

# Editorials

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Lampasas Dispatch Record

www.lampasasdispatchrecord.com

Page 5

Linda Chavez



## Blagojevich inflicting pain on his own party

Rod Blagojevich may look like one of the dim bulbs from Tony Soprano's Bada Bing, but the guy's a political genius. Who could imagine that a month after U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald signaled that the Illinois governor was about to be indicted for trying to sell President-elect Barack Obama's Senate seat, the man would manage to make the entire Democratic congressional leadership look like chumps? In naming former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris to the vacant seat, Blagojevich has hoist the Dems on their own petard.

Blagojevich knew exactly what he was doing by naming Burris. Like any urban Democrat, the governor knew how potent an advantage Burris' race would be. Blacks may be only 15 percent of the Illinois population, but they represent about half the Democratic Party's base in the state. And nationally, the figures are just as skewed.

By appointing Burris, Blagojevich was daring the Dems to bar the Senate door. He knew he could count on the likes of Congressman and former Black Panther Bobby Rush to make invidious comparisons between Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's initial opposition to seating Burris with former Alabama Gov. George Wallace's blocking the schoolhouse door after the Supreme Court ordered public schools desegregated.

With Obama's elevation to president, Senate Democrat ranks are as white as Republicans'. And no matter how many times Reid et al say their opposition to Burris has nothing to do with race, the whole issue makes them squirm a bit. After all, Democrats have been perfectly happy to force police departments, businesses and colleges to select applicants by color,

**The entire Blagojevich episode is a huge embarrassment to the Democrats, including the incoming Democratic president. How ironic that Barack Obama is now saddled with party leaders who are accused of acting like racists.**

but they seem less happy to apply those same standards to themselves when it comes to joining the most exclusive club in the world.

Of course it's absurd to think the Democrats don't want Burris because he's black. But then schools that fail to admit less-qualified blacks, or businesses that don't hire a proportional share of black employees, or police departments that pass over a lower-scoring black applicant in order to promote a higher-scoring white one aren't engaging in racial discrimination either. Yet Democrats have insisted for decades that racial justice somehow required racial parity in all aspects of life. But they don't want the same absurd rule applied to them.

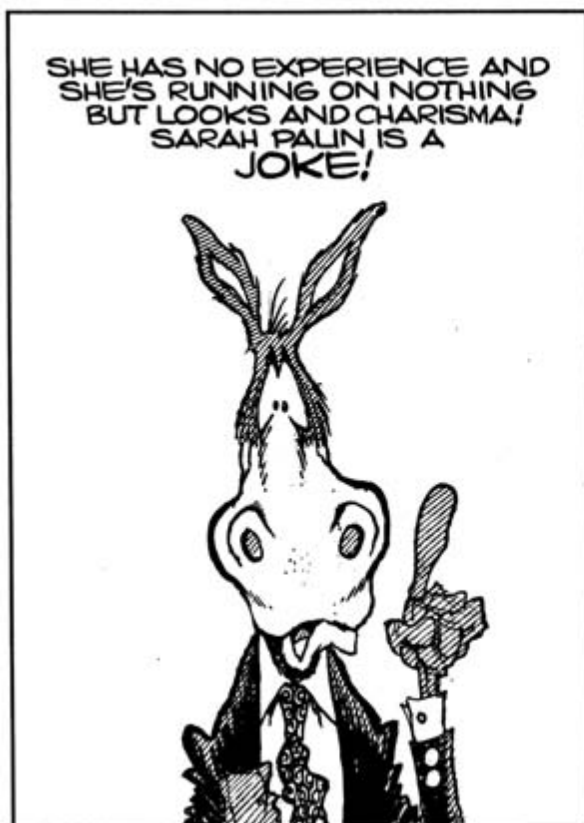
Democrats may have no choice in ultimately seating Burris. Just hours after the Senate sergeant-at-arms summarily rejected Burris from taking his seat, Sen. Reid and others seemed on the verge of changing their minds. Reid's description of Burris had changed from dismissive to complimentary: "He obviously is a very engaging, extremely nice man. He presents himself very well. He's very proud of his family. He's got two Ph.D.s and two law degrees, and he talked about how proud he was having those degrees."

But even if the congressional leadership doesn't cave, Burris is virtually a sure bet to win a challenge in court. Like it or not, Rod Blagojevich is still a sitting governor with the power under Illinois law to appoint a replacement to fill President-elect Obama's now empty seat. The Democrats in the state legislature had their chance to impeach the man — and they chose not to act quickly.

The entire episode is a huge embarrassment to the Democrats, including the incoming Democratic president. How ironic that Barack Obama is now saddled with party leaders who are accused of acting like racists. Democrats have rarely minded when the R-word was hurled at Republicans, but when the shoe is on the other foot, it hurts.

