

Eugene Lorton
1869-1949

Opinion

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

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EDITORIALS

Gaming debate

Same arguments trotted out

Is it a mistake to tap Indian gaming and a lottery to help fund such important needs as education? The debate continues in Oklahoma, and no doubt will continue well past election day.

The work of a Massachusetts professor, detailed in Monday's Tulsa World, should fuel some new discussion on the subject.

There is one important point voters must keep in mind as they consider the gaming and lottery questions on the November ballot: Because of our unique history, Oklahoma is not like any other state when it comes to gaming.

The gist of Robert Goodman's studies is that gambling does not pay off as proponents claim, and that it carries high social costs.

The Hampshire College professor, who has written a book and conducted a two-year national study on gambling, claims states are turning into "predators" by making money off people with behavior problems, such as gambling and tobacco addiction.

He adds that the social costs of gambling are borne by citizens other than the gamblers, and that gambling really is a "zero-sum" game in which revenue is transferred out of the local economy into gaming.

He also claims schools have trouble raising new revenue when gaming and lotteries are dedicated to education, because a perception develops that education is well funded.

Oklahoma's Finance Director Scott Meacham sees things far differently. He feels funding for education will not suffer, but rather

will grow because of the commitment to education at all levels of Oklahoma's citizenry.

He also noted that Goodman's assertions ignore the fact that Oklahoma already has more than 80 tribal gaming centers, with more on the way.

"The issue of whether gambling is going to cause an increase in social costs in Oklahoma, or the lottery is, is really an invalid argument because we already have it in Oklahoma," Meacham said. He also noted that lotteries have been found to be less addictive than other forms of gambling since they don't have the instant-gratification aspect that can be a problem.

Meacham was especially offended by Goodman's predator-state comments. "You have to buy into the premise that somehow the state is harming people by offering a lottery. Obviously, about 40 states and the District of Columbia don't think they're harming their citizens," he said.

Oklahoma already is a big player when it comes to gaming. The questions on the Tuesday ballot will add a lottery, which the state currently lacks, and give the state a cut of Indian gaming profits. All the funds will be plowed into education, and the ailing Oklahoma horse industry also will be helped.

Is gaming the answer to all the state's financial woes? Of course not. But these proposals can help out significantly without doing much, if any, harm.

We've already got gaming. Why not put some of that money into our schools?

Oklahoma poll

Right or wrong, it's legit

The latest Oklahoma Poll, which is sponsored by the Tulsa World and KOTV-Channel 6, showed Brad Carson leading Tom Coburn in the U.S. Senate race, 47 percent to 40 percent.

The seven-point margin was surprising. As the news story in Sunday's Tulsa World reported, most other polls, including two earlier Oklahoma Polls, suggest that the race is much closer than that, a near dead heat.

No one will know for sure until after next Tuesday which results were accurate. What Tulsa World readers should keep in mind is that the Oklahoma Poll is supervised and conducted independently of the paper and is not influenced by the paper's editorial policy.

The Coburn campaign, predictably, was unhappy with the poll results and disputed their accuracy. Coburn spokesman John Hart said in part, "Everybody knows the Tulsa World wants to elect Brad Carson but this is ridiculous."

It's no secret that the World endorses Carson's election. That en-

dorsement comes from the editorial side of the newspaper. The World's sponsorship of the Oklahoma Poll on the news-gathering and reporting side of the paper is done strictly as a public service to readers. It is overseen by a University of Tulsa faculty member and conducted by a professional polling firm using accepted sampling methods.

The news side of the World has strived to be scrupulously fair and balanced in covering the Carson-Coburn race, as any reputable, reliable news operation would. To suggest that the World would deliberately skew poll results in favor of one candidate or another is baloney. Doing so would render the poll worthless and a waste of money.

Coburn's spokesman, John Hart, is caught up in the heat of a fiercely contested campaign. He knows, or has been involved in politics long enough that he should know, that the Oklahoma Poll is on the level, regardless of whether it turns out to be accurate.

Pros and cons

Oklahoma's high incarceration rate

Anyone believing that the lock'em-up-throw-away-the-key attitude has disappeared in Oklahoma should look at the latest statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Oklahoma has one of the nation's highest percentage of people in the correctional system. Oklahoma's percentage of the correctional population incarcerated is 47.9 percent, according to 2003 data, almost 18 percent higher than the national average.

