



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

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Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

The Arkansas Legislature passed four bills restricting abortion in Arkansas during the 2017 legislative session. At least six different anti-abortion groups filed either lawsuits against the legislation (state and federal lawsuits) or "friend of the court" briefs to sway judges to rule against the laws. Which one judge did. The bills were, in the eyes of our editorial writers, perfectly reasonable. One law (on hold now) would require law enforcement to be contacted if a young girl, unable to provide consent, were to seek an abortion. Another would put obstacles in front of those who'd use abortion as a way to select a child's sex. Other bills put even more restrictions on the practice. But a judge did intervene, as we note in our editorials, and put the laws on hold. More's the pity. As far as "results achieved," Arkansas' Newspaper will keep printing its opinions on this matter, no matter how many judges rule, for our writers believe it is a matter of life and death. The next judicial phase in this case, however, won't come around until probably September.

EDITORIALS

Abortion care?

Is that what it's called nowadays?

REMEMBER when the debate was about Pregnancy Related Services? And the debate was fierce, with folks like Ted Kennedy in Washington pounding his desk, demanding more of it. At first, many of us wondered why. What was all the fuss about? How could anybody be against pregnancy related services? Why, that has to be something like free prenatal vitamins and maybe a government-sponsored foot rub for the lady. Of course, as slow as we are, we did eventually catch up to euphemism in this debate. Pregnancy related services meant pregnancy ending services, aka abortion on demand.

Words will tell, even if people sometimes don't. It was many years ago when pro-choice replaced abortion rights on bumper stickers. It's so much easier to claim to be for choice. Especially if there's only one option to choose from. Pro-choice instead of abortion. Pregnancy related services instead of abortion. Any word or phrase to keep from being clear. It's sorta like calling places where abortions are performed "clinics." In this debate, one side is always muddying the water, and language.

So maybe we should thank the abortion-rights folks for, at least this once, being transparent. The paper said the other day that advocates for abortion in this state are fighting four different laws passed by the Arkansas legislature this year. Why? Because the laws "could effectively end abortion care in the state for many women."

Abortion care? Is that what it's called nowadays? Our considered editorial opinion is: good. At least the word abortion is in there somewhere.

But care? It certainly can't be care, it necessarily cannot be care, of any sort, for the baby involved. To some of us, an abortion is *exactly the opposite of care* when discussing the baby. Or should that be a fetus? Or embryo? Or a group of cells that can be removed like any other unwanted growth?

No, we'll stick to baby. The man once said that language doesn't just convey thought; language shapes it, too. When words get fuzzy, so does thought. It's a baby.

Requests for restraining orders and federal lawsuits are flying around Little Rock. Planned Parenthood and Little Rock Family Planning Services have turned loose their lawyers. (Don't get us started on the names of these outfits—as if parenthood and families are the objectives of either.)

What are these outfits fighting? 1. Limitations put on the "dilation and evacuation" procedure, which others call dismemberment abortion. 2. A new law that says doctors who perform abortions on young girls must preserve fetal tissue and notify the police in the girl's town. 3. Legal wording that make doctors notify a woman's family about their rights, too. 4. And a new law to outlaw abortion based on the sex of the child.

All of it might sound reasonable to reasonable people. But those who favor abortion no matter what, no matter when, must believe in Marshal Foch's maxim from the First World War: *cram-*

ponnez partout—hold fast everywhere. Charles Collins, the state representative from Fayetteville who has good ideas on occasion, sponsored Act 733 that would ban abortions that are sought based on the sex of the baby. He notes that the idea for the legislation came to him after discussions about practices in China, where it has been the practice to abort girls.

"As the world becomes more multicultural," he said last week, "this just clarifies what I think everybody would agree would be good behavior." Well, maybe not everybody.

Talbot Camp, deputy director of the ACLU's Reproductive Freedom Project, said: "Arkansas politicians have passed extreme abortion bans that put their political agenda ahead of women's health. No more. We're fighting back."

Women's health? A troublemaker might ask if that includes the health of any little girls who might be aborted. Or are they not counted yet? When should the rest of us consider them fully human? In the third trimester? After they're born? When they're old enough to drive?

No, these new laws in Arkansas must go! Dilate and evacuate them. But come up with a better phrase first.

SOMEBODY once said that the Little Round Top of this debate, like in so many other debates, has always been the language. Hold that high ground, and you've won a tactical advantage over your opponent. Those who push "abortion care" know that well. Better make it sound like it's OK to kill, as long as you have a doctor's excuse.

The Germans didn't call it mass murder in the World War II either; they called it racially purifying the continent. The Armenian Genocide was just a security measure carried out by a Special Organization. In the 1990s, certain Europeans liked to call what they were doing ethnic cleansing, which sounds like a Bosnian or Italian or Spaniard or Frenchman taking a shower.

Maybe all this verbiage today is a symptom of our collective uneasy conscience when it comes to abortion. Maybe that's why so many of us want to, need to, hide behind phrases like abortion care and pregnancy related services and call our organizations Planned Parenthood and rally around causes like "family planning" and "choice." To call things what they are may be too difficult.

Pope John Paul II, who famously opposed the culture of death, whether it was abortion or euthanasia, didn't muddy the waters when he talked abortion. He told the truth. As if it was a commandment of a kind. The pope who'd oversee the fall of the Soviet Empire and a new freedom on Earth took the time throughout his life to argue against abortion and the killing of the least among us. He said such killings were crimes against society. Or as he put it: "Human life finds itself most vulnerable when it enters the world and when it leaves the realm of time to embark upon eternity."

Call them words to live by. For most of us.

OTHERS SAY

Warming in the classroom

THE NEWS-SENTINEL (FORT WAYNE, IND.)

There is a bubbling controversy about how to teach "man-made global warming" in the classroom. Is it a scientific certainty about which there can be no dispute? Or is it a theory about which people with differing viewpoints can have a legitimate debate?

Let's check in and see how The Associated Press reports on the issue: "The struggle over what American students learn about global warming is heating up as conservative lawmakers, climate change doubters and others attempt to push rejected or debunked theories into the classroom."

Wow. Not much doubt about where the AP stands. You toe the line on "scientific consensus" or you're one of those awful conservative doubters trying to push rejected bunk into the classroom.

Schools are on firm footing with the majority of their teachings because they deal either with events that have happened or are happening (history, current events) or facts that have stood the tests of time and rigorous inquiry (mathematical formulas, geographical contours, scientific forces). These things can be imparted with certainty.

At the other end of the spectrum are those things about which there are as many opinions as there are human beings, including the "social studies" of sociology, psychology and politics. These need to be passed along with an understanding of human frailties and uncertainties.

But extremism breeds extremism, so now we're getting politics from both sides, which means science gets a seat in the back of the class.



COLUMNISTS

'Legislative crack'



Rex Nelson

There was no discussion, no debate. It was done quickly, like swallowing medicine with a bitter aftertaste.

On June 15, the executive subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council approved a request from the Bureau of Legislative Research to hire outside counsel to work with federal investigators. The next morning, the full Legislative Council approved the request with no discussion.

It's talked about only in whispers in the halls of the state Capitol, but the bottom line is this: The scope is broadening in the ongoing investigation by the FBI and possibly other law enforcement agencies into legislative abuse of what's known as the General Improvement Fund. This has the potential of becoming one of the biggest Arkansas news stories of late 2017 and early 2018.

I will add this: It's about time. A pox on those legislators who have abused the public trust and misused taxpayer funds.

