentiated cells, supplying the volumes and specific cell types needed for experimental

studies and for transplantation therapies for diseases such as heart disease, Parkinson's and leukemia.

"We will get much greater yields in making neurons, and this is all based on the problem we currently have with differentiating human embryonic stem cells: getting a lot of different tissues but not always the type we are interested in," he said.

Of particular interest to Zwaka are neuroepithelium cells, which play a role in the early development of sensory organs and nerve endings and could potentially have therapeutic benefits.

"We picked the neuroepithelium because this is the first clinically relevant cell type," said Zwaka. "There is great hope in using neurons at some point in the near future for transplantation therapy. We also picked this because it is the simplest cell type you can make from embryonic stem cells."

The non-profit Tilker Medical Research Foundation is dedicated to accelerating the discovery of new treatments and cures for a wide range of neurodegenerative diseases by promoting innovative stem cell research.

## FEMA Mitigation Award May Help Thousands In Beaumont

AUSTIN — Thousands of people in north Beaumont will be the beneficiaries of a federal hazard mitigation grant considered among the largest the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has given in Texas since the passage of the Stafford Act.

FEMA officials recently presented a check, representing \$23.66 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds given to the State of Texas in behalf of Jefferson County Drainage District No. 6, to district representatives.

The FEMA funding is 75 percent of a \$31.55 million project to install box culverts under three miles of Calder Street, one block of North Main Street

and three blocks of Elizabeth Street, to divert water from the Middle Hillebrandt Watershed to the Neches River.

The watershed accounts for 38 percent of the flows in the drainage basin. The project directly benefits approximately 1,100 structures in a 2,200-acre, including a major hospital that previously had severe flood damage.

"The project will remove miles of people from rainfall hazards," said Gregory F. Pekar, Texas state hazard mitigation officer for the Governor's Division of Emergency Management. "This is a significant step forward for the people of Beaumont."

"This project is among the

biggest FEMA has ever given since the passage of the Robert T. Stafford Act in 1988," said E.C. "Butch" Smith, director of the Transitional Recovery Office (TRO) in Austin, Texas. "It is much cheaper for U.S. taxpayers to pay to prevent damage and grief to residents than to spend huge amounts to rebuild after the fact. Studies show that for every dollar we spend for mitigation, \$4 is saved."

The project is currently the largest single structural (construction) HMGP project ever done in Texas. A mitigation project in Houston related to tropical storm Allison is larger, but it was approved as three separate projects.

# Marijuana Beats Wheat, Corn As Top U.S. Cash Crop: Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A new report states that marijuana surpassed wheat and corn as the top cash crop in the United States, even though the federal government has destroyed over 100 million marijuana plants over the last three decades.

The study found in the latest issue of The Bulletin for Cannabis Reform says that the value of marijuana is \$35.8 billion this year, while corn is valued at \$23.3 billion and wheat \$7.45 billion.

The study's author, Jon B. Gettman, reportedly used conservative price estimates to calculate the value of the marijuana crop.

Gettman holds a Ph.D. in public policy from George Mason University, where his doctoral studies concentrated on regional economic development. He has advocated for the regulation and taxation of marijuana.

The executive director of a marijuana policy reform organization said that the study's findings are another indication that the U.S. government's anti-drug laws have failed.

"America's marijuana crop is worth more than our nation's annual production of corn and wheat combined," said Rob Kampia, of the Washington D.C.-based Marijuana Policy Project.

"And our nation's laws guarantee that 100 percent of the proceeds from marijuana sales go to unregulated criminals

rather than to legitimate businesses that pay taxes to support schools, police and roads," he added.

The report also found that five of the top 10 marijuana-growing states are in the South — six counting West Virginia.

The top 10 production states are 1) California, 2) Tennessee, 3) Kentucky, 4) Hawaii, 5) Washington, 6) North Carolina, 7) Florida, 8) Alabama, 9) West Virginia, and 10) Oregon.

Five states including Tennessee and Kentucky had annual marijuana crops worth over \$1 billion.

And marijuana production is increasing in the United States. According to government estimates, production has increased 10 times over the last 25 years. As of 2006, production has reached 10,000 metric tons (22 million pounds).

Gettman reported that marijuana's cross-country proliferation means that it has become an "ineradicable part of the economy of the United States" that "adds resources and value to the economy."

"The contribution of this market to the nation's gross domestic product is overlooked in the debate over effective control and discouragement of use by teenagers and children," he wrote.

The full report can be found on the website for The Bulletin for Cannabis Reform.

**INFO**  
[www.drugscience.org/bcr/index.html](http://www.drugscience.org/bcr/index.html)



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## Log Off To 'Nod Off'

HOUSTON — Something as simple as turning off the computer can help insomniac sufferers get their Zzzz's back.

"Most people will have some insomnia at some point during their lives," said Dr. Michael Abene, assistant professor of neurology and neurophysiology at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston. "It can be due to stress, something more serious like depression or other medical problems such as cardiac disease or chronic pain. It can even be worsened by exposure to the bright screen of a computer before bed."

If an expert determines that a psychiatric condition or medical problem is not the culprit, Abene, also the medical direc-

tor of the BCM Neurophysiology Sleep Disorders Clinic and Sleep Lab at St. Luke's Hospital, suggests the following remedies in addition to logging off well before bedtime:

- \* Develop a regular pre-bedtime routine 30 to 60 minutes before going to bed, such as brushing your teeth and doing some light reading.

- \* Establish a regular bedtime and wake time — weekends included.

- \* Reduce your caffeine intake. Even small amounts in the morning can adversely affect sleep.

- \* Make your bedroom conducive to sleep. Buy a comfortable mattress, and keep the room dark and at a comfortable temperature.

- \* Limit kids and/or pets wak-

ing you up at night.

- \* Think positive — don't go to sleep stressed.

- \* Don't use the computer at least one to two hours before bedtime.

Insomnia is by far the most common sleeping disorder. The American Academy of Sleep estimates that 30 percent of adults experience symptoms of insomnia and 10 percent are at risk for chronic insomnia.

BCM's sleep clinic uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) instead of medication to treat insomnia. CBT, a form of psychotherapy, aims to identify and modify thoughts and behaviors that may be causing the insomnia. It has been shown to be more effective than medication in the long run with fewer side effects.

Dr. Mary Rose, assistant pro-

fessor of medicine in the section of pulmonary and critical care medicine at BCM, uses CBT to treat her insomnia patients, many of whom have tried other options to no avail. If chronic insomnia is suspected, she suggests seeing a sleep specialist with a background in behavioral sleep disorders.

Sleep CBT consists of the following:

- \* Stimulus control therapy, in which patients do not go to bed until they are markedly sleepy. If they wake up in the middle of the night, they should get out of bed and do something sleep-inducing like reading a dull book.

- \* Sleep restriction therapy, in which sleep is condensed into a relatively short time frame to increase sleep efficiency. Time spent in bed rises as sleep efficiency improves.

- \* Sleep hygiene, as in establishing a regular bed time, exercising four to five hours before sleep, and avoiding caffeine and alcohol.
- \* Cognitive therapy, which treats sleep-related stressors.

- \* Relaxation therapy, which incorporates techniques such as stretching to relieve tension.

"People with chronic insomnia will have been going to bed and tossing and turning for many years, and over time they can develop a very negative feeling about going to bed," said Abene. "The problem then becomes the anticipation of going to bed and having insomnia rather than the insomnia itself."