About 62,100 people are in the correctional population in Oklahoma — 29,700 incarcerated, 28,326 on probation and 4,047 on parole.

At the end of 2000, there were nearly 31,000 people on probation and about 1,800 on parole. Parolees rose from 1,825 to 3,406 in 2001.

The number of people in Oklahoma's correctional population has risen slightly in the past five years, while the number of probationers has fallen and the number of those on parole has grown.

Most states have "cap laws," which force the release of nonviolent offenders when capacity rates are reached. Oklahoma does not, and many of the early release programs the state had in the 1980s and early 1990s were discontinued or poohed-poohed by former Gov. Frank Keating.

The nature of corrections has changed. More alternatives to incarceration are available. Oklahoma is making strides in that direction with expanded electronic monitoring systems and community sentencing. But we must and could do more. What are we waiting for?



CROCODILE TEARS

LETTERS

Short memories

I fail to understand the rhetoric regarding President Bush's discharge from the National Guard. Why are people so worried about it, when the previous president skipped out of the country during the Vietnam conflict and joined the anti-war protestors outside Buckingham Palace? But then, the same people didn't think there was anything wrong with his lying about the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Another question: People denounce President Bush for the war in Iraq. What were we doing in Bosnia and Kosovo? They hadn't attacked the World Trade Center or any other building or object in the United States.

It boggles the mind how short people's memories are!

Jean D. Conway, Tulsa

Lottery better than taxes?

We find ourselves in a debate about the lottery again. This issue will appear on the general election ballot, Nov. 2. Those who support the lottery say it will help education. I ask the governor, legislators and other supporters why? Why is the lottery a better choice than taxes for providing new educational resources?

Some say that the lottery eliminates the need for new taxes to fund education. Now education is funded by taxes such as sales, income, inheritance, ad valorem, etc. Funding education through the lottery and funding education through taxes have one fundamental commonality. In both cases the money comes out of the pockets of citizens.

Others say that the money raised from the lottery will create jobs. Why won't the same

resources raised through taxes create as many jobs? Taxation may even have more job-making potential. Nearly half of the lottery receipts will go to prizes. Will lottery winners spend their prizes to create new jobs?

The idea of people from other states spending money in our state on our lottery to help with our educational needs is appealing to some. Buy why would they? Several states surrounding Oklahoma already have lotteries. Why would they come to Oklahoma to play the lottery?

Shouldn't we take care of our own needs? What do we gain when they spend in our state and we spend in theirs?

Some point out that other states raise a lot of money for education with the lottery. Doing what others do is never a good reason for doing anything. Consider the moral and ethical problems created by a lottery.

Are there really any good reasons why a lottery is better than taxes? Should not the responsibility for new funding for education be borne equally by everyone? Why should we expect these resources to be provided just by those who gamble?

Derald Suffridge, Duncan

Don't pick on Bill

Why do Republicans continue to complain about Bill Clinton as if he were running for president? I refer to the letter from Jim Dacus (Oct. 5). He refers to the "draft dodger who fled to Great Britain and Russia."

If Clinton is a draft dodger for one college deferment, then what is Dick Cheney who got several college deferments? For the re-

cord, Clinton was in England at Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship when he received his draft notice.

By the time he received his notice it was already past the date for him to report for duty. He then wrote to his senator and asked for a college deferment, which he was granted. Clinton would have been stupid to pass up a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a world class education in Oxford, England.

For Mr. Dacus' information, the Rhodes Foundation only accepts the best and brightest candidates to its program. Brad Carson is also a Rhodes Scholar.

As for Clinton's trip to Russia, it was an organized group trip and a great opportunity to see more of the world. Inquiring minds are interested in the rest of the world and its cultures.

Frances Brown, Jenks

Not fair

I am dismayed to learn the Social Security Fund has been looted for \$149 billion.

I feel this is a conspiracy by those who spenders in the White House to make the deficit appear smaller.

It is not fair to those paying work tax or to those paying income tax on Social Security.