Former state Sen. Jon Woods and former state Rep. Micah Neal, both Republicans from Springdale, already have been indicted in the GIF scandal. There could be more indictments to come. The GIF consists of unspent state funds and interest earnings.

Prior to the 1997 legislative session, the system generally worked this way: Legislators routinely approved all bills that called for using GIF funds. There often would be three to four times as much spending approved as was actually in the account. The governor would decide what got funded.

This provided political protection for legislators, who could tell their constituents: "I got your bill passed. The dang governor is the one who wouldn't fund it. It's his fault."

Everything changed in 1997 because there was a new governor named Mike Huckabee, the first Republican in the Governor's Mansion since Frank White left office in January 1983. The heavily Democratic Legislature couldn't stand the thought of a GOP governor deciding how these funds were spent. Then-Sen. Nick Wilson of Pocahontas, who later would serve time in federal prison for crimes committed while in office, was among those leading the charge to take the fund away from the governor. Even so-called reform legislators were caught up in the feeding frenzy that spring.

The final day of the 1997 regular session was on a Saturday as the Legislature came in to override all of Huckabee's vetoes. I remember seeing two of those who later would be caught up in the Wilson affair high-fiving in the Capitol parking lot that day. What they didn't understand is that they were making a martyr of Huckabee, who would be elected to full four-year terms in 1998 and 2002.

Once legislators became addicted to these funds, it proved impossible for them to break the habit. I worked in the governor's office in those days, and we referred to it as legislative crack. Legislators could fund pet projects and get their photos on the front pages of newspapers in their district as they handed out checks. The GIF soon became a slush fund in the truest sense of the word.



In 2005, a former Democratic state representative from Jacksonville named Mike Wilson (no relation to Nick Wilson) filed suit in state court in an attempt to abolish the fund. Wilson, a lawyer, said the GIF violated Amendment 14 to the Arkansas Constitution, which bans state-funded local legislation. A fiscal conservative who was appalled by the some of the things on which taxpayer funds were being spent, Wilson said at the time: "It's bad business to give money away with no accountability." The case eventually went to the Arkansas Supreme Court, which ruled in Wilson's favor.

Despite the ruling from the state's highest court, legislators were unable to get off the legislative crack (we might call it legislative opioids these days). House and Senate leaders devised a scheme in which money was funneled to the state's eight planning and development districts. Mike Wilson described it as a system in which money for local projects is "dribbled out through the subterfuge of grants . . . at the direction of individual legislators to their pet local uses. Quietly and with no attention from the media, each individual member is allocated a share of the GIF to spend as he or she sees fit, usually in his or her particular district. These shares are zealously guarded and treated as if they were personal property of the individual members."

The planning and development districts cover six to 12 counties each. They were established in 1967-68 when Winthrop Rockefeller was governor to plan and coordinate economic development projects. A couple of years ago, the director of one such district with whom I had worked closely when I was with the Delta Regional Authority called. She was in tears, having been berated by a state senator who was harassing her on almost a daily basis over what he called "my money."

Democrats, then in the majority, took control of GIF funds away from the governor in 1997. Two Republicans, whose party is now the majority party, find themselves indicted for alleged GIF missteps. Greed and stupidity know no political affiliation. Lawmakers authorized \$70 million for GIF projects in 2013 and \$20 million in 2015.

Scared by the indictments of their former colleagues, they authorized no money for GIF projects this year. It's too late, though. Years of addiction have resulted in a stench that emanates from the state Capitol. If it takes the FBI, grand juries and federal prosecutors to fumigate the place, so be it. A day of reckoning is coming.

Rex Nelson is a senior editor at the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Fortunate son

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

The king of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday changed his successor. King Salman, 81, named his son, Mohammed bin Salman, 31, previously minister of defense, as crown prince and deputy prime minister. The son replaced the king's nephew, Mohammed bin Nayef, 57, who had been deputy prime minister and minister of the interior as well as crown prince.

No reason was given. It could have been health, or some scandal, just plain nepotism or a result of intra-family maneuvering. Saud family rule requires no explanation to be given for such moves. There is no indication that the change comes in any way as a result of the visit of President Donald Trump to the kingdom last month.

There are nonetheless U.S. policy implications.

Trump announced important sales during his visit there. The complicating factor in those sales is that it ties America to any Saudi war-making that its rulers determine to undertake.

One particularly disastrous example of this is the war Saudi Arabia and its Persian Gulf client states have been waging in bordering Yemen

for two years now. That conflict is in effect a proxy war between Sunni Islamic Saudi Arabia and Shiite Islamic Iran for pre-eminence in the region. One major problem with the Yemen war is that it has reduced that country, with a population of 27 million, to ruin, including hunger and disease, most recently cholera.

The latest quarrel the Saudis have picked is with Qatar over its sometimes independent policy positions. That conflict is complicated greatly for the United States by the fact of a large American military presence in the emirate as well as American educational institutions and many businesses.

The new crown prince, as minister of defense, was known as a strong advocate of a more aggressive Saudi role in the Middle East's many wars. It will be interesting to see what changes he will make in his new role. Unfortunately for the United States, policy changes that will involve America will not be made with reference to even a glance at Saudi popular support, not to mention best interests determined in any democratic fashion. If the past is any indication, U.S. support of Saudi undertakings will be assumed and received.

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EDITORIALS

The abortionist's song

With a new chorus written by a federal judge

IT COULD be a Roman spectacle, only instead of the madding crowd cheering as Christians are fed to the lions, Arkansas' abortionists are hailing a federal judge's opinion halting certain abortion restrictions on the least and most innocent of these, the unborn. Their lives will continue to be snuffed out even before they first see the light of day. Not only is this darkness so thick it can be felt now to descend on this state's jurisprudence, but—irony of ironies—it is hailed as a bright shining light.

The beginning of wisdom may be to call things by their right names, but this ruling by a federal judge mistakes abortion for a new freedom: the freedom to kill. The ruling by Her Honor Kristine Baker kept three new anti-abortion laws from taking effect in this increasingly (un)Natural State.

Talk about unfair packaging and labeling, the Arkansas chapter of the ACLU, the American Civil Liberties Union, demonstrated anything but concern for the civil liberties of babies not yet fully formed before they are condemned to death. And by dismemberment at that in this barbarous procedure.

Little Rock Planning Services (one of its doctors was listed as the plaintiff in this sad case) performed most of the abortions carried out in Arkansas over the past year. That's according to the state's Department of Health, which is responsible for keeping tabs on this grisly toll. Of the 3,207 abortions committed in the state over the past year, almost one out of five are done after five weeks of gestation.

Jerry Cox of this state's Family Council called this latest abortion of a ruling from the courts "just sad," but it's worse than sad. It's one more outrage that leaves its bloody prints for the rest of us to track. Who knows what one of these little ones might have become—perhaps a great scientist, scholar or statesman. Instead their lives are dismissed as less than worthless, and they are relegated to the ranks of unpersons. But if they're not persons, then what must they be? Just a meaningless blob, a mass of pre-cancerous cells, a nothingness to be eliminated by the kind of doctor who ignores Hippocrates' command: First do no harm.

It's enough to bring back dour old John Adams' encomium to his political rival, Alexander Hamilton, who happened to be born out of wedlock, a circumstance Mr. Adams made the most of by describing Colonel Hamilton as a "bastard brat of a Scottish peddler." But at least he knew the gentleman's name; these sacrificial lambs did not live long enough to be given a name. They have become unpersons quite literally, for they are denied personhood by those who would let the state destroy them like the useless leavings inside a petri

dish who have served their purpose, if any, and may now be thrown out with the trash.

