

Eugene Lorton
1869-1949

Opinion

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

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EDITORIALS

Recall madness

Councilors want to restrict citizen right

The City Council's fractious five can dish it out, but they can't take it. Now that an as-yet-undefined entity is conducting a recall inquiry in their districts, they're squawking that the effort is unfair — maybe even illegal — and they're talking about restricting recall.

This from the same bunch who has targeted dedicated, hard-working citizens for admittedly no good reason; possibly ruined our relationships with suburban leaders and imperiled important regional utility plans; refused to annex land needed for future growth; and driven off the very forces — builders and developers — who can make a community vibrant and strong.

Since taking office earlier this year, the five — Sam Roop, Chris Medlock, Jim Mautino, Roscoe Turner and Jack Henderson — have taken one misstep after another. They regularly trot out their lame claim they are looking out for the people, but when their activities imperil city progress, growth and improvements, it's tough to prove the people's interests are being protected.

Now that those same citizens might be participating in a recall effort, these councilors think that maybe a wide-open recall process isn't such a good idea. Funny how attitudes change when the shoe is on the other foot.

Several councilors predictably charged that the Tulsa World and the Metro Tulsa Chamber are be-

hind the recall effort, though they have no evidence of that claim. For the record, the World editorial board is in no way involved in the effort. We do what we do out in the open — in print, for all to see, unlike some elected officials. Nor is Mayor Bill LaFortune on a chamber-sponsored trip this week, as one claimed. These councilors apparently never learned it is wise to check your facts before shooting off your mouth.

At least one councilor suggested the recall activity might be illegal if state ethics laws aren't being followed. If that's so, someone will have to face up to it sooner or later.

These councilors claim the recall effort is an attempt to intimidate them and shut them up. They hurl all kinds of baseless charges in a blatant attempt to stymie the recall effort, and then claim they are the ones being intimidated? C'mon.

The City Charter recall provision is quite unrestricted precisely so citizens will feel free to seek change if they are so inclined. Now, the embattled five want to restrict the recall right to a few narrow sets of circumstances.

In their view, recall shouldn't apply when a majority of councilors thwart progress and harm the city, supposedly in the name of the people.

So who's really looking out for the people? And who's looking out for their own hides?



LETTERS

Enough!

We give tax concessions, land grants and all kinds of other incentives in the form of corporate bribery for employers such as American Airlines to come to Tulsa, then our electric company thinks we should pay their overhead as well.

In an age when corporate executives get bonuses is sums far higher than American's electric bill, this proposal is hardly in good taste. Next month, we'll be picking up the tab for their fuel costs. Enough is enough.

Jim Elder, Tulsa

For shame!

In "He forgot" (Aug. 27), the Tulsa World stated about Dr. Tom Coburn: "Now he promises he will serve only 12 more years, effectively the rest of his life. He's now 56."

It is utterly despicable that the World would imply that a two-time cancer survivor has a mere 12 years to live. After all, Coburn will only be 68 in 12 years much younger than many Democrat senators now serving whom the World undoubtedly find more to its liking, such as Robert Byrd, Fritz Hollings, Daniel Inouye and Ted Kennedy.

Just when I think the World can't possibly sink any lower in its obvious bias against conservative Republicans, it scrapes the bottom of the barrel a bit deeper. It must be very proud.

Thomas D. Schwartz, Fairview

Girlie-man Ahnuld

For California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is expecting me to fork over \$8 the next time he makes a movie, don't be an economic girlie-man. If "Around the World in 80 Days" is a sign of the downward spiral in which Schwarzenegger is plummeting, politics was a good turn.

Zane Thomas, Hulbert

For a man who spent 10 years being sponsored as he pumped iron and didn't do a lick of work to support himself by bagging groceries or flipping burgers, who is the economic girlie-man?

For a man who has spent more than 30 years in this country, becoming rich by giving us the same movie one after the other and expecting us to see every one, who is the economic girlie-man?