And that may be Blagojevich's sweetest revenge. The fellow may be a foul-mouthed, larcenous creep, but he knows exactly how to yank his fellow Democrats' chains. Blagojevich may eventually be forced from office — and he may well end up behind bars — but he's going to inflict maximum pain on his fellow Democrats before he leaves the stage.

Linda Chavez is the author of "An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal" and a columnist with Creators Syndicate.



## Democrats' tax cut plan

Left-wing bloggers won't be happy to find men and women of the right celebrating the Democrats' stated intention to make tax cutting a key element in their economic recovery program.

Let's celebrate anyway, in semi-hopeful fashion.

It's reported that President-elect Obama and his congressional allies support lowering taxes by approximately \$300 billion as part of a two-year, \$775 billion stimulus program previously viewed as too heavy on make-work spending.

The professional economists will dilate on the shape and size of the plan, which, as of now, would give tax credits for job creation; extend a Bush-initiated provision shortening the period for depreciation of new equipment; use last year's losses to reduce tax liabilities in previous years; and, for most individuals and families, reduce taxes by up to \$1,000.

"Tax cuts for the wealthy"? To see these relatively mild proposals as such, most fans of big government would have to stand on their heads and screw their eyes in dramatic ways.

The apparent idea behind the Democratic plan is the encouragement of spending and investment. A related idea is the quelling of potential Republican objections to the size of the spending plan by the concession that, well, hmmm, ahem, it can make sense to encourage the flow of money through private rather than public hands.

Who cares, in this case what motivates the thinking of Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi so long as they acknowledge, even tacitly, the beauty of incentives (read carrots) as opposed to punishment (read sticks).

Incentives haven't had much of a cheering section lately. There hasn't been the occasion. First there was the presidential campaign, in which it became obligatory for Democrats and their backers in the mainstream media to portray low, or lowish, tax rates as a gift to the haughty rich and a cause of growing "inequality." Then there was the financial crisis, during which plenty of the haughty rich came to look like idiots, if not thieves. It's hard in such a climate to talk common sense about taxes, but common sense about taxes is what has to be talked.

A vibrant economy — the kind we are scrambling to rebuild — gets that way by making work and investment pay off for workers and investors. This you achieve by cutting taxes.

The need to squash Bernie Madoff (assuming a jury

finds that he merits squashing), and to exact revenge on his fellow plutocrats, isn't the question before the house. The issue of regulation is separate — or at any rate can be separated with some dexterity — from the issue of incentives.

Possibly the easiest way to achieve this end is by noting that, in economic terms most people don't do more for less. They do more for more. When the government's share of their reward (i.e., pay and profits) gets unreasonably large, many, if not most people tend to relax, hold back, withdraw. We went through all this in the '70s. High taxation was depressing the level of work done throughout the economy. Underground dealing and personal dishonesty flourished. The Reagan administration cut taxes. Work and investment soared. In due course the economy bounced back.

No one expects Democratic Washington to sit still for "tax cuts for the wealthy," as broad-based cuts usually get labeled by editorial writers, TV commentators and liberals running for office. But the Wall Street Journal is right to note that "The Obama tax-cut proposals, if enacted, could pack more punch in two years than either of President George W. Bush's tax cuts did in their first two years" — \$300 billion versus \$174 billion.

I propose we don't look a gift horse in the mouth. There's a precedent to be set here — the admission by a governing body not exactly composed of Reaganite supply-siders that, yes, indeed, tax cuts can work for the general good. Upon that admission renewed respect for common sense in taxation can be engineered. At the same time economic recovery gets a boost. No bad bargain, this.

William Murchison is a senior fellow of the Texas Public Policy Foundation and a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

William Murchison



## Art department project

Dear Hanna Springs families and community members:

It is with tremendous gratitude that this note is written to let you know how much we appreciate your help in raising money for the Lampasas Mission, Lampasas Fire Department and Hanna Springs art department.

Working in the school as we do can be very gratifying but often heart-wrenching. We know times are tough financially for many of us, but there are instances when we see or hear things that make us realize many families are having very, very difficult times.

With your help we raised \$2,038 and have made our donations to the Mission and Fire Department. The sacrifice you made to donate your child's artwork, purchase a child's artwork or to help in any way will benefit many people. We offer our most sincere "thank you" for your help in this project.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bear, art teachers  
Mr. Michael Kuehne, art teacher  
Mrs. Nancy Yearly, principal  
Hanna Springs Intermediate School

## Letters

### Iraddell Storm: a life well lived

I wanted to write to tell you that Mrs. Storm's obituary was the most amazing story I have read in a long time. I did not know her, but I found her story to be so full of life, I took the time to read it to my children. She really lived a life full of unique experiences and adventures. There is nothing better than a story like hers to motivate us all to live life to the fullest. Thank you for sharing it with us.