Bettina Brownstein, a lawyer who worked with the ACLU in challenging state laws that limited abortion's reach, accused the state of copying laws of our sister states, which would lead Arkansas into expensive lawsuits—as if a price could be put on priceless human life. Arkansans don't dream up these pro-life laws all by themselves, she argued, but follow the lead of life-loving citizens elsewhere. But what better models to follow when making this state's laws other than the best and brightest of law-givers elsewhere?

Maybe that's why a great justice of the Supreme Court of the United States—Louis D. Brandeis—called the states "laboratories of democracy," free to accept the best policies pioneered elsewhere. He spoke of how a "state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country." Who else should Arkansans follow but the best and brightest of citizens elsewhere—the worst and dimmest?

What next? Will this state be accused of modeling its own constitution on the federal one, which an English statesman named William Ewart Gladstone once described as "the greatest work of man ever struck off at a given moment in time."

SPEAKING of the Constitution, take heart, fellow Americans. This decision will be appealed. And like other decisions, it could be overturned. Just as one was Friday before this latest ruling. Remember, just because a judge says it doesn't make it legal forever. Other judges might be heard from. Certainly We the People will be as well. For there was a time not so long ago that even this country's top federal court—the Supreme one in Washington—protected slavery, and a chief justice of the United States Supreme Court declared one kind of human beings to be unpersons:

"In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people. . . ."—*Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 1857.

Things change. Even if today some class of persons aren't acknowledged as a part of the people—that is, the unborn—they very well could be tomorrow.

Today, call this the American way of death. Tomorrow is another day. And perhaps another ruling.

OTHERS SAY

The options on North Korea

WASHINGTON POST
ONE SCHOOL of North Korea experts has been arguing for some time that sanctions will never induce the isolated regime of Kim Jong Un to give up its nuclear weapons nor its race to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles that could carry them to the United States. A good answer is that while they might be right, sanctions are still the best available option—and unlike others, such as negotiations with the regime, they have never been given a robust try. Fortunately, that may be about to change.

After waiting in vain for China to apply pressure to the Pyongyang regime following President Donald Trump's first meeting with Xi Jinping, the administration is readying sanctions against a number of Chinese companies and banks that do business with North Korea. A sanctions bill on its way through Congress mandates additional steps against North Korean shipping, countries that evade UN sanctions and those that employ the slave laborers whom the regime exports to other countries.

The problem is a lack of time. Even

successful sanctions campaigns, including that which induced Iran to bargain over its nuclear program, can take years to produce results—and the time North Korea may need to acquire the ability to threaten a nuclear attack on the U.S. homeland appears to be shrinking.

Not surprisingly, both the administration and outside experts are debating options. CIA Director Mike Pompeo recently hinted at a strategy to "separate" the Kim regime from its weapons. If that means regime change, it would require far greater cooperation from a Chinese government that so far has been unwilling to seriously pressure its neighbor.

One helpful proposal comes from the State Department's former human rights chief, Tom Malinowski, who wrote in a Politico essay that the United States should ramp up efforts to provide the North Korean people with information, including about the far freer and more prosperous lives of South Koreans. Political change in North Korea forced by its own citizens, he says, is more likely than denuclearization by the current regime. That clear-eyed but ultimately hopeful forecast strikes us as sensible.



COLUMNISTS

God save the Deep State



Philip Martin

The hate mail has slowed down. It hasn't stopped, and I'm probably inviting more of it with this column, though if you're thinking about sending me some you probably should understand I find it hard to imagine a well-adjusted adult wasting much time firing off nasty emails to people they don't know or leaving anonymous comments online. But for some folks it's like watching baseball.

The reasons are obvious; at least a few of the folks who were so ready to defend this brave new POTUS have gotten tired of his act. The only folks still defending him either have a vested interest in his personal success or got sucked into the Say Macintosh/*Clinton Chronicles* matrix back in the '90s. People still share that list of "mysterious" deaths, and people who know better still refuse to denounce it as utter garbage. Just like some people will still argue that Barack Obama was born in Kenya.

It's hard to take those people seriously, even if that on some other level they're perfectly reasonable taxpayers. I regard them pretty much the same way as those folks who believe pro wrasslin' is a legitimate athletic contest.

Maybe that's not true. Most pro wrasslin' fans understand the WWE is scripted. They just go along with the kefaybe because wrasslin' is more fun if you pretend to believe in it. That's not so hard to understand. We suspend our disbelief for movies. They suspend their disbelief for whoever the big pro wrestlers are these days. It's fun.

At least some of the people who talk about politics in overheated ways know what they're saying isn't the truth; it's just the rhetoric that scores the most points. I don't think for a second that Donald Trump ever doubted that Obama was born in Hawaii, and a lot of the people who have parroted that opinion know it's a ludicrous position. They also know it resonates with a certain unwashed TV-fed voter, the sort who hasn't the patience for nuanced policy arguments but loves the drama.

Some people really want to believe they're living in a spy novel, that the black helicopters are coming to get their guns, and they might have to shoot it out with roving bands of Muslim zombies any day now. This sort of paranoia isn't unique to the right, though the right has been better at providing fan service.

Progressives may have the higher-brow comedians (John Oliver, Stephen Colbert, Samantha Bee) but their self-selected elitist audiences tune in for the show then go about their lives. Matt Drudge, Sean Hannity, Alex Jones and even that delicate flower Rush Limbaugh command acolytes willing to stuff dollars into envelopes and mail them off to fight the liberal menace.

Which is a complete canard. Richard Nixon was more "liberal" than Hillary Clinton. Donald Trump is no kind of conservative—he's just a vulgar, self-consciously rich guy who tramples on norms, a nihilistic opportunist who cares for nothing other than his own personal enrichment and self-aggrandizement.

Most of America, and now even close to half of Arkansas, recognizes that.

Sure, he still has his supporters. Every demagogue has supporters. There is a frighteningly high percentage of the population—maybe 20 percent—who would genuinely welcome fascism. More of the people who voted for Trump

were doing so because they didn't like the Democratic alternative, which was understandable to a point. I would have preferred another candidate (as I wrote last year, my preferred presidential race would have been between dull John Kasich and amiable Martin O'Malley) but while Clinton was problematic, Trump was unfit.

My main objection to Trump has always been that he's a con man and a grifter devoid of any moral substance. And I'm still disappointed that so many Americans voted to reward a lifetime of bad behavior.

That's not to let Clinton and the Democrats off the hook; she campaigned poorly and actually helped legitimize Trump's campaign. (She was likely gleeful when he won the Republican nomination.)

Now you've got your Not Hillary. And most of you, in your heart, know it's pretty awful.

Most people, no matter what they think their political philosophy is, tend to decide which personalities they like, then build a rationale for voting for them. The louder they shout, the less serious they tend to be about finding genuinely workable ways to move the country forward. Most people like to identify with one tribe or the other; they like to dress up and play conservative or progressive. They like the circus of the TV shouters. They expect to be entertained.

I was once amused by people who called themselves "political animals" and wore buttons and ribbons. It was healthy fun; if some people wanted to wear blue face paint and others wanted to wear red, it was just part of the rich American pageant. I used to regard politics as a necessary but minor part of life. While there were real differences between parties, all of us were basically on the same side. I used to believe that to be an American meant something.

