

COLUMN

Fare thee well



LINDSEY ALLEN
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You may have noticed, in recent weeks, the lack of a Sunday staff column spanning the opinion page's left rail; or maybe you're a normal human being who immediately gravitates toward the feisty political cartoons. The absence of my column is due to reluctance... my reluctance to say goodbye. Even now, I'm writing this as the deadline bangs on the door. If stalling came with a pair of glass slippers and a happy ending, I'd be the princess of procrastination. Alas, reality doesn't allow for infinite deferment (I'm drawing a blank, but there's a Ward 1 Vacancy joke in there, somewhere). Monday is my final day at The Shawnee News-Star. Since giving my notice last month, I've received encouragement to remain at the newspaper, from a range of people. I'm not sure there is anything more wonderful than genuine words from a community I have come to care for. Maybe the heavenly aroma of books? No, not even that.

A goodbye should sometimes be called a bittersweetbye, but I imagine that's difficult to fit on a Hallmark card. Bob Dylan meant something different when he sang, "Goodbye's too good a word..." so I'll just say fare thee well," but I'm embezzling it for my purposes.

I am so blessed to have spent my evenings in a newsroom of talented and fun individuals, and equally blessed to know hundreds of community faces.

While Shawnee was always a temporary stop, I'm glad I stayed longer than planned.

Now that I have finished at Oklahoma Baptist University, an institution composed of exceptional professors (and Holly Easttom, the world's most incredible advisor), I'm returning to Texas.

My family is naturally excited, but I think my car is even happier. I swear I heard it grumble during my last weekend trip down I-35.

For a word nerd, I'm at a loss for expressing how much I've enjoyed my time here. I would list everyone who made a special impact on my Oklahoma experience, but I doubt there is enough paper. I'm not even sure there are enough trees.

I'll be around town for a while, as I still have ample packing to do. Every time I start fill a cardboard box or plastic tub, I find some long-lost object and become completely distracted.

If I'm still here in six months, you'll know I found my Chinese finger trap and probably need help.

Thank you for allowing me to immerse myself in the community and share stories with you. Bittersweetbye and fare thee well.

Lindsey Allen is a reporter for The Shawnee News-Star.

PUBLISHER'S COLUMN

Don't abuse your right not to be right

This is why we can't have nice things.

As President Barack Obama made his way to speaking engagements in Oklahoma, groups of people in Durant and Oklahoma City staged rallies or protests - or whatever you call people in the back of pickup trucks waving Confederate Flags - to greet him.

These people say the Confederate Flag is about heritage, not hate. They even took advantage of a man calling himself "the black rebel" who helped organize the rally to prove they aren't racists. They have that one black friend, right?

The political environment on my social media feeds was so bad that it made the Plexxus, Advocare and Crossfit updates pleasant by comparison.

I saw so much of that nonsense that I thought about deleting my Facebook account, but then I remembered it wasn't Mark Zuckerberg's fault that I have friends who aren't so bright and are fine with racist undertones. Then I turned to my Twitter page and it made me long for those Facebook posts that were tame by comparison.

I even had one friend who tried to encourage the ignorant people who think Obama is trying to expand high-speed internet access so the government can spy on them.

"We are better than this," he said.

I couldn't disagree more. We aren't better than this.

Many are unbelievably capable of defending child molesters if they are on the right television shows and hate mongers as long as they hate the same things they do.

Look, this is nothing but a perfect illustration of the symbolic culture that we have become.



KENT BUSH
PUBLISHER

Most of life today is about what offends someone. Republicans are offended by Obama and his refusal to stop being President. If Obama offered free ice cream, FOX News would spend an entire evening blaming him for making Americans obese. If he says ice cream is a bad idea, he is criticized for contributing to the nanny state. If he doesn't mention ice cream, he is slammed for ignoring America's ice cream industry.

This isn't a one-way street. Democrats are offended by every FOX News criticism of Obama. Believe it or not, there are valid criticisms of Obama.

People are alternately offended by Planned Parenthood, Confederate Flags, same-sex marriage, comparisons of food stamp recipients to wild animals, transsexual former Olympic superstars, you name it, we have a lot to be offended by.