I'm just grateful that someone like Schwarzenegger will never be elected president. Anyway, he shouldn't boast that he is from a state that re-elected someone they didn't like, then recalled him, or that he ran against a guy whose claim to fame was smashing watermelons.

Smart voters

Tom Coburn and the national Republican Party have insulted not only Brad Carson and Democrats, but also the entire state of Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Senate race is not a battle between good vs. evil. How dare he suggest that anyone who happens to disagree with his radical point of view is evil?

The voters of Oklahoma are smart enough to figure this out and they will reject his extremist views in November. Is it evil to support better education and health care for our citizens? Is it evil to actually vote for funding to improve our roads and infrastructure? Is it evil to believe that Medicare and Social Security are more important than preserving tax cuts for billionaires? Is it evil to believe that our leaders should tell us the truth before committing our young men and women to bleed and die on foreign soil with no exit strategy in place?

Tom Coburn wants to cut spending for social programs. The only place he wants the federal government in our lives is in our bedrooms and our doctor's offices.

Sorry, "Dr. Tom," but I don't believe that any political race can be characterized as a "good vs. evil" race. There are good people and evil people on both sides of this campaign. Brad Carson is a good man, and the voters of Oklahoma will resent you depicting him as anything else.

Marsha Stephens Shilman, Bixby

Cops or not?

I have written to Chief Dave Been about my concerns regarding infringement upon civil liberties by Tulsa Police Department personnel working private security while in uniform. No response yet.

I have no problem with law enforcement officers supplementing their income by working private security details. Just get them out of uniform (and away from their Tulsa PD squad cars) so they do not represent the city when they ask prying questions such as: "Why are you here?" "Where are you going?" and "What are you doing?"

If there is a crime, or reasonable suspicion of a crime at issue, then these questions are legitimate police concerns. Otherwise, when I am on private property, then why I am there, where I am going and what I am doing is none of the city's business.

When I see a police uniform, I assume that means I am dealing with a representative of the Tulsa Police Department. If the person wearing that uniform is being privately paid to enforce the wishes of private employers, then they should not be in Tulsa PD uniform.

Ken Frakes, Tulsa

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@tulsaworld.com.



STEPHEN PINGRY / Tulsa World

Tulsa City Councilors Roscoe Turner (left) and Jim Mautino

Soft money

FEC subverts campaign reform law

After years of stalling, Congress in 2002 passed the campaign finance reform law known as McCain-Feingold. The law attempted to prohibit candidates in federal elections from getting involved in raising so-called "soft money" — unlimited, unrestricted donations from corporations, labor unions and wealthy individuals.

If the law has had little or no effect on this year's presidential and congressional races, and that's the way it appears, there may be a reason: The Federal Election Commission has in effect sabotaged the law it was supposed to uphold and enforce.

At least that's the view of Washington, D.C., federal District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, who issued an opinion Monday that knocked down 15 regulations adopted by the FEC in 2002, rules that ostensibly were to implement the law.

Kollar-Kotelly held that the FEC regulations created "an immense loophole" that allowed candidates and friendly political organizations to coordinate efforts to raise and spend soft money.

The judge said the FEC defied logic, used creative new definitions of common words and interpreted the law so narrowly that its regulations would "foster corruption" and "invite circumvention of the law."

The 2002 law is formally titled

the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. It is popularly called McCain-Feingold, for its Senate sponsors, John McCain, R-Ariz., and Russel Feingold, D-Wis.

The measure's chief House authors, Reps. Chris Shays, R-Conn., and Martin Meehan, D-Mass., filed suit against the FEC for failing to properly enforce the law. The 15 regulations knocked down by Judge Kollar-Kotelly were among 19 challenged by Shays and Meehan.

The judge's ruling was a stinging rebuke of the watchdog agency that is supposed to preserve the integrity of federal elections. It confirms what critics have said: that the FEC is a dysfunctional agency that is too cozy with politicians and political donors and too little interested in the concerns of voters.

