

THE SHAWNEE NEWS-STAR

Established in 1943, The Shawnee News-Star is a locally managed division of GateHouse Media.

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ABOUT THIS PAGE

On the principle that the fair and unimpeded exchange of ideas is the permanent foundation and continuing guarantee of a free people, the Shawnee News-Star opinion page will offer varied opinions and analyses on a broad range of topics that affect your life. The viewpoints expressed in columns, guest commentaries, letters to the editor and editorial cartoons are those of the authors and artists. Editorials are the opinion of the News-Star. Your viewpoints are always welcome. If you have any questions about this page, including its content, please call or write us. Your opinion matters most of all.

EDITORIAL

More liability insurance is necessary move

THE ISSUE Liability insurance
THE OPINION Liability insurance requirement for day cares is good start, but more is needed.

Oklahoma's editorial writers expressed their opinions on a variety of topics last week including food safety and the flu season.

Here is a sampling:

The Edmond Sun on liability insurance:

With the recent signing of "Demarion's Law" by Gov. Brad Henry, Oklahoma parents may feel a tad bit more secure in leaving their children with a day care.

The law requires all child care facilities "in order to maintain or obtain a license, to carry a minimum of \$200,000 of liability coverage for each incident of negligence that leads to any injury to a child that occurs while the child is on the premises or in the care of the child care facility."

Three-year-old Demarion Pittman's life was irrevocably altered the day in August 2007 that a child care worker left the young boy in a hot car for several hours after an outing. The child suffered extensive brain damage and his medical costs already have climbed past the \$1 million mark.

His case brought out that the state Department of Human Services did not require child care facilities to carry liability insurance. It's an almost unheard of oversight in this litigious age.

House Bill 2863 by Rep. Mike Shelton is a great start in rectifying this situation for all Oklahoma parents who must use child care facilities.

But the Oklahoma Foundation for Consumer & Patient Rights recently brought up this point: Why don't legislators extend the same legislation to nursing homes?

"When it comes to child care centers and nursing homes, a person's age determines whether they can be mistreated without financial consequences," stated Jeff Raymond, executive director of the nonprofit consumer advocacy group. "How can that possibly be right? Why wouldn't we offer the same protections to our elderly, who need just as much care and assistance?"

We agree with Raymond. He notes that a bill with similar requirements for nursing homes passed out of the Senate last year but was killed in committee in the House.

As Demarion's case clearly shows, if something tragic happens, medical costs can mount quickly. The \$200,000 liability insurance for day cares is a good start, but we have to ask the state why our children and seniors are worth so little?

We believe businesses should be required to carry \$1 million in liability insurance. These days it doesn't take much to reach those heights in medical costs after a tragedy.

TRI-COUNTY SPEAKS

\$300-plus electric bill fair for elderly Tecumseh couple?

In Tecumseh, two elderly people, air conditioner set on 80 degrees all summer, spring and fall, at \$300-plus. Fair and honest? Who says so?

WHEN WILL THERE BE LIGHT?

Please let us know when the city is going to turn on the street lights from Kickapoo Spur to Kirk Street.

LOVE THE HORSES. HOW 'BOUT PONIES?

Add me to the list of people who love the horses at many of the businesses around town. Wouldn't it be nice if we could get colts to go in the residential areas?

TAKING US FOR A RIDE

This is in reference to the gasoline prices. With oil \$102 a barrel, and a hurricane in the Gulf and gasoline that has gone down about a dime in the last couple of weeks, I guess that proves that the oil companies are just taking us for a ride. The government needs to step in and do something about this.

PALIN ATTACKS

Christians are not popular with liberals. They are attacking Sarah Palin because she believes in Jesus Christ. They say it is not mainstream America.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mathis faced uphill battle with union since day he started

To the Editor:
Shawnee finally hired a professional police chief and what do they do? The interim city manager of two months fires him because he spoke strongly to a union official. Heaven forbid that city hall take on the union. We wonder if Chief Mathis was given the opportunity to review the charges against him and offer any defense?