Perhaps the best thing about our version of American culture is how the divisive political culture and everyone's ability to publish their own thoughts via social media streams has created the counter-offended crowd.

I am perpetually amazed at how no issue is allowed to be black and white anymore. We can't agree on anything.

Depending on who makes the initial statement, the "other sides" will be compelled to take the other side no matter how ridiculous it is.

If someone says the Confed-

erate Flag stands for racism, there is a push-back that says it is about southern heritage. A new group of people rises up to be offended that the first group was offended by the racism embodied in what that flag represents.

When an anti-abortion group somehow tapes a Planned Parenthood worker talking about using aborted tissue for science or selling it somehow, the initial reaction is the pro-life crowd going crazy about trafficking human organs and how if this was happening to puppies, someone would be in jail. Somehow, despite how repulsive the idea is that human fetuses might be used in that way, the pro-choice crowd jumps in the middle of the argument to "clarify" what is truly happening with Planned Parenthood and how it isn't as bad as it sounds.

Our society is now divided into offenders and offended. No one is ever satisfied to believe what he believes and give everyone else the same freedom.

This is America. You have the right to hate people if you want. But if you hate black people, going to a Juneteenth celebration wearing a white power t-shirt is not about being free, that is a direct assault on a group of people.

If the Confederate Flag is about heritage and not hate, you would fly it in your home or on your pickup tag and stay home when the President comes to town.

Being thoughtful of someone else's feelings has now been demonized as political correctness. You aren't being outspoken. You are being rude.

At some point, we have to stop worrying about what we have a right to say and think instead about what is right to say.



YOUR VIEWS

What do you think of Kickapoo construction?

With a portion of Kickapoo Street opening around Independence Street after much construction along that roadway, here are some of your comments from www.facebook.com/shawneenewsstar:

"Wonderful new streets leading to closed businesses and abandoned buildings! I feel so horrible for any business owner in Shawnee that is not corporately run!"
— **James Steele Gaudrone**

"It looks nice !!!! And was nice to drive in yesterday!!"
— **Nancy Holsapple**

"So glad but that is taking FOREVER!"
— **Karen Young Phillips**

"Woo hoo progress."
— **Paula Koontz**

"The intersection is rougher now then before."
— **Eric Likens**

"Looks wonderful. Thanks to all those responsible."
— **Linda J King**

"Now if they would put up speed limit signs and actually write some speeding tickets. It is ridiculous how people think that Kickapoo is now a speedway..."
— **Kay Northcott Hurst**

"Years of construction it seems."
— **Mark Wickerd**

"It's about time!"
— **Amanda Monroe Hess**

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District 3: Eddie Stackhouse

ONLINE POLL

Have you had a chance to visit the new Shawnee Splash park yet?

Vote and see results at www.news-star.com.

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GUEST COLUMN

Unemployment rates on the rise throughout Oklahoma

By Rep. Justin Wood

A June report from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission noted that the unemployment rate in Oklahoma has increased to 4.5 percent. In addition, the report noted that unemployment rates have increased in 76 of our 77 counties.

Since the 2008 recession, Oklahoma has been consistently among the states with the lowest unemployment rates, thanks to our thriving energy industry. That same industry is one of the primary drivers of our unemployment surge as oil and gas prices have dropped drastically during the last year and layoffs have numbered in the thousands in our state.

Republicans in the Oklahoma House of Representatives have taken notice and are looking at ways to get our economy humming again. In the next several months, the House will be holding numerous interim studies on topics including tax and regulatory reform and better preparing students for entering the workforce.

State government plays a vital role in economic activity — primarily by reducing costly regulations and creating an environment where businesses have the freedom to innovate, expand and hire new workers.

I always look forward to interim studies because it is an opportunity to let lawmakers delve into specific issues in a way that is not possible during the chaos of the short legislative session.

In other news, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt continues to battle the Obama Administration on everything from government-run health-care to ambiguous and arbitrary rules on water and energy production.

I personally welcome and support his efforts.

He recently filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging Environmental Protection Agency over the most recent version of Clean Power Plan “because it forces Oklahoma into fundamentally restructuring the generation, transmission, and regulation of electricity in such a manner that would threaten the reliability and affordability of power in the state,” according to a news release distributed by the Attorney General’s office.