M.G. Rathbun, Oklahoma City

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. Letters should be a maximum of 200 words to be considered for publication and 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@tulsa-world.com.

Locust litigation due in a week

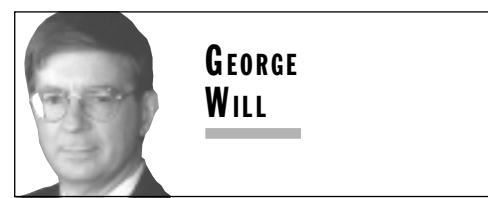
WASHINGTON — Not since the election of 1800, the first in which one party displaced another from the presidency, has there been such anxiety about voting. In 1800 there were fears that the losing side would resort to arms. Today's worry concerns a cloud of locust-like lawyers asserting novel theories that purport to demonstrate that sensible rules, such as requiring voters to have identification, are illegal, even unconstitutional.

This locust litigation will erupt around any close election — any not won beyond "the margin of litigation." The lawyering, which has already begun, will attack rules designed to defeat a banal and familiar phenomenon — old-fashioned fraud. Concerning which, there is a timely and disturbing new book, "Stealing Elections: How Voter Fraud Threatens Our Democracy" by John Fund of The Wall Street Journal.

Even though the 1992 election saw the largest percentage increase in voter turnout since 1952, Bill Clinton quickly sought to address the supposed "crisis" of nonparticipation with the National Voter Registration Act — aka "Motor Voter." It, Fund says, imposed "fraud-friendly" rules on the states, requiring them, for example, to register to vote anyone receiving a driver's license, and to offer mail-in registration with no identification required.

Given such measures, perhaps we should not be surprised that, as Fund reports, since 1995, Philadelphia's population has declined 13 percent but registered voters have increased 24 percent. Are we sure we should be pleased?

The unexamined belief that an ever-higher rate of voter registration is a Good Thing has met its limit in the center of the state that this year is the center of the po-



GEORGE WILL

litical universe — Ohio. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2003 estimate is that in Franklin County — Columbus — there are approximately 815,000 people 18 or over. But 845,720 are now registered.

One reason for such unacceptable numbers in various jurisdictions across the nation is that voter rolls are not frequently enough purged of voters whose status has changed. For example, in 2000 The Indianapolis Star's Bill Theobald reported that "hundreds of thousands of names, as many as one in five statewide" were improperly on Indiana registration rolls "because the people behind those names have moved, died or gone to prison." Unfortunately, there is reluctance, especially among Republicans, to support measures that might appear to have a "disparate impact" on minorities and therefore be denounced as racist.

Today Americans demand, as a California voting official says, the kind of convenience in voting they enjoy in buying airline tickets. So election "day" can be three months long (in Maine). Absentee voting has come to be considered a right — yet another one — of convenience rather than a limited privilege understood as a concession to necessity. Soon, voting by mail (Oregonians all vote this way) and even online will be regarded as rights.

These measures are supposed to increase turnout. However, according to Cur-

tis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, all research is "unequivocal in showing that easy absentee voting decreases voter turnout" because "you are diffusing the mobilizing focus away from a single day."

What liberalized registration and voting procedures do increase are opportunities for fraud, including the sort that Milwaukee television station WTMJ found in 2002. Fund says it "filmed Democratic campaign workers handing out food and small sums of money to residents of a home for the mentally ill in Kenosha, after which the patients were shepherded into a separate room and given absentee ballots."

In 2000, in heavily Democratic St. Louis, at 6:30 p.m., a judge, responding to a Democratic complaint filed in the name of a man the judge did not actually hear from (the man was dead), ordered polls to remain open until 10 p.m., three hours longer than the law allows, and ordered one voting place downtown to be open until midnight.

Before 7 p.m., all over the city, persons were receiving automated, prerecorded phone messages from Jesse Jackson saying, "Tonight the polls in St. Louis are staying open late until 10 p.m. in your neighborhood and until midnight downtown." Between 7 and 7:30 p.m., Al Gore was calling radio stations to announce the later voting hours. Apparently the entire episode was orchestrated by the Democrats well in advance.

Fund's book is replete with stories enraging about the past and ominous about the integrity of American democracy for the foreseeable future, which arrives in a week.

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