It is convenient that this is labeled a personnel issue so the charges are a secret and the public is kept in the dark. Chief Mathis has been facing an uphill battle with the union from the day he was hired. He has shown belief in his decisions and his mission to improve the Shawnee Police Department. We believe the citizens of Shawnee support what Chief Mathis was accomplishing. The citizens voting in April supported the city contract versus the police union contract. We are sure this further infuriated the police union leaders.

Our police officers serve the community with honor and bravery. They put their lives on the line for our safety. Our concern is with the union leaders who want the power to hold a community hostage. One union leader has become so entrenched in the department that he cannot accept decisions and actions that are not his own. He is not interested in the citizens of Shawnee or the police department. He is only interested in power and his own selfish motives. We wonder who would come to Shawnee to be our police chief or our city manager. If we get someone who wants to do a good job, we fire him.

Keith and Doris Smalley Shawnee

Bush philosophy has nearly bankrupted government; McCain is more of the same

To the Editor:
Republicans are masters at changing the subject, and the crowning of Sarah Palin as their VP candidate is doing just that. They wisely don't want to talk about their record on the economy. Obama, on the other hand, has been respectful of their choice and keeps trying to bring the conversation back to the issues that affect everyday Americans.

The current takeover of America's largest mortgage corporations is a case in point. This takeover, which I think is a direct result of the Republican distaste for regulation and oversight of private industry, is probably going to cost the American taxpayers about \$5 billion. I think the government showed that it will continue to allow big spenders to win and taxpayers to lose.

Over and over again the people who break the rules or make bad decisions seem to get bailed

out. Remember the "Keating Five" scam and McCain's part in it? Then there was the \$15 million bailout of the airline industry in 2002 that was supposed to save thousands of airline jobs but instead created golden parachutes for airline CEOs. I'm expecting the American car industry and the airlines to ask for more bailouts any day.

I want to elect a government that will function as a true protector of my tax dollars instead of one that stands by with a gleeful grin on its face while the American treasury is systematically fleeced to bail out irresponsible investors. George Bush and his less-government philosophy has almost bankrupted our government, and something tells me the burgeoning Chinese and Russian economies are going to say no if we need to ask them for a bailout. Who else do you think will have the money to help?

More of the same with McCain sounds like mass suicide to me.

Jo Davis Shawnee

Health of national psyche depends on election divisiveness

To the Editor:
Do you ever wonder how and why we've become a nation so evenly divided, particularly in the last two presidential elections? Markings of divisiveness are certainly present this year as well. True, ideologies and the dominance of one mode over another ebbs and flows. But doesn't the contrast stand out sharply this year?

How have we come to view events and policies from such radically different perspectives? What is it about our psychology and the developmental stages that we humans go through that influences our leanings?

Why do some view money as the "be all and end all" of an issue while others view less-tangible elements as more important? There are multitudes of issues, with a whole host of various perspectives regarding them, and most of us probably feel that "our way is the right way." How will we address those people who don't feel the way that we do and how will we resolve differences? Can we stand in another's shoes?

It seems quite likely that once again half of this nation's voters will be pleased with the election outcome, while the other half won't. In my presidential voting career, no one I desired has ever been elected, and some haven't even made it out of the primaries. Being in the minority and knowing how this feels is nothing close to pleasant. When allowing myself to feel the gravity of this, well, a felling up of the eyes doesn't quite convey it.

So again this time it's likely that vast numbers of us, husbands and wives, partners and lovers, parents and children, neighbors, community members, co-workers and fellow citizens, will be grappling with the stark realities of "winners and losers." Presidential elections certainly aren't the only measure for one's well-being, but they do

impact our lives and contribute to how we view our world.

What will it mean that nearly half of us won't be pleased and heal from this? The well-being of our national psyche awaits our evolution.