Pruitt says the plan is unlawful because the EPA does not have the legal authority under the Clean Air to regulate carbon emissions from the electricity generating plants covered by the final rule.

Every year, federal government agencies promulgate thousands of pages of rules and regulations that cost citizens and business owners time and money.

Since 1975, the number of pages of federal regulations has increased by 140 percent. Today, the federal government sits on more than 170,000 pages of regulations that cost individuals and businesses more than \$1.7 trillion annually to comply with. Money that could have gone in the gas tank or put dinner on the table. Money that could have been used by businesses to expand operations, innovate and hire new workers.

These are hidden taxes, coerced through the power of the government. I applaud Attorney General Pruitt for pushing back against this type of soft tyranny.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you at the Capitol.

I will keep you updated often on the status of our great state. God bless you and God bless Oklahoma!

PUBLISHER’S COLUMN

Appointments in Shawnee are always eventful

You didn’t think it was going to be easy did you? This is Shawnee. If there is an appointment to be made, there is bound to be some drama.

For more than four months, the Shawnee City Commission has operated with six members because of the deadlock regarding the preferred method of replacing Gary Vogel who resigned from his Ward 1 seat.

It can’t come as any surprise that the State’s Judicial Nominating Commission would have its own brand of drama when it tried to fulfill its role in filling a vacant Associate District Judge’s seat in Pottawatomie County.

The JNC forgot the No. 1 rule in politics; If you are going to be shady, you have to be smart.

Reforming the judicial system has been a big part of the Republican policy platform for several years. There has been a strong sense among GOP legislators that the JNC doesn’t actually operate in a non-partisan way. Despite a major shift to the right among the executive and legislative branches of gov-



KENT BUSH

PUBLISHER

ernment, the judicial arm has remained dominated by jurists whose politics would fall further to the left on the spectrum.

The recent recommendations from the JNC for the Pottawatomie County position are certainly evidence of that assertion if it isn’t proof.

Despite the fact that state law requires three names to be submitted to the governor, the JNC only submitted two names to Gov. Mary Fallin — who also happens to be a native of Pottawatomie County.

Those two names just happened to be the two Democrats that applied. The two applicants who were not selected because the commission “wasn’t comfortable with them” just happened to be Republicans.

You could believe that the

JNC was truly non-partisan and the selections were merit-based. After all, political affiliation is one of the few questions candidates don’t have to answer on the 20-page application.

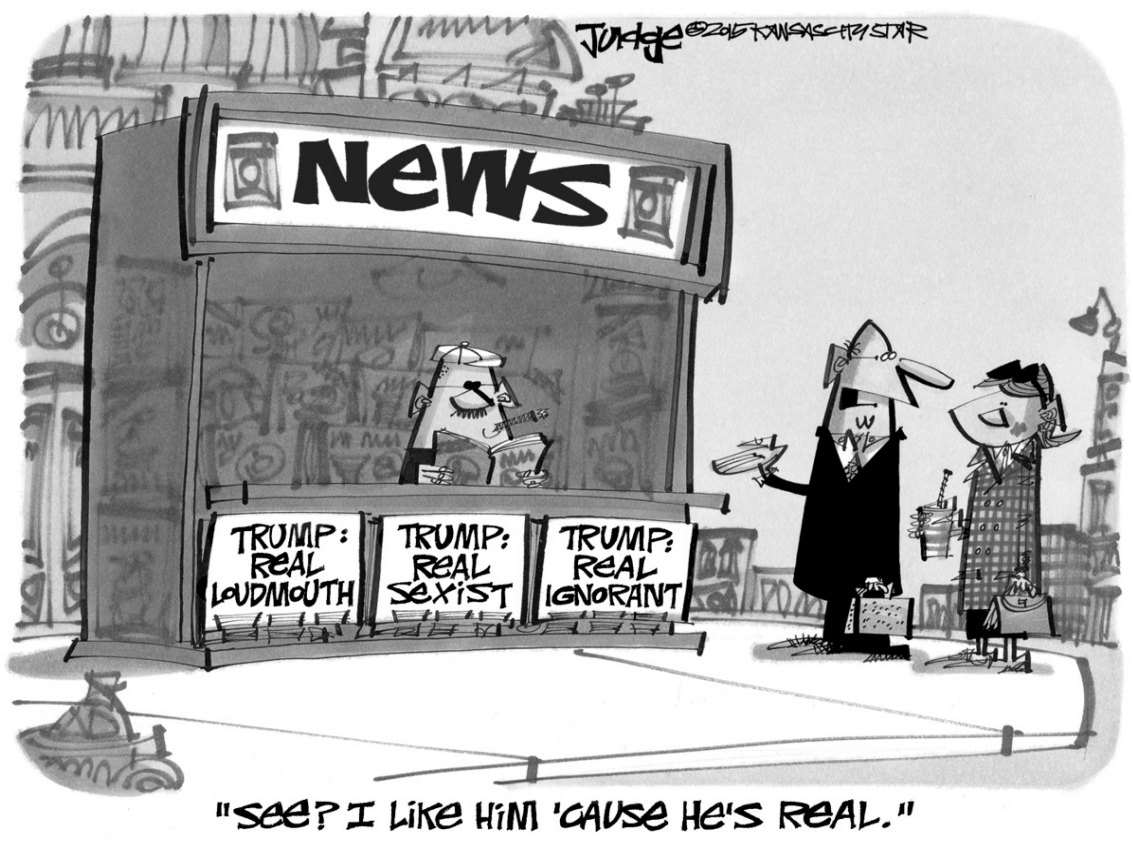
Maybe it was a coincidence.

