



# OPINION

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TULSAWORLD • A8 • Monday, March 19, 2007 • www.tulsaworld.com

"Publish and set up a standard; publish and conceal not." Jeremiah 50:2

Eugene Lorton • 1869-1949

## EDITORIALS

# Hogtied

Bill repealing setbacks shelved

For another year a state law will stand requiring hog farms to be set back at least three miles from water supplies.

Rep. Dale DeWitt, R-Braman, pulled House Bill 1515 after colleagues expressed concerns about its effects.

The hog industry, a presence in northwestern Oklahoma, reportedly is seeking to expand into other areas of Oklahoma where water is more plentiful.

Setbacks were established by the Legislature in 1998. A recent study by the Department of Agriculture showed elevated concentrations of nitrates in water near hog farms. Miles Tolbert, secretary of the environment, said monitoring data contained in the study show that every year since hog farms came to Oklahoma, the nitrate levels in water have increased.

The nitrate content in wells cannot positively be linked to hog farming but there's a good chance it's related. Federal guidelines recommend that the level of nitrates in drinking water not exceed 10 parts per million. "Forty percent of the samples exceed safe drinking water limits," Tolbert said. The study was based on tests conducted by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. Some 393 wells were monitored; 123 had nitrogen levels exceeding 10

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parts per million.

Roy Lee Lindsey Jr., who leads the Oklahoma Pork Council, said some hog operators would like to expand into southeastern Oklahoma but the state's restrictive laws have virtually shut down expansion of the hog industry.

DeWitt's bill would have repealed hog farm setbacks from church camps and recreational facilities. This session, the first version of HB 1515 also would have eliminated the three-mile setback from scenic rivers such as the Illinois.

Those rivers, according to a lawsuit brought by Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, already face pollution from poultry litter.

Oklahoma needs agricultural development. But it also needs safe, clean water. The latest study on nitrates shows that something is fouling wells. Until the source of the high readings is known any legislation removing setbacks should not go forward.



## LETTERS

### What are they thinking?

The recent decision by the Tulsa City Council to let Judge Brad Powers go reveals how little councilors know about traffic court in Tulsa. ("Council won't revisit decision to drop judge," March 2.)

Powers has held this thankless job for longer than I have been practicing law. In my 14 years of appearing before him, he has treated all with respect. He has done his job efficiently and with integrity.

I would be interested in the "group of lawyers" who Councilor John Eagleton stated complained about Powers. Perhaps the question should be who at the courthouse has a complaint about Eagleton? All the attorneys I have talked with about this action are surprised.

If the city councilors really are concerned about city court maybe they should ask the Tulsa County bar for input? Powers has collected millions of dollars for his city and deserves better treatment than this. Nowhere in the articles written about this subject is there any mention of a lack of skill, partiality or honesty. Being a judge is not a popularity contest. All the councilors should wake up and rethink this action.

Mark A. Zannotti, Tulsa

### Self-evaluation

How thrilling to get David Schmidly's assessment of his administration's wondrous achievements during his brief (not brief enough for me) tenure as president of Oklahoma State University ("A report card on Oklahoma State University," March 4).

It's a good thing OSU has a medical school because someone's going to have to set Schmidly's arm. Surely he broke it while so vigorously patting himself on the back.

Ted Coombes, Ketchum

### Fix the traffic circles

Is it really feasible to put a fountain or statue or any object in the middle of an intersection? Now that the Main Street "ornament" (downtown Bartlett Square fountain) has been hit for the third time in less than two

years, it might be best to learn from the law of physics and relocate the fountain from the middle of the street.

Not much has been said about the traffic circle placed on north Denver Avenue in the Brady Heights area, but judging by the tire marks, this is another poorly planned project that will eventually be redone without the obstacle.

Admiral Boulevard and Mingo Road has one of the first of Tulsa's traffic circles, but because of the size of the intersection, it works. The size of the Main Street and north Denver circles are too small to ensure that the ornament will not be struck by vehicles.

Chris King, Tulsa

### Defending the Constitution

Does Elizabeth DeWitt's interpretation of the First Amendment mean that there is separation of church and state for all religions or just Christianity? (Letters, March 3.) Or is it just for the so-called religious right? How about the religious left? We never hear them being told that they should not express their beliefs in the public square.

So am I right in assuming that the establishment clause only applies to those who believe that the Bible is the Word of God, who believe in absolute moral truths, who are pro-life and believe that marriage is between a man and a woman? Everyone else is entitled to free speech but us?

As far as the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli goes, more research should be done. There is still controversy surrounding the quote DeWitt cited. Several historians are not sure that the phrase in question was in the original Arabic translation and could have been added later.

Christians are not out to destroy the Constitution of the United States, but to preserve and defend it.

Michael Dobson, Sand Springs

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Each letter must be signed and include an address and a telephone number where the writer can be reached during business hours. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published. Short letters are preferred. Letters may be edited for length, style and grammar.

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, Tulsa World, Box 1770, Tulsa, Okla., 74102, or send e-mail to letters@tulsaworld.com.

