

### EDITORIAL OUR VIEW

## Demarion's Law a good start

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.

### EDITORIAL OTHER VIEW

#### The Muskogee Phoenix on water:

The city of Hugo may have many reasons why it should be able to sell water to Irving, Texas, but let's wait first on the state's comprehensive water plan.

Hugo filed a federal lawsuit earlier this month asking for permission to go ahead with the sale despite a state moratorium on out-of-state sales. That moratorium has been in effect for about five years, and Hugo said it has lost out on millions of dollars it could have made from the sale of Kiamichi River water.

We sympathize with Hugo. Municipalities can use all the economic help they can get, and the city says it has excess water to sell.

However, when it comes to water, this country has been making piecemeal decisions regarding it for decades rather than having a comprehensive plan. And as water experts have pointed out in recent years, this world is headed for a water crisis. ...

The state plan is the best planning we have going, and we should wait until the proposal is completed before we make decisions about out-of-state water sales.

We don't say this because we don't want Oklahoma water going to Texas.

We say this because water should not be hoarded by any state.

The access to water and its storage and distribution should be guided by the principle that we must provide enough water for everyone, not just by how much those with water temporarily in their possession can profit off of it.



## A time to celebrate Oklahoma

Even as the thermometer tells us summer is still here, fall is just around the corner. School has started for students across the state, football season soon will be under way and it's time once again to celebrate all things Oklahoma at the Governor's Mansion during Septemberfest.

Kim and I look forward to Septemberfest each year, and we invite all Oklahomans to join us from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 6. It's a chance for Oklahoma families to have fun together, tour the beautiful Governor's Mansion and grounds, and learn about our great state and its people.

Septemberfest will include arts and children's activities, interactive exhibits, live entertainment, sports demonstrations and storytelling. As always, there will be a hay bale maze,

great food and tours of the Governor's Mansion, which is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

Those visiting Septemberfest also can also enjoy free admission to the Oklahoma History Center nearby on Northeast 23rd Street. This incredible facility chronicles our state's fascinating history and educates new generations about the people and events that built Oklahoma into the proud state we know and love.

For Septemberfest, the

Oklahoma History Center will supplement its usual exhibits with performances, crafts and displays, such as Celtic Dancers, a re-creation of a 19th magic show, Mexican folk dancing, Asian music and trick roping.

The 12th annual Septemberfest is hosted by the nonprofit Friends of the Mansion and several generous corporate donors. Admission is free, and families are welcome to bring their own picnic lunches or purchase food from vendors.

Every year, the crowds at Septemberfest seem to get bigger, and for good reason: There is always something new to see and do. Kim and I sincerely hope to see you this year for this fun celebration of Oklahoma.

GOV. BRAD HENRY may be reached via his Web site at [www.governor.ok.gov](http://www.governor.ok.gov).



Brad Henry

Our Oklahoma

## Urban living needs mass transit

Neal Pierce is an author and columnist who writes about trends in American states and localities. In his most recent columns for the *Washington Post* he has written about two trends currently visible throughout the nation.

"Return to the City" was the title of Pierce's recent column in which he likened Atlanta and Washington to Vienna and Paris as cities in which the affluent tend to live in the center of the city. The columnist documents that middle class and affluent Americans increasingly are returning to the cities that their parents and grandparents left in the latter half of the 20th century.

The author asserts that while more than a generation ago more than 50 percent of households in America had children in them, it is probable that close to 80 percent of American households will be childless in the not too distant future. Pierce wrote that the residents of those households often prefer to live in areas where there are cultural amenities and stores in fairly close proximity to their homes. He also cites a study that found many young people today prefer urban living to the suburban life they experienced as children. He also points out that this trend was in place before the recent dramatic rise in the price of gasoline.

This national return to urban life is visible in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, where formerly vacant warehouses and office

buildings have been converted into residences, stores and art galleries. In some of the smaller communities in Oklahoma such as Ardmore, Claremore, Mangum, Perry and Sapulpa,

second-floor lofts in the downtown areas have been converted into condominiums and apartments while street-level structures now house new restaurants and stores, said Ron Frantz of the Main Street Program.

Pierce also has seen fit to write about how cities and suburbs throughout the nation have begun to work together to fund mass transit systems. He lists cities such as Seattle, Houston, Denver, Dallas and Minneapolis-St. Paul as places where transit systems have been put in place that allow people from the suburbs to travel into the city center without using a car.

While much of the start-up costs for those transit systems was received from the federal government in the form of funding grants, the columnist points out that expansions of those systems are increasingly funded by sales taxes. In December the city of Phoenix will open a light rail

transit system that will connect its downtown area to the suburbs of Mesa and Tempe. The system will be funded by a sales tax that was approved by the voters in those three communities. Pierce praises those locales in which the city and its suburbs have agreed to the imposition of sales taxes for mass transit systems, and believes that it may herald future joint undertakings in other areas such as environmental protection.

He also asserts that while state legislatures are reluctant to fund transit projects of that type, they often are willing to create regional transit authorities that can ask voters to approve such projects.

There has been some discussion of the possibility of mass transit in Oklahoma City. The Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce has called for the creation of a light rail system that would link Will Rogers Airport to the downtown area and the Cowboy Hall of Fame. And several local governments in the metropolitan Oklahoma City area have expressed interest in the creation of a multimodal transit plan that would include a light rail system. It is possible that the citizenry would be willing to approve new taxes to finance such an undertaking. But it remains to be seen if Oklahoma City will take the steps necessary to create a mass transit system.

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TODAY'S VERSE  
A SELECTION

'It is vain for you  
to rise up early, to  
retire late, to eat the  
bread of painful  
labors; for He gives to  
His beloved even in his  
sleep.'

Psalm 127:2