Or perhaps someone on the commission staff has the same level of computer skills as my 11-year-old son and was able to do a simple search to find the applicants’ voter registration information.

Either way, it looks bad.

Now the Governor has asked the commission to restart the process. It was incredibly politically clumsy to only have two Democrats apply if the intent was to lock out the Republican applicants. If a third Democrat would have thrown a hat in the ring, the JNC could have sent three applicants to the Governor as the law requires. Instead, they willfully violated the law and cast doubt on the process and the commission.

Hopefully, the second attempt at filling the vacant spot on the bench will be more successful and less controversial. But somehow, I doubt it will be.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

‘Elections are due again and some voters have memories’

Dear editor,

Mr. Mayor, City council members: Who do you think you are? Really.

My district is still and may remain for some time it seems without representation. Does it take an act of a supreme being to get you off whatever you are

sitting on and ask you again to get the job done?

Surely somewhere within the city constitution, since that seems to be the hang-up — unless you are waiting for another crony to show up, either with money or affiliations that will pass muster — there is a simple sentence that states how this doldrom can be cleared up.

You have four candidates available, one of whom you attach to some group to get experience. Have the others been

assigned “positions” to keep them occupied until they also give up?

I am tired of asking another council member questions that may have nothing to do with their districts. Should I sent a letter to Santa and ask for one? Sounds like wishful thinking. Remember one thing: Elections are due again and some voters have memories.

Tom Smith
Shawnee

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GUEST COLUMN

Understanding ‘Indian Law’

By Senator Ron Sharp

Presently, there are more than 560 federally-recognized tribes in the U.S., and over half of those are made up of Alaskan Native villages. Additionally, there are almost 245 non-federally recognized tribes; many of which are recognized by their states and are presently seeking federal recognition.

With 39 federally-recognized Native American tribes and other Native American Indians living in Oklahoma it’s important for citizens to have a general understanding of “Indian Law.”

“Indian law” refers to a body of law dealing with the status of the Indian tribes and their special relationship to the U.S. government. Basically, it’s federal law about Indians.

“Indian law” is provided for in: The U.S. Constitution (Article I, section 8, clause 2, and Article 6); historical treaties with the individual tribes, federal court decisions, 25 Code of Federal Regulations, and Presidential Executive Orders.

Historically, the U.S. has maintained four doctrinal bases of “Indian law”: 1) the tribes are sovereign entities with inherent powers of self-government; 2) sovereignty is subject to the plenary power of the U.S. Congress to modify and regulate the status of the tribes; 3) the power to deal with the tribes is totally federal preempting state authority; and, 4) the federal government has a responsibility for the protection of the tribal (Trust) properties.

