

## EDITORIALS

# Right decision

## Revisiting group-home rules

To their credit, city councilors listened to the concerns of fair-housing advocates and agreed to take another look at proposed changes in group-home regulations.

That was the right course to take. While there may be a case for slightly modifying group-home regulations, the proposals on the table were so extreme, they could have prevented any new group homes from being located in the city. Councilors have the duty to try to balance the interests of all their constituents, and that appears to be what they're aiming for in this case.

The proposed changes grew out of the work of a task force that was impaneled in 2007, which was in response to complaints from neighborhoods about traffic and other issues said to be related to group homes.

The proposals would have reduced the number of unrelated people who could live together in a neighborhood setting, and also would have established a half-mile spacing requirement that would have made it difficult, if not impossible, to site new group homes.

Advocates for people with

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disabilities, the elderly and those with substance-abuse problems joined together to oppose the proposals.

Local civil-rights attorney Louis Bullock, who has handled several high-profile cases involving such issues, said the proposals would not withstand a legal challenge because they were so harsh and restrictive.

Councilor Rick Westcott, who was behind the task-force effort, said he was willing to talk to advocates more about their concerns, and reiterated that sentiment after the decision was made to review the proposals.

We trust he is sincere, and hope a satisfactory compromise can be developed.

A couple of suggestions: If parking is a neighborhood issue, let's draft new parking regulations. If trespassing or unruly behavior is the issue, then let's get the police involved.

In other words, let's have the regulations target issues — not people.

# Radish radicals

## Rooting for community gardens

At first it seemed City Councilor Jack Henderson didn't like the idea of community gardens, an issue the council is pondering, because he was afraid they would sprout salvage yards.

By Tuesday he had changed that theory. Now, it's something else he's afraid is going to take root — dope.

"How do we know what people are going to be growing? Vegetables? Maybe. Or maybe something else," he said at a City Council committee meeting.

Henderson is absolutely right. Before we go charging into this whole community garden business, we need to make sure no one grows marijuana in them. What we need is a law that makes it illegal to grow pot. We could even make it a serious offense and put people in prison for it.

Oh, wait. We already have that law. Never mind.

Then there's the argument put forward by Councilor David Patrick.

Patrick said he isn't opposed to community gardens; he just wants to protect neighborhoods from outside groups coming in to start them.

The danger is obvious. If outside agitators are allowed the liberty to use their own

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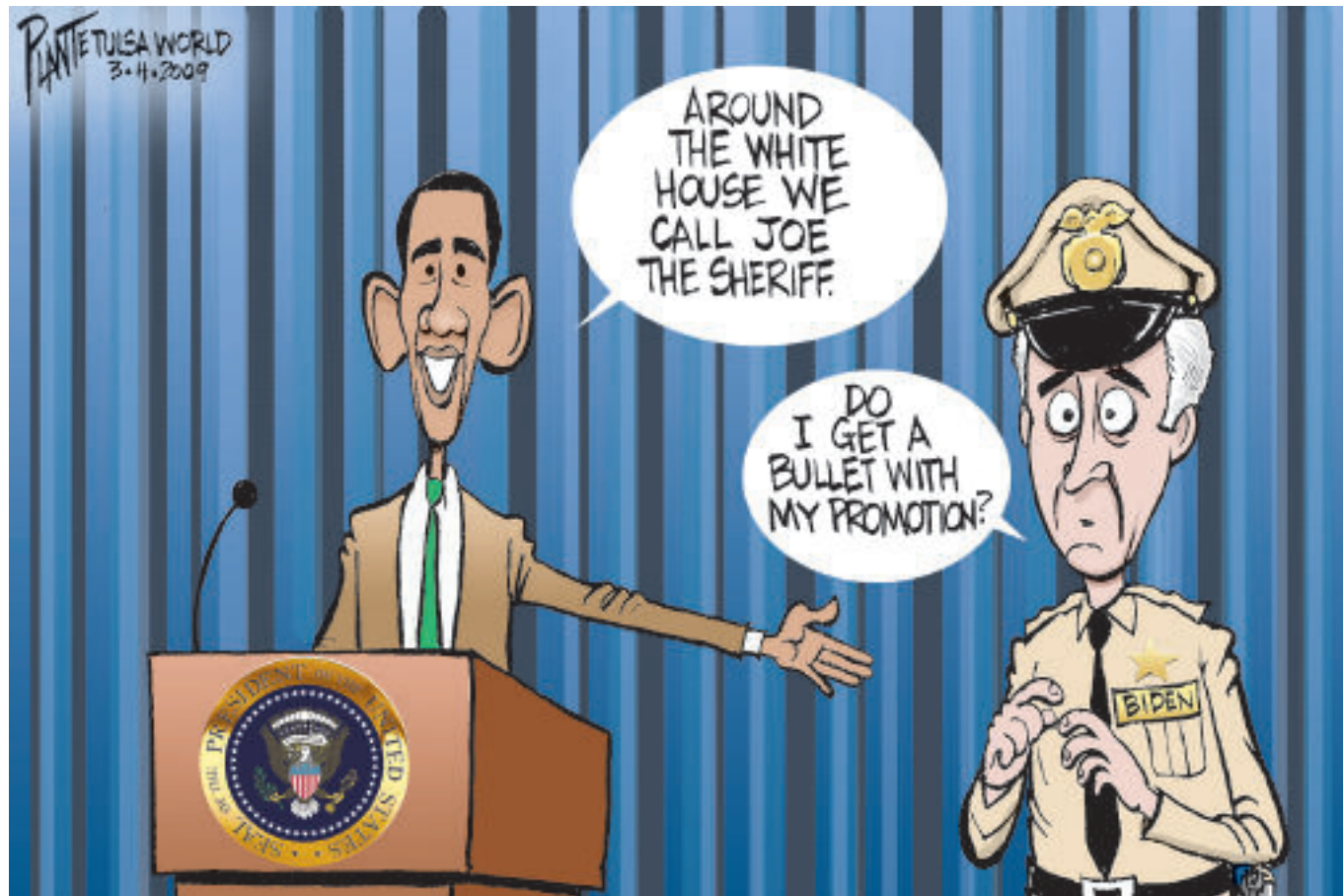
private land for community gardens we could have an immediate outbreak of ... squash.