Fortunately, whether seeing a sleep specialist or simply turning off their computer, those wrestling with insomnia can have sweet dreams, too.



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# It's Enough To Make You Swear

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If you can't say nothin' nice about somebody, say it to the law and collect the bounty."

Muslims are going to eat your children.

If the Mexicans and terrorists don't get them first.

Thus saith the Goode.

Virgil Goode, fascist Republican, Virginia (Where else?), last week penned an epistle of great weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth while standing astride the tire swing (at least it's a swing when the rope is not otherwise employed) beneath the oaks of his stately First Family manor, resting his Bible on the head of an iron lawn jockey while protectively cradling a plastic flamingo commemorative bourbon decanter.

For those of you who have never been to the promised land and actually *seen* Rock City, the Goode congressman rose up in righteous indignation over his Minnesota colleague, Keith Ellison's decision to take the oath of office on the Koran instead of a Jerry Falwell-approved Christian Coalition translation of the Bible with the gilt edged pages and the complimentary DVD of Billy Graham's last Crusade to the Holy Land bound in high quality embossed vinyl with the look of genuine leather.

Goode proclaimed the capital dome is practically awash in a veritable tide of towel coiffed heathens waiting their turn to introduce earmark legislation.

If we do not turn away from the godless path of immigration and return to the faith in the blessed bigotry of our fathers, there is sure to be a host of Muslims voted into office by an electorate blinded by the sin of tolerance.

Goode has further introduced legislation to finance airlines for underdeveloped Islamic countries, so that child-abusing preachers can atone for their sins by hijacking Muslim planes and flying them into convenience stores.

That explains this irresistible urge I've had lately for mashed peas and hollowed-out tortillas and to watch the Texas Legislature stick its collective butt in the air five times a day.

Well, okay, they *do* stick their butts in the air more frequently than that now.

But I'd like to see them do it in unison.

Come to think of it, I'd like to see the Texas Legislature do just about *anything* in unison.

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



Like bell bottoms and paisley, the Know Nothings are back in vogue.

During the 1850s, the Know Nothings were the second most popular political party in the country, with the Whigs and the fledgling Republicans running a distant third and fourth, respectively.

Anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant, which translated for the most part into anti-Irish, the Know Nothings got their name from their deference to public relations.

Like modern Fascist Republicans, the KNs had to hide their real agenda from those radical elements of the electorate who succumbed to the siren song of decency and reason. When asked about their party platform, they simply said, "I know nothing."

They had yet to discover the blessings of abortion, gay marriage and the war on terror.

The Know Nothings' chief

claim to fame was the election of Abraham Lincoln, whom they fervently supported, and initiation of the War Between the States.

Suffice it to say that the great emancipator was quite adept at fooling some of the people some of the time.

At least 39 percent of them, which is all one needs in a field of lunatic fringed third parties and an electorate with a fistful of political taffy inside a coconut.

Just ask Lying Texas Governor Tricky Ricky Perry.

Deranged politics never goes out of style.

If one really believes there is a horde of fanatical Jihadists out there secretly stockpiling voter registration forms in an abandoned Duluth post office, go park your Toyota four-by-four next to a hole in the taxpayer's chain link border deer fence and, then get your Wal-Mart binoculars focused long enough to spot a couple of carpenters on their way to work, and if you can get a signal on your CB radio that was fried by the magnetic yellow ribbon on your tailgate, call somebody who cares.

## TCEQ Urges Consumers To Recycle Used Electronics This Holiday Season

AUSTIN — An estimated 1.3 million computers could be recycled annually.

Every holiday season, millions of Texans receive new home electronics. But as quickly as the latest television, computer, digital camera, cellular phone, video game console, or mp3 player is unwrapped, the older model is quickly discarded—usually in a closet or an attic.

"In this season of giving, we want to encourage consumers to donate their used electronic items, instead of throwing them away," said Matt Baker, division director of the Small Business and Environmental Assistance division at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

"Often these products are still in perfectly good working condition, and can be recycled for reuse, or disassembled and sold for parts."

Based on a study by the National Recycling Coalition, about 1.5 million computers are taken out of service in Texas annually, and only an estimated 162,000 are recycled, leaving more than 1.3 million units that aren't re-

cycled. "Even if your computer is several years old, it is still valuable," said Baker. "An average personal computer typically contains 40 percent steel, 30 to 40 percent plastic, 10 percent aluminum and 10 percent other metals, including copper, gold, silver, cadmium, and platinum—all recyclable," said Baker.

To find a recycler near you, the TCEQ has published an updated version of its statewide computer and electronics recycler locator guide, located in the "Hot Topics" column of the TCEQ home page, <<http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/>>.

In addition, take-back programs are also being offered by some makers of computers and mp3 players, to promote recycling. Contact your manufacturer for details. Local charitable associations and nonprofit organizations are also in need of "almost new," working electronics including computers, televisions, video game consoles and digital cameras. Often these groups have a year-round necessity, and can find a new home for your used electronics.

# EDITORIAL

## Minimum Wage: Two-Fisted Righting

It's been nearly 10 years since the United States raised the minimum wage, and, according to Jim Harrington of the Texas Civil Rights Project, the current \$5.15/hour minimum wage has less buying power than the minimum wage in effect in 1950.

He says it would take "\$9.28 in today's dollars to match the buying power of the 1950 minimum wage."

"A family today needs two bread winners, not one," he says, pointing to a forced change in family demographics that now reflects a dramatic slide in economic health of our citizens..

If Democrats do not get cold feet, a minimum-wage hike will be considered almost immediately after the new Congress takes office. Democrats have pledged to raise the minimum wage in stages whereby eventually, in 2009, it will be at \$7.25 an hour. This would still, however, fall short of the earning power of 1950 minimum wage.

Don't forget, the real value of the minimum wage tracks with rural and suburban middle class economies. You can forget Gross National Product and other holier-than-thou benchmarks that do not reflect in whose hands the money rests. The truth lies in real people and their struggles.

Downward slides in the value of the minimum wage were vividly apparent in the Administrations of Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr., and now Bush Jr.. These premeditated downward shenanigans, intended to de-value less-than-rich humans, also put the overall middle-class economy on the ropes, which is where it is again, only perhaps worse than usual.

Poverty in America is real.

The middle class is vanishing.

It is imperative that the wage be raised.

But there will be fallout.

Especially among small businesses — mom and pop shops and small industries whose owners are barely scraping by as it is.

Fallout will also be reflected in wage earners currently being paid above the minimum, for they will expect like increases in their incomes.

Otherwise they will claim discrimination.

One of the key problems that has been cruelly forced upon small business owners is the energy rip-off.

Although gasoline prices have dropped slightly from the summertime spikes, they are still outrageously high. This has resulted in most small businesses making smaller profits, if any, while at the same time Big Oil has captured outrageous windfalls — in essence stolen the profits from the little guys.

For the new Congress to make higher wages affordable for businesses on the edge of survival, something has to give.

And the key is righting energy wrongs — reversing the greedy dictates of the fascist Republican regime that has engaged in blatant theft of the public in the name of ungodly corporate profits for their buddies and themselves.

A single punch won't do it.

One punch will simply add to the problems of small enterprises.

To honestly correct the matter will require that costs to consumers and small businesses come back into balance with a pre-2000 shift in economic policy.

Energy is at the top of the list.