The 1789 ratification of the U.S. Constitution elevated the treaties made with the Indian Tribes to be on an equal level to those treaties made with foreign governments (Article 6).

Although, states lack any constitutional authority on sovereign tribal lands, the state governments aren’t obligated by the U.S. Congress to provide services to the tribes even though they exist within their boundaries. Subsequently, mutually agreed upon compacts have developed over the years between the tribes and the states and local governments to provide the exchange of basic services.

While “Indian Law” relates to the federal government’s relationship with the tribes, “Tribal Law” is considered the internal law that each tribe applies to its own affairs and members through its constitution and decisions by its tribal council and tribal court.

25 Code of Federal Regulations (25 CFR) are written by the U.S. Interior Department/Bureau of Indian Affairs to interpret and implement the treaties, congressional acts, and federal court cases relating to “Indian Law”. Any proposed change in a 25 CFR statute is published in the Federal Register for comments and review before approval by the agency.

Currently, the BIA regulatory powers found within 25 CFR consist of seven chapters and 1,299 sections. Subjects within the 25 CFR include Enrollment Criteria; Indian Gaming Commission; Health and Human Services; and Trustee for American Indians.

25 CFR requires within the enrollment criteria that an Indian must have a blood quantum, and be recognized as an Indian either by his or her tribe or by the federal government. A Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card is issued by the U.S. Department of Interior (BIA) that certifies the degree of blood quantum and the tribal base roll. An individual can be issued a CDIB card by the BIA and not be a member of an Indian tribe.

“Tribal Law” creates a greater complexity than “Indian Law” because each tribe has historically negotiated its individual treaty with the U.S., its own constitution, trust land, membership, and blood quantum requirement. Some BIA services are limited to those with one-fourth blood degree or more; however, some services may be provided with as little as one-sixteenth blood degree. The tribe may provide services with a lower blood quantum if there isn’t a minimal blood quantum requirement for tribal membership.

The individual Indian tribe has the sovereign power to determine its own membership criteria.

Subsequently, the federal courts have ruled that it’s not always necessary for an individual to be formally enrolled in a recognized tribe to be regarded as a member for BIA jurisdictional purposes. [U.S. v. LaBuff, 658 F. 3rd 873 (9th Cir. 2011); U.S. v. Pemberton, 405 F. 3d. 656 (8th Cir.2005)]. The federal court decisions have attempted to ensure that the classification of “Indian” is more of a political one, and not a suspect racial one.

After losing their sovereign power with the enactment of the Dawes Act during the early Twentieth Century, the Native American tribes have regained their sovereign powers under the presidential administrations of: Franklin Roosevelt; Richard Nixon; Ronald Reagan; Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama.

Next week, I’ll discuss the “Reorganization” of the Native American tribes during these presidential administrations.

PUBLISHER’S COLUMN

Some cute cartoons should come with warning labels

Do you know why movie theater popcorn is so expensive? Because it is worth it.

I’m not sure if that is true, but it might be. That is good enough for the top Republican Presidential candidate, so it’s good enough for me.

No one loves movie theater popcorn more than my son Dawit. Since we adopted him in 2011, he has left a lot of Ethiopia behind. But it seems like anything to do with food still takes him back to his home country.

When we find an Ethiopian restaurant, it becomes a popular destination for us. One thing many people don’t know about Ethiopia is that they do coffee ceremonies that rival the British afternoon teas.

Since they are in the home of coffee, Ethiopians will roast green coffee beans in a metal pan and then crush the freshly roasted beans in a mortar and pestle and use a French press to make coffee. The most unique thing about Ethiopian coffee ceremonies is that popcorn is often served alongside the coffee.

Since he became part of our family at four years old, Dawit has begged for coffee whenever his mom or grandparents enjoy a cup. He also loves popcorn. Like I said at the top, no popcorn is better than movie theater popcorn.

Last week he got to enjoy some popcorn while enjoying “The Good Dinosaur.”

The popcorn brought nothing but smiles as he ate one handful after another. The movie was good, but it brought anything but smiles.