Trish Argumaniz Kempner

## Letters Policy

The Lampasas Dispatch Record encourages letters from its readers. Letters should be to the point, typed if at all possible, and signed. Address and telephone numbers also should be included for verification purposes. Only one letter per writer will be considered in a 60-day period.

Letters will be printed on a space-available basis. Letters should stick with issues, and not simply be personal attacks. Letters endorsing a particular position on issues of local interest will be accepted, however letters endorsing a candidate for political office will not be accepted.

We reserve the right to edit for length, content and potentially libelous statements. Correspondence should be mailed to: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 631, Lampasas, TX 76550. Or send an opinion via e-mail to letters@lampasasdispatchrecord.com.

## Letters

### Quiet and the trees

New Year's Day, 2009, and my house is blessedly quiet.

This is my family's first New Year's Day in Lampasas and really not much different than the typical celebration of all New Year's Days ... five bowl games droning in the background, the smell of chicken 'n dumplings wafting through the house and the traditional black-eyed peas simmering on the stove.

But it is quiet.

My husband and I bought a house and retired here last spring to be closer to our daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren who live here, and our two sons who live in Houston. Our roots grow long and deep in West Texas. My family still operates the sprawling ranch where I grew up, and our ties to Abilene will never be completely severed.

Perhaps native Central Texans have a hard time understanding what drives all of us to retire here. Many of us are from rural areas and love the lifestyle.

But the main draw, perhaps, is the terrain and beautiful Central Texas landscape, including magnificent trees. It's hard for Central Texans to imagine how the wide-open spaces of West Texas can be so desolate and without greenery. A mesquite tree is hardly a substitute for a sprawling oak. A pump jack and a wind turbine do not provide the same aesthetic value.

The house we bought is in the Diamond Ridge subdivision at the corner of Diamond Ridge and Rocky Mountain Drive, which I now jokingly call "Epicenter." We like our house in a wonderful and friendly neighborhood. Before you ask... yes, we were told there was a possibility of an extension of our subdivision behind us. But, like many who buy next to a pasture zoned "agriculture, open space", we decided to gamble.

We lost. The new development started in earnest on Dec. 1. We've endured a rumbling gas truck filling up vehicles at 5:30 a.m. daily; eight to 10 vehicles parked daily in our backyard beginning at 7 a.m.; enough Caterpillars to build a small city yards from our home; the endless noise and dust, plus numerous other inconveniences.

We understand it is all in the name of economic development. No new businesses will ever be recruited to Lampasas without adequate and desirable housing. An expanded tax base is needed for city, county and school improvements.

I've worked for years enhancing economic development in Abilene, perhaps never sympathizing enough with those opponents who said "Not in my backyard" (NIMBYs, I think they are called!). I can live with all of this. Nevertheless, I look forward to back-door neighbors, a revitalized area and working to recruit new business and industries to Lampasas.

The final straw for us, however, was the complete devastation of the trees. I sat on my back porch and cried as a grove of trees surely more than a 100 years old was destroyed in 20 minutes. No regard for the beauty, the quality-of-life value, the displacement of wildlife and birds of the neighborhood.

What makes that even harder to bear is that since moving here, we bought the lot to the west of us on Rocky Mountain Drive to save the trees. We wanted to give the neighborhood children and our grandchildren a place to play and hold Scout meetings, etc. Two young neighborhood boys, Bryce and Nolan Ramon, helped us pick up after trimming trees and removed countless rocks. We hope to hold neighborhood picnics and help the neighborhood youth understand what this area looked like before yellow machinery moved in.

On a personal level, I should mention in November we planted two disease-resistant oak trees in our yard. We paid thousands of dollars for the trees and chose one because it was said to be a descendent of the Hancock Park Golf Course bur oak trees. If I had only known, I could have transplanted magnificent trees right outside my back fence.

"So, are you moving?" someone asked. The answer is simple: Of course, not! This is a wonderful community and a great place to retire. I simply wish more regard would be given to the natural beauty of the area.

Oh, and one thing I forgot to mention is that, because of the development, we have three portable toilets in our backyard! I guess you could say when your small house is overflowing with holiday guests, that is a real plus!

Celia Davis

### From the Bible

"Forever, O Lord,  
Thy word is settled in heaven.  
Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations;  
Thou didst establish the earth, and it stands."

Psalm 119:89-90

Thank you for reading the Lampasas Dispatch Record