But you can add pharmaceuticals, insurance, and a trumped-up war to the mix.

If repaired, not only will an increase in the minimum wage help those on poverty row and allow a middle class resurgence, but the ability of everyday citizens to buy cheaper energy, drugs, and insurance will enhance the wage increase — perhaps eventually providing buying power that is nearer the 1950s level or beyond.

Fascism comes in many colors. Let's hope that Democratic blue isn't one of them.

— W. Leon Smith

# Improving The Quality Of A High School Education Using End-of-Course Exams To Measure Student Performance

By BROOKE DOLLENS TERRY  
TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

For too many Texas students, a high school diploma signifies little more than a certificate of attendance.

While today's high-tech, global economy demands students to have a rigorous education and a high level of skills to succeed, too many students are graduating without the basic skills needed in the "real world." Part of the problem is a poor assessment for measuring subject-area mastery and student progress in high school. With billions of dollars spent each year on Texas schools, students and taxpayers deserve better.

End-of-course exams can move us in the right direction.

Inflated grades, inflated course titles, and lack of rigor in the high school curriculum fail to prepare Texas students for success in college or a career. Regrettably, students in disadvantaged and low socio-economic areas tend to suffer the most.

An analysis by the U.S. Department of Education found that students in poor schools typically receive A's for work that would earn a C- in wealthy schools. Imagine the surprise and frustration when these "honor" students get to college and are placed in remedial reading and math classes!

Some teachers admit they are pressured to inflate grades. According to an American Federation of Teachers' survey, 30 percent of American teachers admitted to feeling pressure to give higher grades than deserved and to decrease the difficulty and amount of work assigned.

Grade inflation does not benefit the student; instead, it gives students an inaccurate representation of their skills and abilities and sets them up for future frustration.

As schools enroll more students in advanced courses, course inflation is also becoming a problem. According to the National Center for Educational Accountability, "high percentages of students receiving credit for advanced courses are not learning the content implied by their course titles." Their research found a startling 60 percent of low-income Texas students who received course credit for Geometry and Algebra II failed the Texas exit exam covering Algebra I and Geometry.

Texas must ensure that stu-

dents are given an accurate assessment of their comprehension and skill levels in each subject area as they progress through school to immediately identify where and when improvement is needed. The current testing system, which assesses students in the spring of 11th grade with a multi-subject cumulative test, does not provide parents and students with timely information to identify and remediate problems.

Texas should replace the TAKS test with a series of end-of-course exams in math, science, social studies and language arts in each grade of high school. End-of-course ex-

ams are statewide finals given at the end of each course to provide an in-depth measure of comprehension and skill attainment. As a result, educators can evaluate subject mastery, determine if the student is ready for the next level of the course, and more accurately measure student progress. Most importantly, end-of-course exams can diagnose weaknesses in academic curriculum and teaching before it is too late.

Research shows that end-of-course exams increase academic standards and student achievement. Researcher John Bishop found that students in both New York and North Caro-

lina, states with end-of-course exams, are about half of a grade level ahead in math and science and almost two-thirds of a grade level ahead in reading among comparable students without such exams. New York's examinations are so well regarded for their rigor that the City University of New York uses their English end-of-course exam in place of their own placement test.

Moving to end-of-course exams would put Texas in good company. There are as many as 15 states across the country and several countries in Europe and East Asia using end-of-course exams to evaluate student

learning.

Ultimately, the rigor of Texas' academic curriculum is only as tough as the tests used to measure performance. If Texas lawmakers want to improve the quality of a high school education and ensure that all Texas students are taught a rigorous curriculum and have an incentive to learn, Texas should adopt end-of-course exams to better assess student learning and achievement.

Brooke Dolleens Terry is an education policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-profit research institute based in Austin. She can be contacted at [<bterry@texaspolicy.com>](mailto:bterry@texaspolicy.com).

## THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

This week's well-publicized immigration raid on the Swift & Co. meatpacking plant in Cactus, in the Texas Panhandle, serves as a troubling reminder that our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed.

Texas businesses want and need to follow the law. Unfortunately, they lack a sensible and reliable system to verify an employee's legal status.

Employers are forced to navigate tricky waters each time they make a hire. Texas businesses must deal with complex immigration regulations; a glut of seemingly valid, but sometimes counterfeit, worker identification documents; and the threat of discrimination lawsuits if they ask the "wrong" questions about employees' documents.

Enforcement alone will not fix our immigration system, and it has failed in the past. We can't just build walls around a broken system - we need to fix the system to make sure we achieve real security, restore law and order and have enough workers to continue growing our economy.

It is time for a serious solution to this serious challenge. It is time for Congress to act.

Sincerely,  
Bill Hammond

President, Texas Association of Business  
Austin, Texas

Dear Mr. Hammond and Readers,

In response to your letter citing the ludicrous often unenforceable immigrant policies placed upon Texas (U.S.) businesses, which included the statement: "We can't just build walls around a broken system..."

Mr. Hammond is incorrect. Of course we can build walls around a broken system as easily as our Congress approved a wall between the U.S and Mexico as a means to secure our mutual borders as a means to regulate and stem the tide of illegal immigration.

Any government proposing such stupid practices will be consistently stupid in resolving most matters.

Peter Stern

Dear Editor,

"Failure in Iraq would be a calamity," Robert Gates said after he was installed as Secretary of Defense. He echoed the Cheney-Bush-Rumsfeld delusion that we still have the possibility of not failing. The fact is that the neocon's gamble in Iraq has failed; it's lost; we're toast.

Why? Two words: Abu Ghraib. From America's torture chambers we showed the world, and particularly the Muslim world and all Iraqis, that we were subhuman. We lost all legitimacy. Rumsfeld, Cheney, Bush, and Alberto Gonzales' dismissal of the Geneva Conventions certified that Abu Ghraib wasn't just the misdeed of "a few bad apples."

Strategically, they dishonored our moral authority, and defiled our democratic ideals. Tactically, by disbanding the Iraqi army, by turning loose thousands of men with guns who had no way to feed their families, they provided overwhelming force to the insurgency.

The Bush Administration policies are zombies - dead bodies walking around, unaware that they have died.

Yours truly,  
Bruce Joffe, Piedmont, CA



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# Hallelujah! For The Christmas Music

By the time you read this, the biggest secular excitement of the composite Holiday Season will have passed.

Except for those who revel in the boozefest of New Year's Eve, of course.

But, the Hanukkah tradition of eight nights of lights and cheesy gifts has come and gone for another cycle of the moon. And the birthday of convenience assigned to Jesus Christ has once again been upon us and is 364 days away.

So, the prayers have all been prayed. The twice-a-year believers have all attended the occasional place of worship of their choice.

Most importantly, the gifts have all been disseminated from beneath the tree or around the Menorah and ripped opened to loud shrieks of gleeful merriment. Well, more joyful noise from those attributed to the brightly-colored packages found under the tree...

Now that The Lad is 26 it's really difficult to discern what I enjoy most about the season. It's not as though we're awakened with that squeal of joy when Pete gets out of bed at 5:24 in the morning and finds a shiny new bicycle in the living room adorned with a big red bow; nor is it the same thrill as when he would tear off the wrapping and find underneath a Star Wars X-Wing Fighter with Luke Skywalker figure.