KENT BUSH

PUBLISHER

By the end, I was wondering why I spent so much money to make my family cry.

If you haven’t seen the movie and don’t want me to ruin it for you, turn back to the sports section now.

The movie is about a green dinosaur that has a southern accent and works on a farm with his other brontosaurus-type family members. If you want to hear Sam Elliott’s cowboy voice come from a tyrannosaurus rex looking dinosaur that wrangles longhorn cattle, this is the movie for you.

In the movie, the humans can’t talk but the dinosaurs can. The little green guy loses his father thanks to the escapades of the human boy.

The two become unlikely friends as more events bring them together.

One moment in the film that connects them emotionally featured the two using sticks to tell their family story. The little human boy is an orphan. The dinosaur had lost his father and needed to get home to the rest of his family.

Just as the two made it almost back home safely, another human family appeared. The dinosaur wanted to keep his friend with him, but – with uncommon wisdom for an animal with a walnut sized brain – he knew the little boy should go

with the humans.

As they had when they told each other their own family stories, the dinosaur put the boy with the family and drew a circle around them to indicate they were the boy’s new family.

They were sad to be parting but they knew they had made the best decision.

When Dawit saw the orphan boy join his new family, the emotions were more than he could handle. He began to cry. I don’t mean sniffing and wiping away tears. It was a full force ugly cry with hands over eyes that were dripping tears over snot bubbles.

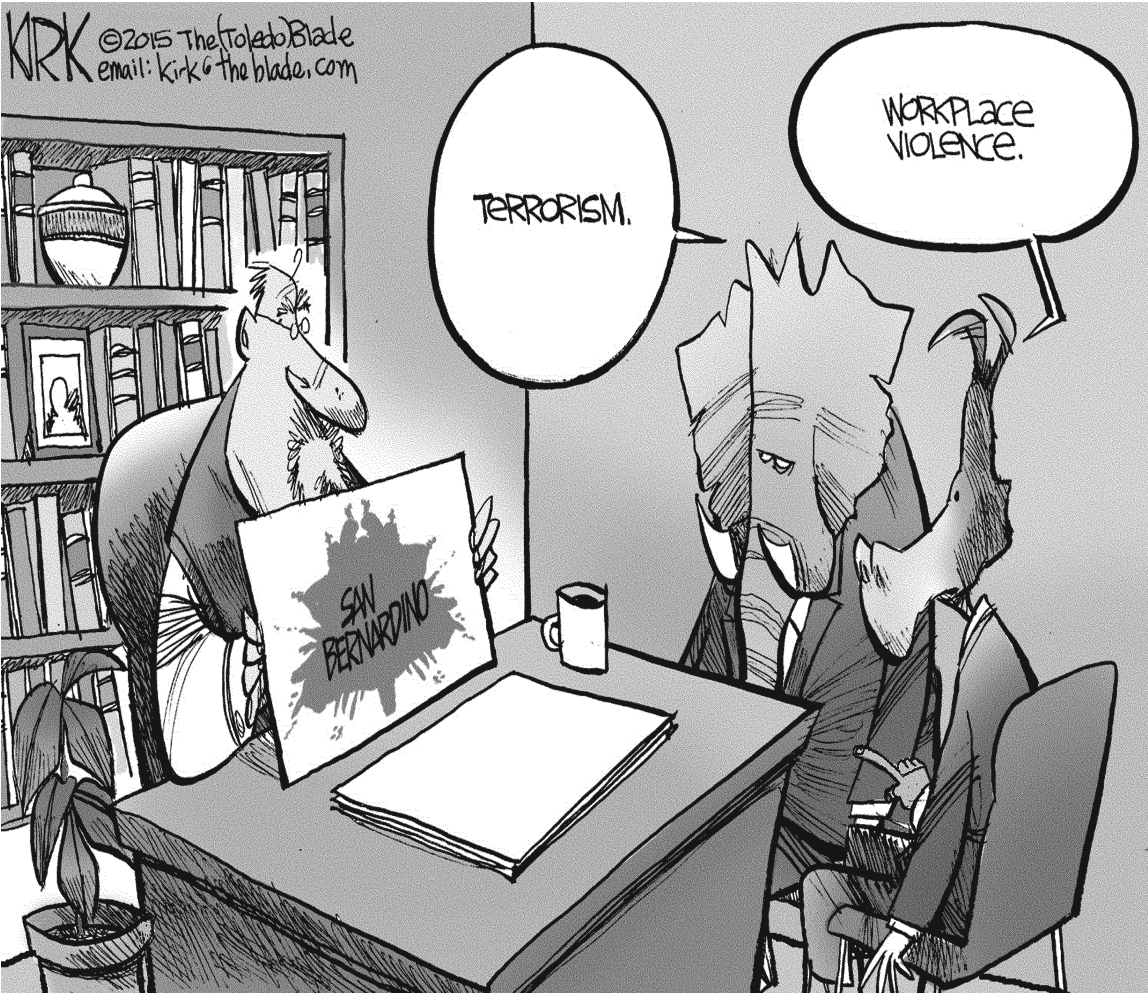
I scooped up my little guy and comforted him. He was happy for the boy, but all of the situations that brought Dawit to his new family overwhelmed his senses as he experienced the boy’s story on the big screen.