The judge's ruling most likely is too late to affect the current presidential and congressional races. But an overhaul of the FEC following the November elections, or even its replacement with a new agency as proposed by Shays and Meehan, is called for.

Perhaps then the reform law will be allowed to do what it was intended to do: namely, reduce the pernicious, cancerous influence of soft money, most of which goes for negative and even misleading attack ads against candidates, in federal elections.

Candidate Kerry does it again

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry has achieved something that may be unique in the history of our country. He has managed to oppose two wars while they are being fought, undermine the objective of the nation and give aid and comfort to those who are killing American soldiers and kidnapping American civilians.

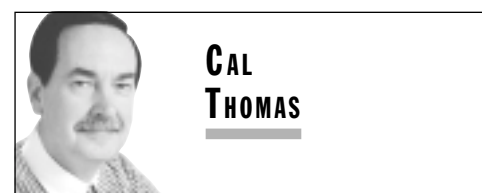
In a speech at New York University on Monday, Kerry questioned President Bush's judgment in ordering American troops to topple Saddam Hussein, saying the president had exchanged a brutal dictator for "chaos."

While acknowledging "there has been some progress, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our soldiers and civilians in Iraq, (and) schools, shops and hospitals have been opened, (and) in parts of Iraq, normalcy actually prevails," Kerry claimed that "most Iraqis have lost faith in our ability to deliver meaningful improvements to their lives. So they're sitting on the fence ... instead of siding with us against the insurgents."

Kerry is an expert at fence-sitting, having sat on one most of his life. He has taken both sides in the war and tried even in this speech to distinguish between granting George W. Bush authority to wage war and reserving his right to micromanage the war the president wages if it doesn't immediately produce victory.

It wasn't long after Kerry returned from Vietnam that he joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He slandered his fellow soldiers, calling them indiscriminate killers and comparing them to Genghis Kahn.

Returning prisoners of war said their



CAL THOMAS

North Vietnamese captors played excerpts from Kerry's congressional testimony in an attempt to break their morale and convince the POWs their country had abandoned them. Sound bites from Kerry's NYU speech could be played in certain mosques to persuade the insurgents and other Muslim extremists that all they have to do is step up the killing between now and the U.S. election and victory for them is assured. They have seen America cut and run before. Kerry's address may again provide aid and comfort to America's latest enemy.

Kerry claimed President Bush has offered "23 different rationales for this war." Even if that were true, he is still far behind the number of flip-flops committed by Kerry on the war and a long list of other issues.

Kerry once again returned to his pledge to seek help in Iraq and against terrorism (as if the two can be separated) from America's "allies," despite statements from many European leaders indicating that they will not become involved in Iraq no matter who wins the November election.

Kerry criticized the president for "colossal failures of judgment — and judgment is what we look for in a president." So is decisiveness, and Kerry fails on both counts.

There is nothing in his Senate record, in his pronouncements during this campaign, or in much of his life story that gives voters confidence that this is a man with strong principles whose judgment and vision can be trusted. Instead, Kerry's life has been one of self-promotion and self-indulgence. As with the Vietnam War, he doesn't talk about victory, or America's unique place in the world to which free people, and those yearning for freedom, can look.

Terrorism didn't begin on September 11, 2001. It started earlier than the Beirut barracks attacks in 1983. It began in the hearts of evil men who preached about an angry god intent on wiping out his enemies through violent acts. That disease spread, and whether it found a host in Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden, the virus exploded into a worldwide plague. Sen. Kerry's remarks were not about finding a cure to the plague but about surrendering to it, or taking diplomatic placebos hoping the disease will go away.

It won't go away, even if America withdraws from Iraq tomorrow. Had we not gone there in the first place, terrorism would still be around.

The objective should be victory. It was a word absent from Kerry's speech, because it is a concept foreign to a man who has demonstrated his preference — first with Vietnam and now with Iraq — to help America's enemies in times of crisis far more than helping his own country.

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