It meant we were supposed to try to be brave. We were supposed to recognize that if we wanted to be free to say what we wanted and to worship as we pleased, we were compelled to extend that courtesy to others. It meant that we didn't try to kill each other with tax cuts for our patrons. It meant that while we acknowledged that government's role in maintaining civilization, we never took the sometimes pitiable people trying to salve their wounded egos by running for office too seriously. It meant we laughed at the idea of big daddies, the sort of swaggering rulers who'd put themselves above the law. Who would rule by fiat and fear.

You can claim you didn't know about Trump (though plenty of people told you) but you can't pretend you don't know now. Maybe it's starting to sink in. Our bystander Congress hasn't the courage to help us.

God save Robert Mueller and the Deep State.

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Trump in August

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

In a divided nation, this president took office amid controversy. Many Democrats believed his victory was illegitimate. And what exactly were his qualifications?

Obviously, we're referring to President George W. Bush, who won the 2000 election only after the U.S. Supreme Court validated his 537-vote Florida victory. Yet Bush's first six months in the White House went smoothly, professionally. In June 2001 he delivered on a promise to cut taxes. Don't spit out your coffee here, but Congress passed that legislation with broad support.

Looking back to Bush reminds us of what the American people should demand of the incumbent president: Do your job and deliver results. While everything would change for Bush's presidency on 9/11, he overcame odds early in his tenure to govern effectively. That Donald Trump has failed abjectly to move the country forward is not a matter of political circumstances beyond his control. The disarray in the White House is all

on Trump. And it must end—now.

Obsessing on the president's crass behavior often strikes us as a waste of energy. Yes, he can be vulgar and impetuous. That was clear before the election, which he won.

Where Trump gets himself in the most trouble is when his rash temperament and classless comments distract from important issues and derail political progress.

Trump promised to repeal and replace struggling Obamacare with a better health-care plan, but he failed to develop a strong working relationship with the Republican-led Congress. His tax plan awaits his attention. He burned political capital on a Mexican wall instead of crafting immigration reform. Allies in Europe and Asia are still not sure they can trust Trump. Perhaps if the president stopped rehashing his victory over Hillary Clinton he'd have more time to think about the future.

Trump has two options: He can get a grip on his presidency, or see it wither.

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EDITORIALS

‘Baby in the womb’

The ongoing battle for language

IT CAN be an education to listen to those on the other side of the abortion question when they deliver their talking points from wherever they get them. It may be that they’ve repeated them so often, like mantras, that they aren’t paying attention any longer. Forgive them Father, for they know not what they say.

This past week, after the United States House of Representatives voted 237-189 to ban abortion after 20 weeks, we got this bit of PR from Planned Parenthood, which really has the wrong name: “It is unbelievable that politicians in Congress are once again attempting to interfere in a woman’s ability to make personal decisions about her pregnancy in consultation with her doctor and others she trusts. If the last few months have shown us anything, it’s that Americans want policymakers working to improve health care access and rights for women, not take them away.”

Improve health care? Isn’t that what this legislation would do? It would certainly improve health care for the babies involved. Excuse us, fetuses. (Or maybe, if some prefer, just a bit of unwanted growth.) And as far as rights of women are concerned, what about the 50 percent or so of these poor aborted kids who are girls? Or don’t they count in the world of Planned Parenthood?

This reminds us of the recent push to begin calling abortion “abortion care,” as if it could be described as any kind of care for the children being pulled apart and discarded before their first breath in this world. The killing of people must first be ushered in by the killing of language, which might have started in this debate when pro-abortion became “pro-choice.” As if the people killed in abortions had any kind of choice in the matter. And the misrepresentations continued as these abortions were described as taking place in “clinics.” And an outfit dedicated to cutting families short would call itself Planned Parenthood.

All four House members from Arkansas voted to end abortions after 20 weeks. (Exceptions are included in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother.) This legislation might not pass through the Senate, but at least our national representatives are on the record. Dante reserved a special place outside the gates of Hell for those who never saw wrong and called it out. Milk-

sops, in his opinion, didn’t deserve a special place inside Hell proper.

“The U.S. is one of only seven countries that allows elective abortions after the 20-week mark,” noted French Hill, the congressman from (and with) central Arkansas. “And some of those award-winning countries include North Korea and China, so I’m pleased that we’re doing this and I think it’s the right thing to do.”

His colleagues from the Natural State agreed. Such as Congressman Steve Womack: “Medical science has concluded that at the 20-week mark, the neurological development of a baby in the womb is sufficient to feel pain. I think we’re on the right side of this issue.”

There he goes again. Using the phrase “baby in the womb.” My, my, but the folks at Planned Parenthood must be clutching their pearls over such uncultured truth.

SOMEbody once said that the Little Round Top in this debate, like so many others, has always been the language. Hold that ground, and you have an advantage over your opponent. Which is why there is a move in some quarters to discuss “abortion care” at “clinics” for “women’s health.” That way you have a license to kill, as long as you have a doctor’s excuse. Call it the American way of death.

Abortion is no longer a crime—at least as far as the courts are concerned. So why all the attempts to conceal what’s happening? Can even those in the pro-abortion lobby understand what dilate and evacuate mean? They haven’t yet figured out a way to stop Americans from using the phrase “partial-birth abortion.” It’s impossible to put that any plainer, but the pro-abortionists will surely come up with something cleaner, neater, more tolerable soon enough.

But will calling it something else make it something else? As a man named Lincoln once asked, how many legs does a dog have if you call its tail a leg? Answer: Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn’t make it one.

No matter what the pro-abortion lobby comes up with next in this battle of the language, abortion will remain abortion. And, as our good congressman noted, a baby in the womb remains so. Until—or maybe if—it is allowed to be born.

OTHERS SAY

Cuba must answer

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Whatever and whoever is behind the so-called sonic attacks targeting Americans in Havana, one party—the government of Cuba—is responsible for getting to the bottom of it. The growing scandal threatens Cuba’s image, and it has all the reason in the world to solve the mystery.

The attacks first were reported in August as having targeted members of America’s diplomatic community. But more recent reporting specifies that U.S. intelligence officers (operating under diplomatic cover) were the first and biggest group affected.

In all, at least 21 Americans have experienced hearing or cognitive problems because of the 50 or so attacks, which began in November, days after the U.S. presidential election of Donald Trump. They occurred at the victims’ homes and hotels where they were staying. Some of the victims are spouses of U.S. government employees; a Canadian diplomat was also among those injured. Some victims have reported hearing cricket-like noises before symptoms appeared while others recall nothing out of the ordinary before hearing loss or other damage manifested itself. In a few cases, the injuries appear to be permanent.

It is tempting to view the attacks as simply another plot twist in U.S.-Cuban relations, which warned under President Barack Obama and quickly cooled again under President Donald Trump. However, it has the look of something

more complicated than post-Cold War spy games pitting one old foe against another. Times have changed. It would be shortsighted of Cuba to attack U.S. personnel in retaliation for Trump’s hard-line stance.

President Raul Castro’s response also was telling. He denied responsibility for the attacks but seemed sincerely perplexed by them—and invited U.S. officials to send FBI agents to Havana to investigate. That was a big move for the old Cold Warrior.

But Castro was acting with enlightened self-interest. Cuban authorities have as much reason as Washington does to identify and punish whoever is responsible.

America already had ordered non-essential diplomatic personnel out of Cuba and warned other Americans to stay away, saying their safety cannot be guaranteed. That will scare off some tourists no doubt, but it’s unlikely to affect the growing number of cultural and humanitarian cross-border partnerships.