# The confession

Captured terrorist reminds of danger we face

It has been more than five years since the horror of Sept. 11, 2001, awakened Americans to the fact that there is a group of radical Muslims in the world who want nothing more than the total destruction of the United States.

The chilling testimony and confession by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed last week was a sobering reminder that the threat still exists. One can argue with President Bush's decision to invade Iraq and our role there now, but Mohammed's words remind us that the danger still exists.

His list of deeds completed or planned might be seen as one man taking an opportunity to brag about some things that he never really had a hand in. The list, however, is too real.

Mohammed's list was lengthy. He confessed to 31 separate plans from the 9/11 attacks to plots to assassinate U.S. presidents to bombings in foreign countries.

His role in the 9/11 attacks has never been in doubt. His admission before a military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, — "I was responsible for the 9/11 operation, from A to Z" — should have been anticlimactic, but it brought back the vision of those burning buildings and the scene of the plane crash in Pennsylvania and reminded Americans of just how brutal the act was.

His flimsy excuse, if that is what it was, was

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appalling but not unlike so many deranged terrorists that have gone before him. He compared himself to George Washington's role in the Revolutionary War.

How absurd. But it goes a long way in explaining the thinking of such terrorists. They have convinced themselves that their cause is just and the deaths of innocent people, including children, is necessary.

They have twisted their faith to accommodate their warped sense of justice. The great majority of Muslims around the world condemn their actions. And as they murder and maim, they tarnish their religion and jeopardize the very people they claim to represent.

The capture of Mohammed was one of the victories in the war on terror. He and others of his ilk are who we should be going after.

His confession was a stark reminder of what has happened and what we face.

# Only the middle gets immigration problem

SAN DIEGO — In the fever-pitched immigration debate, the extremes have it wrong and the center is the only sensible place to be.

President Bush gets it. While visiting Mexico last week, Bush stressed the need for a "middle ground" solution between unconditional amnesty and what he called the "empty talk" of threatening to deport 12 million people. Earlier on his swing through Latin America, Bush staked out some more middle ground. He asserted his belief that "family values don't stop at the Rio Grande." But at the same time, he also felt it necessary while in Guatemala to declare that it is the right of the United States to enforce its immigration laws.

That is precisely the right balance to strike, and the president deserves credit for trying to hold on to the middle in a debate that is too often dominated by the extremes.

I'm a middle-grounder myself, although I spend so much time battling ridiculous and reactionary proposals from the right



RUBEN NAVARRETTE

that I don't always get around to taking on some of the senseless and self-destructive notions from the left.

Such as the insistence by some that if an illegal immigrant has U.S.-born children to support, this alone should be enough to justify allowing the immigrant to stay in the country. The issue has surfaced because of recent worksite raids in which illegal immigrants have been nabbed and deported, some of them leaving behind U.S.-born children.

It happened in December after Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raided Swift & Co. meatpacking plants in six states and rounded up nearly 1,300 illegal immigrant workers. Many of those apprehended had children waiting at

home, and community activists had to scramble to arrange childcare.

And it happened again earlier this month in New Bedford, Mass., where ICE raided a leather-goods factory that makes vests and backpacks for the U.S. military. About 361 workers were picked up — most of them women — and, again, charities and activists hustled to locate and help the youngsters left behind.

After the raids in Massachusetts, Gov. Deval Patrick, a Democrat, declared a "humanitarian crisis." Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said that ICE was "heavy-handed." And Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., insisting that the federal agency was cold-hearted, quipped that "ICE is not a bad name for these people."

It's a good line. But the agency is getting a bad rap. ICE is just doing its job. Under current law, immigration officials insist, law enforcement officers can't make exceptions for family hardship.

Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y., hopes to create an exception, using the courts. He has sponsored a bill that would give immigra-

tion judges more discretion in weighing the effect on families when deciding whether to deport an illegal immigrant.

Fine. Let's give judges more discretion. But let's not get to the point where simply having U.S.-born children amounts to some sort of automatic exemption that allows illegal immigrants to stay. That creates more problems than it solves.

First, it's impractical. The numbers are too high. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, there are as many as 3 million U.S.-born children who have at least one parent who is an illegal immigrant. About 10 percent of American families have at least one member who is here illegally. So this "U.S.-born-children-to-support" exemption could apply to millions of people, watering down the rule of law.

Besides, such a policy would play into the hands of immigration restrictionists who drone on about so-called anchor babies — U.S. children who supposedly keep their illegal immigrant parents anchored in the United States. It's an oversimplification. There is only one thing

that is anchoring illegal immigrants in the United States: jobs.

And finally, allowing people to stay in the United States because they have U.S.-born children to support only confuses the issue of who is actually responsible for the precarious state in which these folks find themselves. The activists like to blame the government and a broken immigration system. Yet the blame lies with the parents. They made at least three mistakes to get to this point: coming to the country illegally, having children while they were in the uncertain situation where they could be apprehended and deported at any time, and allowing this uncertainty to drag on for years by not taking the steps necessary to become legal.

The legalization process is not easy, but no one said it is supposed to be. Perhaps the same can be said for staying in the center of an emotional debate that makes trying to be fair and reasonable nearly impossible.

Washington Post Writers Group