If these rogue elements are not controlled, tomatoes and okra will stalk our streets.

Before you know it, everyone's got a cucumber and the kids are down on the corner trying to score some lima beans.

It's silly and enough to make you wonder what are these councilors really are afraid of and why do they seem so hell-bent to either stop the community-garden movement or attach such a high application fee to the process that no one will ever attempt one?

Community gardens are about good food, hard work and communities pulling together. They aren't about junked cars, dope or radical cells spreading dangerous ideas, unless you think a cantaloupe is dangerous.



## LETTERS

### Kudos to Pickens

I completely agree with Madeleine Pickens concerns about the abuse of animals at Oklahoma State University veterinary school. It takes courage to stand up for the rights of defenseless animals. I agree the best thing Pickens can do is stop funding these unethical and cruel practices in the name of education and research.

In this high-tech era, there are so many other techniques for vet training that can be used, not the barbaric practices on live animals. Some of the vet students responded that the animals are on death row anyway. Please ... what if we used that reasoning on our poor and old sick human beings?

Kudos again to Pickens. Maybe you have at least a shed a light on a problem that most people didn't know existed.

Tim Cooper, Miami

### Hypocrisy in high office

No matter what you think about President Obama, you can't call him a hypocrite. That, according to the March 2 Tulsa World article ("GOP puts items in bill") is more than you can say for a lot of the hypocrites you recently re-elected including: Sen. Jim Inhofe; Rep. Tom Cole, Rep. Mary Fallin, Rep. Frank Lucas and Rep. John Sullivan, all of whom opposed the recovery plan, but not their personal pork. Talk about wanting it both ways.

It is OK to be anti-pork (Sen. Tom Coburn does not appear to be a hypocrite on the topic), but you can't also bring home your favorite bacon and still be credible.

Try to remember this the next time you decide who to elect because these politicians depend on voters having short memories.

Greg Markley, Tulsa

### No honor in 'Redskins'

In response to "In Praise of Redskins" (Letters, Feb. 23), invisible racism is still growing, and you, Mr. Turner, as you said, are "confused" by Sen. Judy Eason-McIntyre's bill. It is good that your children (not Redskins) have excelled in school and sports. What a

great honor!

Please remember "Redskins" will always be a disrespectful word. It refers to a time when it was open season on Indian men, women and children. The "Skins" were brought in for bounties. Naming teams after this act dehumanizes native people. It doesn't honor them.

Native studies need to tell the whole story. It is documented and truthful. I hope that you share your love with your nation or tribe to keep the spirit going and not forget to preserve our traditions.

Cheri Haney, Glenpool

### Opportunity, not punishment

"Tulsa clinic's suit against ultrasound law" (Feb. 27) describes the law as "requiring women seeking abortions to view an ultrasound of the fetus." This is obviously untrue. No one can require a person to look at something.

The author, Randy Krehbiel, apparently wants the reader to believe that the law in question is intended to punish the pregnant woman by forcing her to do something she does not want to do when, if fact, it offers her the opportunity, if she elects to take advantage of it, to become better informed about something she is contemplating.

Burl Watson, Tulsa

### God needs no help

Greetings also to J.C. Moore, who inquired "Who's Playing God" (Letters, Feb. 26). Condolences on the loss of your youngest brother and for the loss of the twins conceived by your sister-in-law.

Eventually we all have to look beyond our losses and raise questions. Stem cell research does offer hope for Parkinson's disease; and what a boon that would be. It is regrettable, however that the source of the stem cells is almost always assumed to be embryonic stem cells. The fact is that adult stem cells hold a much greater therapeutic value.

As early as 2006, the National Institutes of Health wrote that adult stem cells and stem cells from cord blood (naval cord of newborns) are currently utilized to treat over 70 diseases in-

cluding lupus, heart failure, liver failure, nerve regeneration and pulmonary fibrosis. Research shows great potential to treat Parkinson's and diabetes, the NIH reported. The report further states that "every useful stem cell therapy to date has come from non-embryonic sources."