An independent party’s involvement in the attacks—a rogue nation such as North Korea comes to mind—seems possible. FBI agents may do what they can to help, but Cuban authorities are better positioned than anyone else to investigate crimes on their sovereign territory. Cold War veterans like Castro ought to know who is capable of such deeds and why. Dealing quickly and efficiently with the problem will do much to improve bilateral relations in the way Cuba desires.



COLUMNISTS

Effort above and beyond

Back in December, Tom Reilley, the man behind Pine Bluff’s \$229 million Highland Pellets plant, spoke at a graduation ceremony for Southeast Arkansas College.

Reilley and his efforts to transform Pine Bluff are the focus of a story on the cover of this section. He talked at the graduation ceremony about how he had come to love the city and its people during the months it took to get the wood pellets plant up and running.

“I learned that this plant was more important to many people than it was to me,” Reilley said that evening. “Almost 1,000 indirect jobs will come from cutting and hauling 1.4 million tons of pine pulpwood. I had caring emails and letters asking for jobs. I was in awe of what this could mean. . . . Something special happens when you lose yourself. You get out of the greed, get out of the vanity, get out of the false promise and you focus on what’s real. I promise you there were some moments between permitting and contracting time when I feared that things would not work out. I fought like I’ve never fought before so the other side knew this was not just about a contract or a permit. This was about lives.

“We won. We got it done, but only because of the strength and fellowship that this community gave me. It has been the most impactful thing I’ve ever done, and I’ve learned so much. I have you to thank for your gift and your grace. I’ll forever be in your debt.”

Reilley’s efforts go beyond the plant. His Pine Bluff Rising organization is working to reopen the Hotel Pines and soon will begin other developments downtown. His timing is good because there are additional initiatives coming together that could lead to an economic rebirth in Pine Bluff.

For the first time in my life, I can make this statement with a straight face: I’m bullish on Pine Bluff. Arkansans who have spent years making jokes about a place they called Crime Bluff likely don’t realize that reported crime has dropped in seven of the past eight months when compared to the previous year. They also don’t realize that tens of millions of public and private dollars are being raised for future developments.

Current efforts include:

■ The Go Forward Pine Bluff initiative. In June, a sales tax increase passed by more than a 2-to-1 margin. Proceeds from the five-eighths-of-a-cent sales tax will produce about \$4 million annually for the next seven years. Go Forward Pine Bluff officials hope to raise another \$20 million in private funds (Pine Bluff-based Simmons First National Corp. is expected to be a major supporter of the effort). That will give the city almost \$48 million to implement Go Forward Pine Bluff recommendations. During 2016, dozens of Pine Bluff residents participated in a planning process funded by the Simmons First Foundation. Earlier this year, a 27-point plan for city revitalization was unveiled.

Tommy May of the Simmons First Foundation and Mary Pringos and Carla Martin of Go Forward Pine Bluff wrote in the introduction to the revitalization plan: “Our community has been the talk of Arkansas, and the conversation is not flattering. The media have used words and phrases to describe Pine Bluff such as ‘war zone,’ ‘a town full of crumbling buildings,’ ‘the



Rex Nelson

worst place in America to live’ and ‘identifying towns or cities facing years of neglect, despair and desolation as the Pine Bluff syndrome.’ . . . It’s time to put up or shut up. We truly believe that change is not only essential; we believe it is our last real chance to turn things around and to begin recovering from two decades or more of a downward spiral.”

■ A new library. In November of last year, Jefferson County voters approved a three-mill property tax increase to construct a library in downtown Pine Bluff while also improving existing facilities at White Hall, Altheimer, Redfield and the Watson Chapel neighborhood of Pine Bluff. It’s hoped that a new downtown library will be the same kind of catalyst for development that the Central Arkansas Library System’s main branch was for the River Market District in Little Rock. Last month, the Pine Bluff/

Jefferson County Library Board of Trustees voted to hire the Little Rock architectural firm Polk Stanley Wilcox to design the building. Polk Stanley Wilcox has done extensive work for CALS. Taylor Eubank, the interim library director, said: “We’ve got a chance for the Pine Bluff library to be transformative architecture.”

■ A \$6.5 million aquatics center near the city’s civic complex. Pine Bluff voters approved a bond issue and a five-eighths-of-a-cent sales tax for the aquatics center and other projects in a February 2011 special election. Reilley is hopeful that the next step in the neighborhood after completion of the aquatics center will be a renovation of the Pine Bluff Convention Center and the hotel adjacent to it.

■ Construction of a walking trail around Lake Saracen along with a playground along the lake’s shores that will be accessible for children with disabilities. Joy Blankenship, executive director of Pine Bluff Downtown Development Inc., said: “All of the trail funding has come from federal highway grants. Students from UAPB, retirees, families wanting to have a healthy lifestyle and downtown employees walk or bike the trail for exercise and for the beauty of the lake.” Blankenship’s organization also restored two downtown murals this year. A \$4.5 million downtown beautification plan is expected to be completed in early 2019.

Last month the Pine Bluff City Council voted to re-activate a long-dormant urban renewal agency with the power of eminent domain and the ability to issue bonds. Pine Bluff first created an urban renewal agency in 1961 and disbanded it almost a decade later. The reactivated agency is expected to play a key role in the revitalization of downtown Pine Bluff. Should all of the above efforts come to fruition, I have no doubt that the rebirth of Pine Bluff will be considered one of the great Arkansas success stories of the next decade.

Rex Nelson is a senior editor at the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Ol’ Rex never had a chance

ALBERT R. HUNT
BLOOMBERG VIEW

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson insists that he’s staying at Foggy Bottom following reports that, after one humiliation on top of another from President Donald Trump, he threatened to quit.

Despite Tillerson’s ineptitude as secretary, his departure wouldn’t be altogether welcome. He is part of the Trump administration’s “sane caucus” led by Defense Secretary James Mattis, bringing rational judgment to decisions on explosive foreign-policy issues involving North Korea, Iran, Russia and the Persian Gulf. The counter caucus is led by Trump himself.

Still, it’s impossible to defend Tillerson’s tenure. He has ignored or alienated much of the foreign service, and mid-career diplomats are leaving in droves. U.S. foreign policy will pay a price for this brain drain well after Trump is gone. He’s obsessed with reorganizing the department.

Tillerson is politically tone-deaf. He doesn’t

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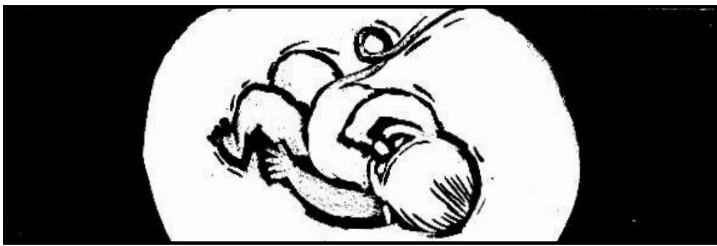
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EDITORIALS



Words, words, words
And the American way of death

“What do you read, my lord?”
—Polonius

“Words, words, words.”
—Hamlet

THIS STATE’S Board of Health met in august session late last week to clear up a certain number of matters in regard to state laws and such. Emphasis on clear up.

For that board voted to use the word “death” when describing an abortion of an unborn child. Which is as clear as it gets.

Imagine that. Using the language to properly explain what’s happening.

That is unusual when it comes to the abortion debate in this country. Language is the Little Round Top of any debate, and both sides have been trying to gain the better ground for a generation.

It may have all started when the pro-abortionists began calling themselves Pro Choice, and the media went along with the euphemism. As if those who preferred to choose life didn’t like choices. Or if the infant involved in the matter had a vote at all.

