

# OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

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Dear OCPA Member:

Thursday, August 28, 2008

Have you ever had the experience of traveling down a road with a preponderance of potholes? Usually, you are so happy when the road improves that your first thought is not to go down that stretch of road again. You think about how jarring the experience was and promise yourself never to risk again the costly repairs such roads can cause. Yet today it amazes me how many tired old public policy potholes liberals continue to promote, everything from “price controls,” “socialized medicine,” “the windfall profit tax,” “the fairness doctrine,” “a national speed limit,” “bans on energy exploration” . . . the list goes on and on . . . but all of them have been tried and have failed.

Just what is it about those old standards of liberal thought that makes them so alluring? Could it be the idea that all of them necessitate government control? It seems liberals love the idea of controlling an individual’s destiny. They basically don’t trust people to take personal responsibility for anything. So, in order to control individuals and manage their lives, liberals know it requires them to grow more government.

As columnist George Will notes, “In America, conservatives much more than liberals reject the presumption of individual vulnerability and incompetence that gives rise to liberal statism.” Conservatives like to “fix” problems, while liberals prefer to “address” problems. If you fix a problem the problem goes away. If you address a problem, the problem can be perpetually addressed and never really solved.

Consider the subject of public education in Oklahoma. For years the public has been told that to address the problem of poor performing schools we needed to spend more money. So the public agreed to spend more money again and again. But it was never enough. Eventually, we were told that we needed to pass the lottery because it would address the “money issues” in public education. But guess what? Again we’re told it isn’t enough. Over and over again the public is told the answer is more money, but regardless of the money spent, it never fixes things. The teacher’s union even recently attempted to sue the Oklahoma legislature to force it to spend additional money for education and the courts dismissed the lawsuit. (Interestingly, it’s the public education bureaucracy that siphons off lots of the money before it gets to the actual classroom.) Meanwhile, conservatives are busy advancing a simple fix: school choice.

The reality is liberals don’t really intend to fix problems at all because it would limit the number of issues they perpetually address. That’s why liberals like the tired old solutions of the past. It permits them to wail and whine while they address the same problems over and over again in order to grow more government and gain more power.

Yes, liberals like controlling other people. They point to the deficiencies in the American way of life – any excesses, abuses or failures -- and address each problem through more taxes, more regulation, more mandates and more laws. Conservatives meanwhile, want to fix the problems so that they may get on with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, with the limitations on government our founding fathers intended.

Until next time. . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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