This superiority has continued to be proven. In the March 2009 issue of Citizen magazine, there is a quote from Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla.: "God is the author of all science, and I guarantee you that [researchers] never will come close with embryonic stem cells to what we can do with adult stem cells."

Returning to yo ur query of who should play God, we realize that God doesn't need help. He is actually in charge. And you and I can access him in prayer and listen to his loving messages to us.

Jean Stiles, Owasso

### Who's at fault

Republicans ought to be hanging their heads in shame and humbly asking Democrats for guidance instead of bombastically proclaiming the president is destroying this country ("Crushing debt, higher taxes," Feb. 27).

Ted Wilson, the letter's author, needs a refresher course on what has just happened in the United States. First, George Bush and the Republican Party are mostly responsible for the financial debacle in our nation. President Obama is trying as hard as he can to fix the mess.

Second, Bush and the Republican Party spent profligately for the past eight years, putting us in unimaginable debt. Because of this spending spree, President Obama is forced to spend on an enormous scale to resurrect the economy.

Third, there is general consensus among economists that a combination of spending and tax cuts are necessary. President Obama is doing both. The lesson is: Republicans did wrong and sank us, and the Democrats are trying to right the ship.

The next time Mr. Wilson has the urge to write a letter, his first step should be to get the facts correct.

Steven S. Pither, Tulsa

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# Meet Illinois' new governor: Mr. Clean

WASHINGTON — In his first few weeks in office, President Barack Obama has caught very few good breaks. But last week he had one. When he entertained the nation's governors at his first formal state dinner, he did not have to figure out what to do about Rod Blagojevich.

The scandal-plagued leader of Obama's home state of Illinois was impeached and removed from office on Jan. 29, and that same day was replaced by Patrick Quinn, who was in his second term as lieutenant governor.

Quinn, 60, had been bouncing on and off the public payroll ever since the early 1970s, when he was given a patronage job by the later-convicted Gov. Dan Walker. Although I know many politicians from my native state, I had never met Quinn until he came to Washington for the winter meeting of the National Governors Association and the White House dinner.

He is immediately engaging, a balding, beefy guy with no preten-



David Broder

Washington Post Writers Group

sion who conveys a sense that what you see is what you get.

Quinn inherits a mess that could be as daunting as Obama's. Blagojevich was at war with the other elected statewide officials and the Democratic Legislature even before the FBI taped him discussing what sure sounded like a plot to auction off Obama's Senate seat.

As a result, the state's bills have not been paid for a long time. A week after Quinn was sworn in, the state comptroller announced that the current-year deficit would hit almost \$9 billion, putting Illinois "at the precipice of the worst fiscal crisis in the state's history." When

Quinn submits his first budget this month, he may well have to slash programs and raise taxes.

Neither will be easy for a populist politician who has cultivated a reputation as a cheapskate when it comes to his personal life and his attitude toward public finance.

Quinn told me that his role model is the late Paul Simon, the Illinois senator who combined a passion for improving education with equally ardent support for a balanced-budget constitutional amendment. Quinn cherishes a bow tie from Simon's collection, a gift from Simon's daughter.

Like Simon, Quinn's strict ethics and his unusual assortment of policy views made him an odd duck among Springfield politicians. As a young political activist, he launched successful petition campaigns to reduce the size of the Legislature and end the practice of its members drawing their full salary for the year on the first day of the session.

As Quinn cheerfully recalled,

when he went to Springfield after those votes and was introduced from the visitors' gallery, "I was booed for three minutes by the members."

Quinn found himself tethered to Blagojevich because of a quirk in Illinois election laws. In the primary, candidates for the two top offices run separately, but in the general election, the governor and lieutenant governor run as a ticket, just like the president and vice president.

Since their re-election in 2006, Quinn was completely ostracized by Blagojevich and, candidly, ignored by most of the rest of Illinois officialdom. Now he has lost no time demonstrating how different he is from his predecessor.

He quickly named a high-powered ethics commission to "rescue a trust deficit that's worse than our fiscal deficit," as he told me.

A realist about the corruption problem endemic to Springfield, Quinn added, "I have to get the re-

forms passed by May 31. There are already old-timers in the Legislature who are saying, 'Well, we got rid of the bad guy, so now we can go back to business as usual.'"

The legacy he could not escape was Roland Burris, the lackluster veteran politician who eagerly accepted Blagojevich's appointment to Obama's Senate seat.

Quinn told me he had warned Burris in advance that taking the Senate job from Blagojevich "would be a terrible mistake, but he wouldn't listen."

As Burris belatedly began acknowledging the extent of his overtures to Blagojevich, Quinn joined the calls for the senator to resign, and he has urged the Legislature to pass a bill creating a special election if Burris is forced out.

Quinn's own term expires next year and he has not announced whether he will run.

Meanwhile, it will be fascinating to see whether Illinois can adjust to having a clean governor.