And all these abortions—pardon us, “terminated pregnancies”—were occurring in “clinics,” doncha know. And it was a matter of “women’s health,” even if the child killed was a female. And none of it was a crime. At least not on the books.

We remember Ted Kennedy talking—as always, at length—about “pregnancy-related services” when what he was really talking about was abortion on demand. Always the charlatan, Sen. Kennedy knew better than to make things clear. Better if he sounded like he was offering prenatal care rather than prenatal death.

Once language is abused this way, soon thinking can be, too. And so the killing of a child becomes antiseptic. Clean.

Here is one board member on the decision that the term death will now be used, officially: “We are requiring that women with unwanted pregnancies be told that a decision to proceed with a medication or a procedure that is legal

in all 50 states is tantamount to killing her baby.”

By jingos, we think he’s got it! Yes, isn’t that what’s happening during an abortion? Or does he think something else is going on?

We’re sure that those who support this American way of death would like for it all to be shielded from view. For it is horrible. But others of us would like for these “medications” and “procedures” to be explained in full. After all, this isn’t a pedicure we’re talking about.

The governor of this state, the Hon. and honorable Asa Hutchinson, seems to understand as much. Last year the board tried to replace “death of the unborn child” with “termination of the pregnancy.” As if somebody was canceling a magazine subscription. The governor rejected the change and sent the matter back to the board. Good for him. Asa Hutchinson always did seem to be straightforward.

Another pol, a congressman named Steve Womack from Arkansas, offended the delicate sensibilities of our betters a few weeks ago when he used the term “baby in the womb” during an argument about abortion. Oh, such uncultured truth! What’s next? Up is up and down really is down? He’d make an awful debate coach.

EARLIER this year, in one of the never-ending stories surrounding the controversies of Planned Parenthood (another euphemism), some clumsy soul used the phrase “abortion care” when describing the killing of a child in the womb.

Imagine. Abortion care!

As Paul Krugman noted in a column not long ago, “It’s not just false. It’s almost the opposite of truth.”

Language is important. No where more important than in this debate over abortion. Is this just a “procedure” to remove an unwanted growth? Or is it the killing of a human? We know what we think.

We’re glad to know that the state wants to put it plainly, too.

OTHERS SAY

Over there

BLOOMBERG NEWS

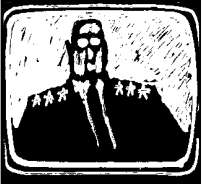
If there is anything to be gained from President Donald Trump’s disgraceful attack on the credibility of the widow of a U.S. Special Forces soldier killed in Niger, it’s that Americans are finally becoming aware of the expanding U.S. mission against extremist violence now spreading across the Sahel region of Africa.

As Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford explained, the role of the U.S. military over the last decade has been critical: helping local nations defeat a variety of armed threats. These include affiliates of al-Qaida and Islamic State, local extremist groups such as Boko Haram, traffickers in migrants and arms, criminal syndicates, and tribal rebels.

The good news is that, aside from this month’s tragic ambush, in which five Nigerian troops were also killed, the strategy has shown promising results. The U.S. mission, involving several hundred special forces, has been successfully training troops from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and other states. The key has been a bottom-up approach, working with local rather than central governments.

Inexplicably, Washington is balking at fully funding the G5 through the United Nations.

The U.S.’ short-sightedness is also evident in its tendency to view Africa through the lens of individual states. The borders on the map are irrelevant on the ground in the Sahel and else-



where, which means solutions have to be regional. And it’s not just a military problem: Lasting progress depends on Western nations and global nongovernmental groups helping these impoverished countries improve governance and development.

The National Security Council should rethink its Africa policy more along transnational lines. The State Department needs to improve coordination and information-sharing among its embassies in the Sahel. The military, meanwhile, needs more funding to support effective security and public services along in sparsely populated areas of Mali and Chad. But sending a lot more troops and advanced equipment that the local forces are unable to operate would be a mistake—a slippery slope toward the U.S. owning a mission that the locals must fight themselves.

Last, Congress can do its part by passing a new war authorization to avoid mission creep and give a strong legal basis for counterterrorism operations far away from the original battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Eventually the facts on the ill-fated Niger mission will come out, just as Trump will eventually lose interest in his feud with Sgt. La David Johnson’s widow. Ideally, both the Pentagon and the president will incorporate what they’ve learned into better strategies. But there’s no need to wait to address the danger of increasing extremism in Africa.

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COLUMNISTS

Foundations crumble



Bret Stephens

That was quite a philippic Arizona Republican Jeff Flake delivered last week from the Senate floor, announcing his decision not to seek re-election while denouncing Donald Trump’s “reckless, outrageous and undignified” behavior and “flagrant disregard for truth and decency.”

And that was some speech George W. Bush gave in New York the other day, too, warning pointedly of “nationalism distorted into nativism,” and a politics “more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and outright fabrication.”

And who will ever forget Republican Sen. Bob Corker’s acid description of the White House as an “adult day care center,” or John McCain’s magnificent denunciation of “people who would rather find scapegoats than solve problems”?

Who will forget? Republicans will, led by the pro-Trump intelligentsia that has spent the past 18 months abasing itself so it could normalize him.

In 1927 French philosopher Julien Benda wrote *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (*La Trahison des Clercs*), a short book that pointed a damning finger at the ultra-nationalist thinkers of his time.

Benda excoriated them for “the intellectual organization of political hatreds.” He condemned them for worshipping a “cult of success,” which “says that when a will is successful that fact alone gives it a moral value, whereas the will which fails is for that reason alone deserving of contempt.”

He warned, prophetically, that this “great betrayal” of their philosophical vocation, along with their “desire to abase the values of knowledge before the values of action,” had put mankind on the road to “the greatest and most perfect war ever seen in the world.”

Benda is often celebrated by conservative writers for his understanding of how prone intellectuals can be to fatal political misjudgments. Think of Michel Foucault’s embrace of Ayatollah Khomeini, Noam Chomsky’s excuses for the Khmer Rouge or Naomi Klein’s effusions for Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez. The list of intellectuals making fools of themselves is long.

So where are Benda’s conservative disciples today, the ones I remember from panel discussions on the importance of moral character, the dangers of relativism or the postmodern assault on the concept of truth?

It’s instructive to read the high-minded defenses of Trump offered by writers in Breitbart, the *Washington Times*, the *Federalist* and the rest of the pro-Trump press.

Their chief argument for Trump is that he won and is therefore a winner. Their argument against Never Trumpers is that we failed and are therefore losers. What about Trump’s character? It doesn’t matter so long as the Supreme Court



remains conservative. Legislative failures are always and only the fault of “establishment Republicans.” Boorish habits are merely a matter of taste and something of a virtue in the era of snowflakes. As for the criticisms from Flake, Bush, Corker and McCain, who needs moral instruction from those sore losers and political has-beens?

Most telling is the Trumpians’ inability ever to utter a whisper of criticism of their man. Even Never Trumpers will occasionally find themselves agreeing with the administration over one issue or another. Not so the Trumpians. With instincts that recall the Stalinist intelligentsia of the 1940s, they mix the logical elasticity of the sophist with the unflinching loyalty of the toady. They are never anything except always all in.

All this suggests that what the media now trumpets as a looming GOP civil war isn’t going to happen. Corker and Flake aren’t stepping up; they’re bowing out. Political retirees are good for leading charities, not movements.