Now, the best we can do is put the DVDs and CDs into odd sized boxes in a vain attempt to disguise their true nature. Since Pete provides a list, anyway, it's pretty much a given what he's going to receive. We always throw in a curve ball, just a little surprise here and there to keep him guessing.

Not to mention the eight nights of lights...

I do admit that since the late 1990s, following a combination of my nearly dying on Christmas day from internal sepsis and subsequent embracing of Judaism, my love for holiday music has increased considerably. For the longest time it seemed we had one two-disc CD collection of songs, secular as well as religious, by various artists. Every year or two we would add a CD here or there, but only if they were very select performances — for some reason we have no Streisand Christmas music. Oy, vay!

For some reason I have gone absolutely bonkers in search of Christmas and holiday-themed music the past three or four years. When I was a kid, my mother would buy these \$1.99



## Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

albums (remember, vinyl 33 1/3 rpm?) like, "A Christmas With..." *The Church Choir of the Holy Rollers of East Tatonka, Maine*. Or, *The Church Organist of East Tatonka, Maine*. She figured they were a real bargain because they always contained "a full hour of music!"

We did have a few good records, such as originals of "I'm Getting' Nothin' For Christmas" and Gene Autry's "Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer"/"Up On The Rooftop." Imagine, they weren't afraid to use the "C" word 50-some years ago!

My dad would go a Goodyear Tire store each year, where they also sold Magnavox televisions and stereos. He'd act like we were interested in purchasing a color television or console stereo. As a reward for stopping in Goodyear would present him with an LP of Christmas music by various A-list performers — Anthony Newley, Ann-Margret, Perry Como, etc.

My dad would not buy a color television until 1972, some years after this promotion ended and from a local appliance store that didn't sell tires. It was, however, a Magnavox. As I was stationed in Korea at the time, physics excluded me from the family celebration (back then something like that was a big deal in an Italian family, but they didn't even write me about it).

My parents never owned a stereo until we gave my dad a simple, small boombox around 2000.

I don't remember my dad ever having Goodyear tires on his car, either, unless it came with them as factory equipment.

Anyway, I've been buying Christmas music all over the place. You've been at the checkout counters and seen the "special" promotional CDs one store or another has compiled to suit the tastes of its clientele. Every year now and then we come across one of those that isn't too redundant or seems unique. Since the prices are usually low, around \$6.99, with performers who are known artists, why not? At that price you can always program out the one or two cuts that might suck.

If the price is right, I'll also try individual artists. In the past few years we've acquired

Christmas CDs the likes of Jimmy Buffett (most unique); the London Symphony Orchestra; Dan Fogelberg (some truly Fogelberg-ish touches); and, of course, The Rat Pack (Mr. S, Dino and Sammy). This year I scored good deals on Willie Nelson (gotta pay those IRS fines); John Williams and the Boston Pops (not quite the same deftness as Arthur Fiedler); Mahalia Jackson (the all-time Queen of Christian Music), et alia.

I've tried to make some inroads into Hanukkah music listening, too, but haven't gotten the hang of it yet. Some of the music is bright, upbeat, cheery and celebratory. We've all heard "The Dreidel Song." Well, that's mundane compared to other Hanukkah songs.

However, true to the Jewish spirit, a lot of Hanukkah music is very somber in tone. Let's face it, a downbeat song can bring any celebration or gathering directly to its knees. But I'm working on it.

Every year or two, with the advent of new music in our collection, I feel compelled to make a Holiday MP3. The first time I did not completely fill one disc. My second effort resulted in a handful of songs being omitted. This year, I filled two entire MP3 discs — it took damn near a week, drove me almost crazy, and still there was enough music left over for at least another full disc.

I even decided to entirely leave out Hanukkah music. I just didn't have the time to listen and familiarize myself enough to not include the dreary pieces. When I feel like being Democratic about the music, I'll put on one of the previous MP3s.

From Tchaikovsky to Lennon, Vivaldi to Torme', whether performed by The Beach Boys, Vaughn Monroe, Judy Garland, James Taylor, The Kinks, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat "King" Cole, or whomever, since almost shuffling off this mortal coil on Dec. 25, 1997, I have come to enjoy the music of the season — when properly performed — with new ears.

It hasn't been a detriment, either, that years after my sudden illness Pete played a father (with six kinder, no less) and, despite no formal training, danced in several local productions of "The Nutcracker." One year he also got to be "Mother Ginger," a tremendous honor. Perhaps it was Kismet that this great work by Tchaikovsky has long been one of the few ballets I can listen to in its entirety.

As to my favorite songs, despite no longer practicing Chris-

tianity I still think "O, Holy Night" is the best of those with a religious theme.

With secular music, the decision's a tad more difficult. There's a lot of bittersweetness associated with Christmas. The Mel Torme' classic, "The Christmas Song," is perhaps the crème-de-la-crème of holiday ditties. The live Torme' rendition is excellent, naturally, but Nat "King" Cole's hit version makes Christmas what it is to many people.

However, in these war-infested times, my heart can't help but harken back to a different time, a more sullen age. We have a copy of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" by Connie Francis that could rip your heart out.

However, the real tearjerker is "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Whether you listen to the original Judy Garland version, slightly censored for a sensitive World War II audience, or James Taylor's more recent recording, singing all the lyrics for the first time, you'd have to be a heartless somanabitch not to be touched.

I spent Christmas Day, 1971 at the USO in Seoul, South Korea, sad, lonely, pissed off at the world. At 20 years old I had been in country now for 10 months, and was sick of nothing but Army all around me. This was the first time I had even gone to the Seoul USO, and can't for the life of me remember what precipitated my visit.

That morning, a fire broke out in a high-rise hotel about three blocks from the USO. We could hear the sirens, even the screams of the victims. At the time, South Korea was still mostly a third-world nation, and they didn't do well with major disasters of the man-made variety.

The only thing we could get on television was live coverage of the fire. People were holding onto mattresses and jumping out of windows, not understanding any of the concepts of windage and floatation and just plain common sense. As they were falling the mattresses would go one direction, the jumpers another. Even after seeing other people die in this grotesque manner more people panicked and followed suit.

A number of people jumped even without mattresses to certain death. All they had to do was stand at the windows and wait. Because of the panic, from the moment the kitchen coffee machine had caught fire and was not put out by its untrained attendant, through the restaurant and lobby, to the people who overreacted and trampled each other in stairwells, attempted to

use elevators, or jumped, the death toll was five to ten times what it should have been.

We dare not, however, blame the woefully ill-prepared Seoul Fire Department of 1971, and a complete lack of public safety awareness within the city itself.

Whenever I hear the two aforementioned songs, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas," that day 35 years past comes back in too many ways to explain.

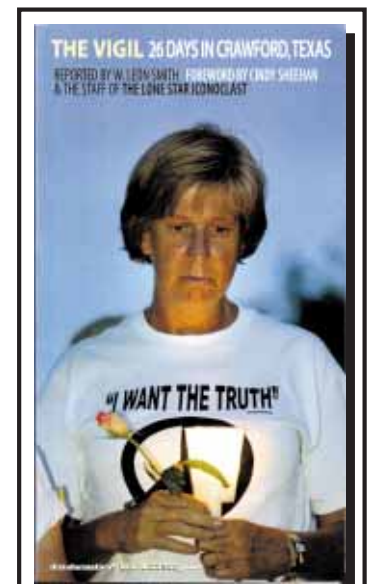
Let's not dwell there. That's what the other songs are for! On one "Holy Night," if that's how some perceive it, I can agree that something special occurred. Let's just agree to disagree as to what actually transpired... and enjoy those chestnuts once they're done roasting on the open fire.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

**HAPPY HANUKKAH!**

Shalom, Dear Friend, to You and Yours!