Dawit’s mom and brother also teared up as did several people around us in the theater. It was emotional.

Note to self, know the content of movies before you pay to see them. We aren’t a family of dinosaurs farming the ground, but Dawit does know what it means to be an orphan and he is very happy to have his family. We’re pretty excited to have him too.

It was so sweet to see his reaction to the movie that I find myself wanting to draw circles around him every day just so that he gets reminded about his position in our family. After a rough start to life, Dawit has lived with us longer than he has lived any other place.

And he’s not going anywhere, even if a kindly dinosaur happens by.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

‘The far left is at it again’

Dear editor,

The far left is at it again, they won’t rest their war against American citizens and their rights guaranteed by the Constitution, they never fail to salivate over the latest tragedy or act of terrorism, they call for ‘comprehensive’ background checks, but Colorado and California both already have comprehensive background checks. Nothing they have proposed would have prevented the acts of violence they are reacting to. We can never forget that the largest and most despicable act of violence and terrorism in U.S. history was committed by men armed with box knives, are we going to

ban them next?

No law they have proposed would prevent a terrorist from getting a gun, terrorists or criminals can always get a gun on the black market, while all the laws proposed by the far left are targeted at law abiding citizens. In the face of terrorism does it make any sense at all to disarm the victims? Aren’t we allowed to defend ourselves from terrorism, are we just supposed to throw up our hands and let them kill us because our government has left us defenseless? In the face of terrorist acts we, as Americans should stand up and fight back, that is the American way, we have always fought back against evil, whether it be terrorism or a totalitarian government.

Every person is responsible for their own personal security, in most situations the authorities arrive to pick up the pieces and write reports after the crime has happened, as they did in the latest attacks. I have no intention of being a victim, I will not stand idly by and let terrorists take over our country, it’s up to each individual to decide where they stand. Do you stand with the terrorists, or with the President who thinks that ‘climate change’ is a bigger danger than terrorism? That is probably the single most ignorant thing I have ever heard a politician say. I reject all of that, take a stand for our way of life, the American way.

John Owens
Shawnee

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ABOUT THIS PAGE

The Shawnee News-Star opinion page offers varied opinions on many topics. The viewpoints expressed in the columns, guest commentaries, letters to the editor and editorial cartoons are those of the authors and artists. “Our View” editorials are the opinion of the News-Star. Your opinion is welcome. Letters to the editor should be 400 words or less and include the author’s name and town of residence, along with a phone number for confirmation purposes. The phone number will not be published. All letters are subject to editing and unused letters will not be acknowledged. Printed letters to the editor are limited to three per month per person. Letters with topics connected to an upcoming election will not be considered within two weeks of that election.

Typed letters are preferred and should be e-mailed to: Kimberly.morava@news-star.com. Letters also can be sent by mail to: Letters to the Editor, The Shawnee News-Star, P.O. Box 1688, Shawnee, OK 74802.

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District 3: Eddie Stackhouse

ONLINE POLL

Do you plan to do most of your Christmas shopping in Shawnee this holiday season?

Vote and see results at www.news-star.com.