As for the rest of the conservative movement, through its liaison with Trump it is participating in its own moral degradation in much the same way that Xaviera Hollander—a Dutch consular secretary who realized she could make a much better living as a call girl and brothel operator—became the notorious Happy Hooker of the 1970s. Shameless, yes. Criminal, also. But a runaway success all the same, with a memoir that sold north of 15 million copies and a movie about her starring Lynn Redgrave.

The default assumption of nearly every opponent of Donald Trump is that, sooner or later, he is bound to fail, either because he will be overwhelmed by events, undermined by scandal or abandoned by his own supporters.

So far none of that has happened. In one key respect, he is the most successful president in modern times. He has ripped out the ideological foundations on which his party once stood. The Democratic Party was still recognizably itself after Bill Clinton left office. The GOP will not be after Trump is done with it. Like it or not, that’s a testament to his charisma and power—aided and abetted by those conservative intellectuals who proved so quick to prostitute themselves on his behalf.

Bret Stephens is a New York Times columnist.

Then came Harvey

JONATHAN CAPEHART
THE WASHINGTON POST

In October 1991 the phrase “sexual harassment” and the menacing environment it created for women in the workplace exploded onto the national consciousness. Like the rest of the nation, I sat riveted in front of my television as I listened to the reluctant testimony of Anita Hill during the confirmation hearings of then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Despite Hill’s stunning allegations, Thomas was confirmed. But what she said changed the dialogue in this country.

Hill gave voice to the silent indignities endured by women, professional women in particular, at the hands of men who subjected them to lewd comments, propositioned them wherever and whenever, or chased them around a desk or office sofa. The nation was forced to acknowledge that sexual harassment was pervasive in the workplace and that it could no longer be tolerated.

And then came Harvey Weinstein.

Nearly 26 years to the day of the Anita Hill hearings, the *New York Times* and Ronan Farrow writing for the *New Yorker* revealed that movie mogul Weinstein allegedly harassed and assaulted actresses for years. The number of accusers is now more than 50.

Veteran journalist Mark Halperin is the latest addition to the dishonor roll. CNN reports that

five women accused the former NBC News political analyst of sexual harassment in the 1990s through the mid-2000s when he worked at ABC News.

What another woman—Emily Miller, who is not a part of the CNN story—posted on Twitter is very telling.

She added, “I did not report Halperin to ABC because I thought I was the only one, and I blamed myself, and I was embarrassed and I was scared of him.”

What Miller said she did hearkens back to the days of silence about sexual harassment that Hill’s testimony exposed. It also showed that the potency of the power dynamic that allows such abuse to occur and go unreported. But Miller’s tweet and the punitive actions that have taken place in the aftermath of Weinstein represent something new.

Hill’s testimony ushered in an era of recognition of a problem. What we are witnessing now is empowerment to say something and do something about it.

“Abused women feel liberated to bring down powerful men in government, media, tech, politics, business and pop culture,” Mike Allen of *Axios* wrote Thursday. “It’s spreading by the day.”

If I may put an even finer point on it: They have found the courage to hold their tormentors accountable. And those men are being held accountable.



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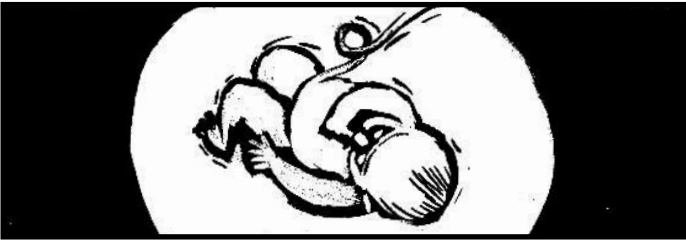
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EDITORIALS



The meaning of life

And the meaning of the words we use

IT WAS partially a pleasure to read the email from a fellow journalist—as many journalists are defined today, which is to say, loosely—after we had read all the news stories over the weekend about Arkansas’ abortion laws. Or the laws that are almost-laws. For a judge has put a hold on more than one as the lawyers do their work.

The papers say there’s a federal lawsuit challenging four laws that the Arkansas General Assembly passed in 2017. Then there are three other abortion-related lawsuits over in the Eastern District of Arkansas as well. And a fifth was filed in Washington County Circuit Court last month. All in different states of appeal. We suppose lawyers have to eat, too.

While we were pondering weak and weary over the comments from proponents and opponents to these Arkansas laws—why would anybody oppose notifying law enforcement when a 13-year-old girl, who cannot give consent, seeks an abortion?—our email pinged. It’s such a common sound that it almost blends in with the background noise.

The email was from somebody in an outfit that touted itself as “the only non-profit, independent daily publication focused on reproductive justice,” and called itself *rewire.news*.

How wonderful, we first thought. An entire publication devoted to justice for those who should be protected in their mother’s wombs, but instead are oft times put in the most dangerous positions. Yes, join hands and join the ranks, fellow justice-seekers! Let us call out wrong when we see it, and do right as He gives us to see the right, and see that justice is done in this country, even for the least of these. For who is more vulnerable than a child unborn?

Then we read *rewire.news* and discovered it’s every bit as devoted to reproductive justice as Planned Parenthood is to parenthood.

Oh, what crimes have been committed against the language in this battle. Just as those in Arkansas call an abortion procedure Dilation and Evacuation, or Dilation and Extraction, or— even better—D&E or D&X, in an attempt to clean up any real image of the bloody mess, so too must the abortionists fog the area when discussing “reproductive justice.” And for the same reason smoke bombs are launched onto a beach before the infantry lands.

OTHERS SAY

Researching gun violence

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

EVERY mass shooting, most recently the slaughter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, brings a familiar and usually fruitless call and response. Gun control advocates urge tighter laws; gun rights advocates argue that those measures are too harsh or won’t work.

What’s missing from this debate are studies that provide evidence of strategies proven to reduce gun violence, and of those shown to have little or no effect. In that void, lots of people voice assertions that may or may not be accurate.

Why the dearth of data? One reason is that a 1996 congressional amendment barred the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from spending to “advocate or promote gun control.” The amendment, sponsored by the late GOP Rep. Jay Dickey of Arkansas, for two decades has been credited—and blamed—for tamping down government-funded gun research.

That could change. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar recently promised the CDC will resume research to find ways to curb gun violence. “We’re in the science business and the evidence-generating business,” Azar says, vowing the agency’s researchers

Blur, obscure, complicate. Never allow abortion to be debated with straightforward words and clear language. Especially if you can’t defend your position while using them.

Our new email correspondents write that several new laws in Mississippi are “anti-choice.” As if, during an abortion, the child has any choice in the matter. They call the state’s requirements “that only physicians provide abortion care” a scheme. But we’d ask: Who else would they allow to do this? And what the bloody hell is abortion care? It seems that abortion and care are polar opposites. What next, a debate about death health?

Humpty Dumpty once told Alice that he was the master of words, and he could use them to mean anything. “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” He’d fit in nicely today as Americans debate Choice, as long as there is only one.

EUPHEMISM isn’t unknown among the Arkansas stories, either. In one of those many lawsuits flying around the Natural State, a group calling itself Biomedical Ethicists filed something called an amicus brief, or friend-of-the-court brief, on behalf of an abortion doctor in Little Rock. We note that Biomedical Ethicists, the group, is a collection of a couple-dozen physicians and professors around the country.

The group’s filing says the Arkansas laws, still on the shelf for now, “prevent physicians from upholding their ethical obligations.”

Ethical obligations of physicians?

Like, for example: First, do no harm?