Matthew Scala Shawnee

Environmentalists throw common sense out the window

To the Editor:
Here is what the "environmental wackos" forgot to tell you. You know the funny-looking compact fluorescent light bulbs that use 75 percent less energy than an incandescent bulb? We buy them to be more energy efficient and lower consumption. We all want to lower our electric bill. Here's something I just learned.

These high-efficiency light bulbs contain Mercury and must be properly handled to avoid both personal danger and polluting the environment. How dangerous are they? The amount of mercury contained in each CFL bulb is low and we should not consider intact CFLs a danger. The key word is intact. Broken CFLs must be handled with care. The EPA recommends a rigorous set of guidelines for cleanup. Ventilate the room where the break happened for 15 minutes, scoop up broken pieces (don't touch the glass), use the sticky side of tape to clean up the small pieces, and deposit the debris into a jar with a lid or a zip-top bag. For hard surfaces, wipe up the area with damp paper towels and put in a container. It's important to avoid direct contact. Seal all the debris in the bag or jar, and then take it to a recycling center for safe disposal. If the break occurs on carpet, more stringent measures are required; for step-by-step cleanup advice, visit the EPA's mercury cleanup site, www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm.

You have got to be kidding me! Break a light bulb and call the EPA to sterilize the house. This brings us to the real long-term disposal problem with CFLs. Throwing the bulbs (broken or not) into the trash means the mercury is being introduced into landfills. This puts the individuals processing the waste in danger. It also means that mercury will eventually leach into the environment. One bulb isn't a problem; multiplying it by millions increases risk that mercury (an element that doesn't ever break down) enters the groundwater or contaminates soil. It's a problem that can't be ignored. Mercury is a potent toxin that can cause brain and kidney damage, especially in a developing fetus.

Oh, but the left wants to save the planet (animals and trees). But I guess it is OK if we poison every human being in the process. Responsibility and common sense once again has gone out the window with this idea. Who do I sue for getting mercury poison, Al Gore?

Rickey Dale Crain Shawnee

NEWS IN BRIEF

Revenue up, led by sales taxes

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Collections of state sales taxes and gross production on natural gas showed a big jump in August.

The monthly state revenue report was released Tuesday, showing total general revenue collections were up about 11 percent in August over the same month a year ago.

State Treasurer Scott Meacham said a 17 percent increase in sales taxes indicate Oklahoma's economy remains healthy, even during a national economic downturn.

Gross production taxes are up 69 percent over last year, reflecting higher natural gas prices.

The increase in the two tax categories more than made up for a 4.6 percent decline in total individual and corporate income taxes.

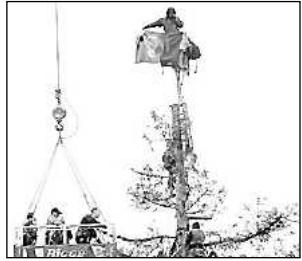
Investigation ongoing into E. coli outbreak

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — State health officials say tests of a Locust Grove restaurant at the center of a deadly E. coli outbreak show no traces of disease-causing pathogens on restaurant surfaces.

The outbreak of the rare E. coli O111 was traced to the Country Cottage restaurant in Locust Grove and is blamed for one death and more than 200 illnesses.

Epidemiologist Dr. Kristy Bradley with the state Health Department says about 20 people remain hospitalized.

Bradley says retrieving organisms from a restaurant surface that may have been cleaned since the contamination poses a challenge to investigators.



Final tree-sitters make descent

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — The four remaining protesters living in a redwood at UC Berkeley climbed down from their perch Tuesday, ending a 21-month occupation of a campus grove aimed at stopping construction of a new sports center.

The tree-sitters said they agreed to come down on the condition that the University of California create a land use committee that will include input from students and residents into the school's future land decisions. But a UC spokesman said no such deal was made and the university has no plans for the committee.

School officials prepared to forcibly remove the activists by building scaffolding around the tree. The protesters slowly climbed down the tree and onto scaffolding amid cheers from supporters soon after the agreement was reached.

BIBLE VERSE

"Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance." — Titus 2:2