*(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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# Cupcake Ban

**GUEST COMMENTARY**

By **TOM PURCELL**  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Let me get this straight. According to The Washington Post, schools are now banning cupcakes?

That's right. What of it?

They're just cupcakes — little individual cakes wrapped in paper and coated with icing. What the heck could be wrong with a couple of lousy cupcakes?

Are you not aware, sir, that a childhood obesity epidemic is under way in America? According to the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of overweight children between 6 and 11 doubled in the past 20 years!

Yes, there IS an obesity problem with our children. Kids are taking in way more calories than they're burning off. But how the heck did this result in a wholesale cupcake ban from many schools?

It has to do with the Child Nutrition and Reauthorization Act of 2004. Any school that receives funding from the federal lunch program is required to create a wellness policy.

A wellness policy?

Yes, each school must develop a program to promote good health. Though the government doesn't direct schools on what the programs should include, typical programs are a mix of physical education, a health curriculum, and the elimination of junk food on school grounds.

No junk foods at school?

Nope, many schools have banned sodas, cakes and candies from being sold in vending machines. Many are more cautious about the foods they serve in their cafeterias. And many are banning sweets from being used for a variety of activities, such as fundraisers.

No sweets in fundraisers! But when I was a kid, brownie sales raised lots of money for all kinds of charities. How are you going to raise money now?

Our spinach-stuffed tofu bars are starting to sell. Look, if a school body sanctions the use of sweets in any way, isn't that tantamount to teaching kids that sweets are good? Isn't that tantamount to ENCOURAGING them to eat sweets?

You're thinking too hard. One of the best teachers I had promised my fourth grade class fresh donut holes every now and then if we did well in our classroom work. We always looked forward to the reward. It provided a welcome break from our regular regimen.

He might be arrested for that today.

They're just cupcakes. As the Post points out, cupcakes stoke our nostalgia. As adults, they bring back the feelings of security and good times we enjoyed as children. Without cupcakes, what will today's kids be nostalgic about when they're adults?

Celery stalks. Look, you need to get over it. Cupcakes are being banned at schools all across America — maybe even in Texas one day.

Texas?

They rabble rousers passed the "Safe Cupcake Amendment." They say it is to protect the rights they eat at home? Doesn't it have to do with a lack of exercise and playing video games at all hours? And parents who of kids and their parents to bring cupcakes to school, but I think they just like to make trouble.

Look, there is no doubt our kids are overeating, but doesn't the problem have more to do with how aren't teaching good nutrition in our high-calorie society?

Sir, as an educator I cannot concern myself with what happens to kids in their homes. I control only what happens to them at school. And if I wish to keep receiving federal funding, I must do what the government tells me to do. That is why I established a wellness program, and ours bans cupcakes.

But your cupcake ban is another example of government seeking to control our behavior — another example of "dogooders" unwittingly taking all the color and flavor and fun out of our public institutions? How can you possibly replace the cupcake?

You've obviously never tried our asparagus wraps.

*Tom Purcell is a humor columnist syndicated exclusively by Cagle Cartoons. For comments to Tom, please email him at <TomPurcell@aol.com>.*

# Online Shopping The New Humbug?



**Modern Times**

By **Lloyd Garver**

Now that Christmas has passed, some people have started thinking about, well, next Christmas. You probably know at least a couple of people who impress you — or more likely, annoy you — when they smugly announce way before Christmas that they have finished their holiday shopping. These days, there is a sub-group of these early bird shoppers: those who finish all their shopping weeks — or months — ahead of time and do it all online. I read about a woman who boasted that she did all her Christmas shopping on the day after Thanksgiving without ever leaving her home. To me, this is a dubious accomplishment. Why is it necessarily a good thing to spend the holiday shopping season without ever leaving your home? Is the current holiday slogan, "'Tis the season to avoid other people?"

To those of you who shopped online this year, I'm not saying you did a "bad" thing. Online holiday shopping can be a great convenience. If you definitely know what you want for that person who lives far away, and you want it wrapped and delivered, the internet is wonderful. And for people who aren't able to leave their homes, e-shopping is a blessing.

I'm just suggesting that for those who are capable of getting out there, they're missing out on something if they do all of their shopping from their computers. Next year, don't you want to feel how soft that Teddy Bear is, or browse through that art book you're considering? Doesn't it make sense to actually smell that perfume you're buying instead of just clicking on a picture of it?

I know what some people consider the big negatives of holiday shopping, especially last minute shopping: It's hard to find a place to park. Stores are crowded, and they may no longer have that thing in stock that you've been buying "in your head" for months.

But these things aren't necessarily negatives. What a great sense of accomplishment I get after people tell me that I'll never find a place to park two days before Christmas when a big parking space opens up just as I pull in front of the store. And as for those stressed-out shopping crowds, try thinking of them as a community with a "we're all in this together" attitude. Complaining to each other about shopping is certainly within the concept of holiday sharing. And if the store is out of what you had planned on buying, isn't it a great feeling when you discover something else that's even better?

Okay, maybe you think I'm being ridiculously naive. You're not the kind of person who could ever see other shoppers as a

"community;" rather, you feel they are the hated enemy that's keeping you from buying what you want, getting out of the store, and getting home to put your feet up. I still think it's important that you at least experience holiday shopping in person. Even if it's just for a little bit. Even if it puts you in a bad mood. Honk at that car that stole your parking space. Yell at that person who cut in front of you in line. And angrily insist on seeing the manager if a salesperson has been rude to you. But interact with real people at this time of year! I kind of think that's what we're supposed to do during this season.

When I was a kid, my parents would take us downtown to see all the decorations. We would watch those magical displays in the windows until we got cold enough to need hot chocolate. It was a nice tradition. Today, public decorations are even more inclusive, since more and more often, Chanukah and Kwanzaa are represented. To hear some of the rigid Christmas-only-ites tell it, so many holidays and groups are represented, that they are making it hard to see the downtown Christmas trees. So, you'd think that this tradition would be flourishing.

But I'm afraid it will die out. That's why I think people should put up with the inconvenience of old-fashioned shopping, even if it's just for one outing. If not, traditions like taking kids to see decorations, or listening to carolers, or running into people while shopping whom you haven't seen for years will be as outdated as, well, as a black-and-white computer monitor.

I can imagine in the not-too-distant future a family having a "tradition" like this: Everybody will be in their holiday pajamas when the parents call out: "Come on kids, gather around. It's that magical time of year again. Let's do what we always do, and look at that website that has the animated Santa, juggling a screwdriver set."

*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 can be reached at [lloydgarver@yahoo.com](mailto:lloydgarver@yahoo.com)*

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# The 'Decider' Has Decided: No Decision

By GRAYSON HARPER  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Prior to the November elections, Bush said we were absolutely winning the war in Iraq. In the wake of the elections, he now says, "We're not winning and we're not losing." Which is a bit like saying, "I've got a job at WalMart, but I'm living in my car."

In any case, the "Decider" has been to the mountain, he has counseled with the "Wise Men," and he is expected to announce his "New Iraq Policy" sometime this month. I can hardly wait. He was too busy last month. Well, after all, Congress was adjourned, Christmas was around the corner. Everybody was just too dadburn busy to worry about all that carnage, blood being spilt in the streets of Iraq.