As the language is misemployed in this discussion, it may become harder and harder for many of us to realize it when debate descends to farce. For when serious people use phrases like “reproductive justice” for the killing of an unborn child, and “abortion care” for the removal of a person, limb by limb, from a mother’s womb, and a group called Biomedical Ethicists goes on the record saying such procedures are ethical obligations among doctors, words fail us. Almost.

Call it the American way of death, as corporate-speak comes to a more important item on the agenda. God have mercy on us.

will be “certainly working in this field, as they do across the broad spectrum of disease control and prevention.” Bravo.

Even Dickey apparently recognized the damage done by his amendment. Six years ago, he co-authored a *Washington Post* op-ed that called lawmakers’ fears of such research “senseless.” “We must learn what we can do to save lives,” Dickey and his co-author wrote.

Gun violence is a public health crisis, as urgent and lethal as cigarette smoking or Ebola. There will be intense debate. Good. Let rival gun control and gun rights advocates debate the paths research should follow, argue the merits of studies, and poke holes in conclusions. That’s how science works.

Many may not have believed the initial studies that showed a link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. They shrugged off the dangers, or justified smoking for its pleasures. But the evidence of health risks grew overwhelming over time. So did the number of people who quit—or never started.

It’s a rough analogy, but the overarching point is: Let’s establish some evidence about the gun epidemic and what can curtail it. Then Americans can decide what additional gun measures, if any, they will support.



COLUMNISTS

That elusive fair housing

CHARLES LANE
THE WASHINGTON POST

FIFTY years ago last week, an assassin’s bullet claimed the life of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and cities erupted in violent protest.

Fifty years ago this week, the House, galvanized (or embarrassed, or scared) by the crisis, passed the much-postponed Civil Rights Act of 1968, better known as the Fair Housing Act.

In his April 11, 1968, signing statement, President Lyndon B. Johnson alluded to the 1964 and 1965 laws that outlawed racial discrimination in employment, public accommodations and voting rights, and declared that the measure filled one of the biggest remaining gaps in the new structure of justice.

“Fair housing for all human beings who live in this country—is now a part of the American way of life,” Johnson said.

Is it? There has unquestionably been progress. Between 1970 and 2010, the average U.S. metropolitan area’s “dissimilarity index,” a widely used measure of segregation between blacks and whites, declined from 78 to 60, according to sociologists Jacob Rugh of Brigham Young University and Douglas Massey of Princeton University: To achieve an even racial distribution would have required relocating 60 percent of an area’s African Americans in 2010, as opposed to 78 percent 40 years earlier.

That’s a 23 percent improvement. The United States as a whole is approaching a level of black-white residential segregation that researchers customarily consider “moderate,” and in places such as Blacksburg, Va., or Fort Collins, Colo., housing segregation is in the “low” range, as Massey notes in a review of the data soon to be published in the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*.

Nevertheless, black Americans remain far more likely than others to be concentrated racially and isolated geographically, Massey reports. For blacks, nine of the 10 most segregated metropolitan areas are northern cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and Philadelphia. Their average dissimilarity index stands at 76, down only slightly from 84 in 1970. These figures do not capture the various deprivations, in transportation, employment and education, that go along with ghettoization, but those are very real too.

Persistent racial isolation does not result only from natural demographic processes, or private prejudice, though both have played a part. Rather, it is to a large degree a legacy of conscious federal actions that helped ghettoize blacks as they migrated from south to north in the mid-20th century.

When the Roosevelt administration bailed



out the housing industry during the Great Depression, it did so on a discriminatory basis, steering Federal Housing Administration subsidies to whites-only neighborhoods, purportedly to avoid the property devaluation that black residents caused. When the federal government built housing for World War II defense plant workers, it did so on a segregated basis. FHA and GI Bill housing benefits also favored white suburbs after the war.

The Fair Housing Act represented a federal promise not only to prevent new discrimination but also to reverse damage Washington did.

It has been more successful at the former task than the latter. Overt racial bias in renting and selling homes—of the kind for which the Justice Department sued Donald Trump, his father, Fred, and their apartment company in 1973—is less common than it was. (The Trumps settled out of court, promising not

to discriminate without admitting wrongdoing.) Yet successive presidential administrations have balked at full enforcement of the 1968 law’s requirement that federally aided local governments take “affirmative” steps for residential desegregation. Many predominantly white communities resisted; they were happy to take federal money but didn’t want fair-housing strings attached.

The Obama administration wrote regulations to carry out this long-dormant provision in 2015, but President Trump’s housing secretary, Ben Carson, who previously denounced the whole idea as “social engineering,” recently postponed implementation of the Obama rule until late 2020.

Ironically, the purpose of these federal regulations in many cases would be to counteract the effect of other government rules, enacted at the local level: Land-use restrictions—zoning, minimum lot sizes, growth controls and the like—that effectively enable upper-income households to create their own residential enclaves are a major culprit in the persistence of segregation by both class and race.

Deregulating local residential real estate might get at the root causes more efficiently. A recent paper by Michael Lens and Paavo Monkkonen of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs suggests that state government intervention can help, by offsetting local interest group pressure.

As social “sorting” and political polarization advance, it seems more important than ever to tear down barriers that prevent Americans from living together as equals.

John Bolton’s new stance

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HERE’S a prediction that is sure to annoy everyone: Now that he’s national security adviser, John Bolton will become more moderate.

Some extremists moderate when they take public office because of bureaucratic push-back from the middle. Don’t expect that from Bolton. He’s made a career of fighting the bureaucracy from the right.

Bolton will moderate for the opposite reason: In this stage of President Donald Trump’s administration, there’s almost no one left to push back at Bolton from the center. Without such opposition, Bolton is going to realize that he’s the grownup in the room, and the closest thing to a realist anywhere in Trump’s foreign policy circles.

He will have to take the role of war-skeptic, asking the president to consider the consequences of aggressive action and intervention.

Ideologically, Bolton is a nuts-and-bolts national power right-winger who thinks the U.S. needs to project power outward and use force when it’s pragmatically necessary to do so. That means he will also consider when the use of force could backfire—especially if no other senior member of the administration is looking out for the risks.

Even if Trump now thinks he has surrounded himself with advisers who will let him indulge extremist impulses, he hasn’t, at least not in Bolton. Bolton will likely constrain Trump.

Bolton has consistently occupied a position at the right extreme of Republican foreign policy. But he has never been truly outside the spectrum. To the contrary, Bolton has always made sure that he was a member of the establishment, albeit the

member with no one remaining to his right.

In government, Bolton worked for the Justice Department and the State Department in assistant secretary level roles. Those are the insider-power positions of these large bureaucracies. You have to fight to move the agenda, but you still have to play as part of the team.

Out of government, Bolton held a senior position at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank within the mainstream conservative establishment. He wrote for the *Weekly Standard*—again, establishment conservative. He has been a commentator on Fox News, not a Breitbart contributor.

The point is not only that Bolton’s niche has always been at the right wing of the establishment. It’s that he has always had others in the conservative establishment to push back against him. He’s never had to be the backstop against extremism, so he’s always been free to advocate the most right-wing stance.

That’s about to change. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has been replaced by Mike Pompeo, a former congressional ideologue who is further right than Bolton. If Gina Haspel is confirmed as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the agency will likely have trouble occupying the “voice of caution” role.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis might be the only figure against whom Bolton could struggle from the right. That depends, however, on whether Mattis himself stays in place—and whether he is interested in trying to constrain Trump from using military force abroad.

It’s one thing to be the most right-wing member of the establishment. It’s another thing to put policies in place that break the establishment’s norms altogether.

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