There's just so much to do to get ready for Christmas. Gifts to buy, beeves to slaughter, mountains of food to prepare. But at least His Honor didn't have to worry about his children being special delivered to the Crawford ranchette in body bags over the holidays.

So, he thought it best to wait till the new year before making any big decisions. That's reasonable, isn't it? It's called being "prudent." After all, anybody can get into a war. That decision, as any of our Congressmen can tell you, requires only a minimum of thought and debate. Actually, the less thought and debate, the better. No messy "Study Groups" required for that! But getting out of the war—now, that's a whole 'nother kettle of fish. I mean, we have to look at the "reality on the ground," don't we? Remember that? Remember "the reality on the ground?" Well, I don't know about you, but I have fond memories of "the reality on the ground."

There's all kinds of complexities, here. Layers of issues and . . . bodies, and . . . rape and torture and pillage, and what have you. And, by the way, what kind of a send-off can we expect from the Iraqi people once our troops are on their way out of town? Hm? Has anyone given any thought to that? Will it be a cheerful send-off? Will the grateful newly democratized citizens stand and wave and cheer along the parade route? Will they throw flowers and garlands at our victorious army as it passes in review? Will their women dish out kisses to our boys as those saucy French girls once did when we liberated France? Will it be a good photo-op for the embedded press?

## GUEST COMMENTARY

And how do you calculate the proper ratio of blood spilt to the price of gas at the pump? Who makes that decision, for crying out loud? Do we just leave it up to the CEO of Exxon-Mobil to figure out? How much is he making, anyhow? What's his name? Rex. Rex Tillerson. Let's see. Well, ol' Rex is up for a 2.8 million dollar bonus for 2006.

And he's getting a 17% pay hike for 2007—that will raise him to 1.75 million bucks. Hm. I'm just not sure he's the right one to decide this issue. You think self-interest might be a problem, here? I just don't know.

Well, maybe we let the Decider handle that one, too. Gee, that's a lot of decisions we've handed him, lately, isn't it? Frankly, I'm a little concerned for his well-being. How many things can one guy decide on before he finally crumbles under the weight of all those deci-

sions? Decisions like whose phones to tap and whose emails to read. Oh, but he's already made that one kind of easy, hasn't he? Just tap and read them all. Yeah, way ahead of us, there.

But what about who to lock up and who to torture? Oh, that's right, he made that one easy, too. Just arrest and torture anybody that looks out of place. *Habeas Corpus* is finito, so that's not a problem. But what about all those decisions about which laws to obey and which ones to break? That's a lot of balls to

juggle, isn't it? Well, no, I guess not. He just decides in the moment, doesn't he? And nobody objects anyway, so. . . .

But still, pulling out of a war, that's a lot more complicated, I should think. We might need two or three Study Groups to handle this problem. Or maybe a dozen or so. And surely, we oughta get the Think Tanks involved. Let's face it. It could take years to arrive at the proper decision on Iraq.

What to do? Stay? Or go home? It's just so complicated.

## Federal Minimum Wage Is A National Disgrace

By JAMES C. HARRINGTON  
DIRECTOR, TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT

As of Dec. 2, 2006, this country broke the record for the longest period of time without a raise in the minimum wage since that federal law was established in 1938. The prior record was nine years and three months (Jan. 1, 1981 until April 1, 1990).

The buying power of today's \$5.15/hour minimum wage is less than the 1950 minimum, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator. It would take \$9.28 in today's dollars to match the buying power of the 1950 minimum wage. And it requires almost two workers these days to match the buying power of one minimum wage worker in 1968. A family today needs two bread winners, not one.

A full-time, minimum-wage worker earns \$10,712/year—less than \$900/month to cover housing, food, health care, transportation, and other expenses. Or, to put this in another perspective, today,

## GUEST COMMENTARY

family health insurance costs more than a minimum-wage worker's entire annual income, which is why so few minimum-wage families have health coverage. The annual federal minimum leaves a family of three subsisting at about \$6,000 under the poverty level.

The minimum wage sets the wage floor. As the floor has sunk below poverty levels, millions of workers earn above the minimum, but not above poverty wages.

The share of national income going to wages and salaries is at the lowest since 1929, while the share going to after-tax corporate profits is at the highest. Since 1997, domestic corporate profits have risen 72%, while the minimum wage has fallen 20%, adjusted for inflation. Compared to 1968, domestic corporate profits have climbed 214%, but the minimum wage has dropped 44% in value.

CEOs have enriched themselves and their families while workers struggle just to support themselves and their children. The highest paid CEO in 1968 made as much as 127 average-income workers together (or 239 minimum-wage workers). The highest paid CEO's salary in 2005 equaled the combined wages of 7,443 average-income workers (or 23,282 minimum-wage workers).

With the federal minimum wage stuck in the cost-of-living quicksand, a number of states have raised their minimums, but not Texas, of course. At least 29 states and the District of Columbia will have minimum wages above \$5.15/hour as of Jan. 1, 2007.

Contrary to the naysayers and according to the Fiscal Policy Institute, since 1998, states with higher minimum wages than required by federal law had better job growth than states paying only the federal minimum. And small businesses in higher minimum-wage states had twice the job growth as the rest of the coun-

try. Democrats promise a minimum-wage hike within the first 100 hours of the new Congress. The long-delayed Fair Minimum Wage Act would occur in three steps: \$5.85/hour, 60 days after enactment; \$6.55, one year later in 2008; and \$7.25 in 2009.

This is a step in the right direction, but workers should not have to wait until 2009 for a \$7.25 minimum wage that does not even restore buying power lost since 1968.

Congress has given itself eight pay raises since 1997 and is scheduled for a \$3,300 "cost of living adjustment," raising congressional pay on Jan. 1 to \$168,500—not counting health coverage, pensions, and other benefits. Congress should refuse pay increases until it raises the minimum wage enough to keep workers out of poverty, instead of in poverty.

*The Texas Civil Rights Project, a nonprofit foundation, promotes civil rights and economic and racial justice throughout Texas.*

## True or False?

By KEN DARBY  
THE PEBBLE PUBLICATIONS

Can you guess which of the following are true and which are false? (Answers are below)

1. Apples, not caffeine, are more efficient at waking you up in the morning.
2. Alfred Hitchcock didn't have a belly button.
3. A pack-a-day smoker will lose approximately 2 teeth every 10 years.
4. People do not get sick from cold weather; it's from being indoors a lot more.
5. When you sneeze, all bodily functions stop, even your heart!

6. Only 7 per cent of the population are lefties.
7. Forty people are sent to the hospital for dog bites every minute.
8. Babies are born without kneecaps. They don't appear until they are 2-6 years old.
9. The average person over 50 will have spent 5 years waiting in lines.
10. The toothbrush was invented in 1498.
11. The average housefly lives for one month.
12. 40,000 Americans are injured by toilets each year.
13. A coat hanger is 44-inches long when straightened.
14. The average computer user blinks 7 times a minute.
15. Your feet are bigger in the

16. Most of us have eaten a spider in our sleep.
17. The REAL reason ostriches stick their head in the sand is to search for water.
18. The only two animals that can see behind themselves without turning their heads are the rabbit and the parrot.
19. John Travolta turned down the starring roles in "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Tootsie."
20. Michael Jackson owns the rights to the South Carolina State Anthem.
21. In most television commercials advertising milk, a mixture of white paint and a little thinner is used in place of

22. Prince Charles and Prince William NEVER travel on the same airplane, just in case there is a crash.
  23. The first Harley Davidson motorcycle built in 1903 used a tomato can for a carburetor.
  24. Most hospitals make money by selling the umbilical cords cut from women who give birth. They are used in vein transplant surgery.
  25. Humphrey Bogart was related to Princess Diana. They were 7th cousins.
  26. If coloring weren't added to Coca-Cola, it would be green.
- Answer: They are all TRUE ... Now go back and think about #16!

# The Real Truth About The War In Iraq

I'm a simple person, not well versed in politics. My areas of expertise are far from government and Washington. All I know is what makes sense to me, just an ordinary American.

I caught a bit of the President's speech today. I missed part of it — and some of the question-and-answer period, but I expect I might be able to guess how most of it went. If I'm wrong, you can correct me. We've heard it all before.

I know the President mentioned (again) that we must help the Iraqi people toward freedom. Their country had big problems before, and now that we are there, they have other problems, also big. So we're supposed to try to fix mostly what we ourselves wrought. Have we helped them? I don't think so. Maybe in some ways. Can we really make a difference there? I doubt it. There is a mindset in that part of the world that is dif-

ferent than our thought patterns can fathom. We have paved the way for a Civil War that may be even more destructive than the reign of a madman. And our soldiers are in the middle of it.

Now the President and his folks repeat themselves over and over again, so if I do the same, I hope you'll forgive me. I think the common wisdom is that if you say something enough, people are supposed to

## Rustic Ramblings

By Dr. Gene Ellis



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

believe it's true.

I still have to wonder, as I've wondered before, why we feel we must be the keepers of freedom, the caretakers of the world, especially in a region where factions have fought among themselves for thousands of years. Are we so egotistical as to believe that we can change this?

And why do we feel the need to protect the freedoms of people halfway around the world while we have so many poor and hungry in our own country? We've depleted our coffers with this war. That money could have been and should have been spent on domestic issues.

Not only do we have the homeless (mainly due to drug problems and elimination of public mental health facilities), domestic violence, illegal immigration, borders that aren't secure, gangs, public education in trouble, and a myriad of other social ills, but we've now a growing number of working poor, people who toil every day and still can't afford adequate food, health care, insurance, gasoline, or prescription drugs.

We also have people on welfare, generations of them, and now huge numbers of women (sporting expensive designer bags) having babies out of wedlock while we hardworking taxpayers are expected to feed and clothe them (so their mothers or grandmothers can afford the designer bags), provide their doctor's visits and medical care.

I don't know about you, but I'm having a pretty challenging time affording my own insurance, prescriptions, health care, food, sundries, and gasoline — on a fixed income. Forget about luxuries. Did you notice how gas prices went down before the recent elections and then went right back up? Gee, what a surprise.

Like every generation has probably observed, prices do keep going up. I heard President Bush, in his speech today, urge us to go out and shop, add to the economy this holiday season. Shop with what? Most average Americans are already in debt up to their eyeballs (another huge problem in our country. Debt has become a

way of life). And our disposable income, if there is any, goes into the gasoline pump. What are we supposed to shop with? What dream world is our President living in?

At least many of the generations before us had their social security to look forward to. The idea was that after lifetimes of working for the good of society (rather than living off it, which was considered a disgrace), when folks became too old, sick, or exhausted to work any longer to fund the whims and whimsies of politicians, to pay the salaries of representatives and senators who weren't really working for THEM — when it was time for others to pay in to fund wars no one wanted and programs that weren't working — at least then, at retirement age, people could be comfortable. Now we will be expected to work longer and receive less. What a system! And who knows for how long even that money will be available to those who have paid into it their entire working lives?

I had asked a few paragraphs back, before I got off on tangents (any of which could be an entire column), why we feel the need to protect the freedoms of people halfway around the world while we have so many poor and hungry in our own country. The answer is probably that our government really doesn't feel that need at all. They don't really care about the freedoms of Iraqis, and most Americans probably don't either. It's not that we aren't sympathetic to the needs of all, but most of us don't feel it's our responsibility to right all the wrongs in the world or that it's a task we could possibly accomplish.

So maybe all this care and concern about protecting freedom is just B.S., a polite sham. Perhaps the reasons we are in Iraq have little to do with the freedom of the Iraqi people, fighting terrorism, or bringing peace to the Middle East. Maybe, just maybe, the reasons we are in Iraq have to do with big oil and big money, and putting it in the preferred pockets. Period.

My holiday gift to you simple, honest, trusting people out there (like me) is to suggest that you please all open your eyes and see what just might be the real truth.

## Bible Brings Longhorns Back From Dead

The DAILY TEXAN, the student newspaper at the University of Texas, reported on Dec. 13, 1936, that the athletic council had a secret game plan to replace the current football coach with the legendary Dana X. Bible.

Although a charter member of the Southwest Conference, the state's largest college had just three measly championships to show for 22 seasons. The Longhorns had fallen on humiliatingly hard times in recent years, finishing dead last in the latest seven-team race.

Jack Chevigny realized his coaching days were over at Texas and only hoped to exit with his tattered dignity intact. But a student representative on the athletic council leaked the hush-hush decision to fire him to the campus paper, and Chevigny was forced to resign in disgrace.

The unanimous choice to raise the lifeless football program from the dead was Dana Xenophon Bible, the gridiron genius who posted a phenomenal 72-19-9 record at rival Texas A&M before moving on to Nebraska. He expressed an interest in returning to the Lone Star State, if the price was right.

Negotiators listened in stunned disbelief as Bible recited his exorbitant demands: a no-cut contract for 10 years, \$15,000 annual salary, \$5,000 more to cover his moving expenses and, to sweeten the deal, his new employer had to pay his income taxes.

To the casual observer, Bible might as well have asked for the moon. How could anyone expect to earn twice as much as the university president and four times the income of a professor for teaching young men the finer points of a violent sport?

But football has always been much more than a pastime in Texas. Influential alumni overcame the vehement objections of the faculty and state legislature by guaranteeing the con-

### This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



troversial compensation would come from gate receipts at athletic events.

Bible no sooner set up shop in Austin than he made a rash promise to the victory-starved faithful. "We shall try to give Texas a winning football team. We do not mean five years from now or three. We mean starting new fall."

Bible knew from long experience that college football games are won in the living rooms of top high-school prospects, so-called "blue chips." During the off-season, he unveiled the Bible Plan, an aggressive yet squeaky clean campaign to attract cream-of-the-crop players.

The next year the lowly Longhorns lost every contest save one, the Thanksgiving Day grudge match with the Aggies. The silver lining in the black cloud of 1938 was the varsity-freshman scrimmage, where Bible's initial batch of recruits beat the daylights out of the outclassed upperclassmen.

Nineteen thirty-nine was the turnaround year as the superb sophomores took charge. The reinvigorated Horns not only recorded their first winning season in five years but upset mighty Wisconsin on the road and came from behind in the closing seconds of a home-field cliffhanger to surprise Arkansas.

Even though their helmeted heroes tasted defeat just twice in 1940, UT fans dreaded the finale with the Aggies, who had crushed 19 consecutive opponents behind the power running of All-American John Kimbrough. But after the offense tallied on the fourth snap of the pigskin, the stingy de-

fense did not surrender a single point to the potent A&M attack.

In 1941 Bible had a hand-picked squad at last. Headed by the fabulous freshmen of '37, who had matured into veteran seniors, every spot on the roster was filled by a product of his tried-and-true "plan." Coaches, players, students, and alumni all believed their time had come.

The Longhorns clobbered their first six foes piling up 230 points while allowing a grand total of three touchdowns. This astonishing start landed them on top of the college polls and on the cover of LIFE magazine. A national championship as well as the conference were within reach.

However, someone forgot to tell the Baylor Bears that Bible and his boys were invincible. The Horns escaped the Waco ambush with a tie only to lose to TCU the very next Saturday. In eight traumatic days, a dream season went up in smoke.

Texas bounced back to beat A&M, but the Aggies still went to the Cotton Bowl. Passed over by the Rose and Sugar, the frustrated Horns bombed Oregon 71-7 the day before Pearl Harbor.

Bible won back-to-back SWC titles in 1942 and 1943, but the repeat feat was tarnished by the musical-chairs effect of the world war on college football. His star running back, one of a score of players "on loan" from the military, had been Texas Tech's best peacetime ball carrier.

At the end of his ten-year contract in 1946, Dana X. Bible passed the reins to Blair Cherry. He stayed on at the University of Texas as athletic director and spent a second decade molding the Longhorns into a perennial powerhouse.

*Bartee Haile welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at [haile@pdq.net](mailto:haile@pdq.net) or P.O. Box 152, Friendswood, TX 77549.*

# Saying Goodbye In 2006

As 2006 comes to a close, the final 2006 edition of *The Iconoclast* is providing a listing of some of the famous individuals who are now gone but who during their lifetimes made a mark that will stand the test of time. (They are listed during the month of their death; beside listing is their birthdate).

## January

Susan Bergman (writer/teacher) 1957  
 Bryan Harvey (guitarist/geek) 1956  
 Lou Rawls (singer, philanthropist) 1933  
 Hugh Thompson (counselor/war hero) 1943  
 Shelley Winters (actress) 1920  
 Tony Franciosa (actor) 1928  
 Wilson Pickett (singer) 1941  
 Fayard Nicholas (dancer/choreographer) 1914  
 Chris Penn (actor) 1965  
 Wendy Wasserstein (playwright) 1950.  
 Coretta Scott King (civil rights advocate/musician) 1927  
 Moira Shearer (dancer/actress/writer) 1926

## February

Jean Byron (actress/singer) 1925  
 Al Lewis (actor/author/politician/former restaurateur/radio show host) 1923  
 Betty Friedan (writer/feminist) 1921  
 Franklin Cover (actor) 1928  
 Alan J. Shalleck (illustrator) 1929  
 Akira Ifukube (composer) 1914  
 Phil Brown (actor) 1916  
 Sir Freddie Laker (businessman) 1922  
 Peter Benchley (writer) 1940  
 Andreas Katsulas (actor) 1946  
 Billy Cowsill (singer/guitarist) 1948  
 Curt Gowdy (sportscaster) 1919  
 Octavia Butler (writer) 1947  
 Don Knotts (actor) 1924  
 Dennis Weaver (actor, philanthropist, environmentalist) 1924  
 Darren McGavin (actor) 1922

## March

Ronald Anthony Cross (writer) 1937  
 Jack Wild (actor) 1952  
 Kirby Puckett 1960  
 Dana Reeve (singer/activist) 1961  
 Gordon Parks (photographer, director) 1912  
 Maureen Stapleton (actress) 1925  
 Peter Tomarken (game show host) 1942  
 David Feintuch (writer) 1942  
 Oleg Cassini (fashion designer) 1913  
 John Morressy (English professor/fantasy writer) 1930  
 David Stemple (Renaissance man) 1937  
 Sarah Caldwell (opera director/professor) 1924  
 Richard Fleischer (director) 1916  
 Buck Owens (singer) 1929  
 Dan Curtis (TV producer) 1928  
 Stanislaw Lem (writer) 1921  
 Caspar Weinberger (politician) 1917

## April

Thomas Abercrombie (photographer/writer) 1930  
 Gene Pitney (singer) 1941  
 June Pointer (singer) 1953  
 Scott Crossfield (pilot) 1921  
 John Kenneth Galbraith (professor/economist/writer) 1908

## May

Lisa Barnett (writer) 1955  
 Louis Rukeyser (journalist) 1933  
 Senator Lloyd Bentsen (politician) 1921  
 Paul Gleason (actor) 1944  
 Robert Sterling (actor) 1917

## June

Billy Preston (singer/songwriter) 1946  
 Robert Donner (actor) 1934  
 Tim Hildebrandt (artist) 1939  
 Aaron Spelling (producer) 1923  
 Jim Baen (publisher) 1943

Jan Murray (comic) 1916  
 Kasey Rogers (actress/writer) 1925  
 Syd Barrett (singer/songwriter) 1946  
 June Allyson (actress) 1917  
 Barnard Hughes (actor) 1915

Red Buttons (actor) 1919  
 Carrie Nye (actress) 1936  
 Mickey Spillane (writer) 1918  
 Jack Warden (actor) 1920  
 Mako (actor) 1933  
 David Gemmell (writer) 1948

## August

Susan Butcher (sled dog racer/vet technician) 1954  
 James Van Allen (teacher/astronomer) 1914  
 Mike Douglas (talk show host) 1925  
 Bruno Kirby (actor) 1949  
 Maynard Ferguson (trumpeter) 1928  
 Joseph Stefano (writer) 1922  
 Gerald Green (writer/producer) 1922  
 Glenn Ford (actor) 1916

## September

Bob Mathias (decathlete/Congressional representative) 1930  
 Steve "The Crocodile Hunter" Irwin (TV personality/zoo director/conservationist) 1962  
 Robert Earl Jones (actor) 1910  
 Pat Corley (actor) 1930  
 Ann Richards (commentator/politician) 1933  
 Oriana Fallaci (journalist) 1929  
 Charles L. Grant (writer) 1942  
 Sven Nykvist (cinematographer) 1922  
 Edward Albert (actor) 1951  
 John M. Ford (writer) 1957

## October

Wilson "Bob" Tucker (writer) 1914  
 Freddy Fender (singer) 1937  
 Anna Russell (musical comic) 1911  
 Jane Wyatt (actress) 1911  
 Arthur Hill (actor) 1922  
 Red Auerbach (coach) 1917

## November

William Styron (writer) 1925  
 Ed Bradley (journalist) 1941  
 Gerald Levert (singer/songwriter) 1966  
 Jack Palance (actor) 1919  
 Jack Williamson (writer) 1908  
 Milton Friedman (economist) 1912  
 Robert Altman (director) 1925  
 Betty Comden (lyricist, screenwriter) 1919  
 Anita O'Day (singer) 1919  
 Bebe Moore Campbell (writer) 1950  
 Emmett Kelly, Jr. (clown) 1923

## December

Dr. Jeane Kirkpatrick (UN envoy, professor) 1926  
 Elizabeth "Lizzie" Bolden (World's oldest woman 2005-2006) 1890  
 Michael Gilden (actor) 1962  
 Peter Boyle (actor) 1935  
 Dr. Richard Carlson (psychologist/writer) 1961  
 Joseph Barbera (cartoon creator) 1911

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