

CAM OTTAWA CITIZEN  
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from our viewpoint...

# Progress can come in small, quiet steps

Economic success seems to be coming to Sherman County in quiet ways. Take the opening of Siram at Edson.

When the snow melts, workers will return to finish the Goodland Energy Center, and those three plants promise one of the biggest economic boosts for the county and the surrounding area. That's the big stuff, though.

Our hats off to the Sherman Economic Development Council and to Tiffani McMinn for helping a computer cartridge company, which has opened in the old Edson gym.

It was good to hear from Ben Bohannon, president of Siram, that the people he has been hiring to work at Edson have a better level of education and work ethic than those he hired when the firm was in Denver.

Siram is not a large plant, but the 10 or so jobs are a welcome boost to the county and the firm's shipping business could be a boost to the Edson post office. This company has a proven product, and appears to be a good fit for the Edson gym.

We welcome Siram. Their arrival is a sign that sometimes, things do work out for the best. Remember, it was about three years ago when Adronics/Elrob Manufacturing chose Goodland to expand its automobile antennae business. They have been a quiet addition, and a good employer in our community. That is another of the quiet successes of the Economic Development Council, even before McMinn got here.

McMinn has been busy since her arrival last year. Her enthusiasm keeps surprising people, and she has managed to accomplish some of the projects that had gone nowhere while the council had no director.

One of the projects previewed at the January council meeting was a new video promoting Sherman County and Goodland to businesses looking to relocate or expand.

McMinn helped put the script together and S&T Communications did the video. The six-minute clip on DVD is a good sample of the things Sherman County can offer a new business. It covers all the bases, and gives the viewer a good feeling about the community and the people who live here.

McMinn said she hopes the video will be shown in the lobbies of the hotels and motels in town, and any place else where people who live here or are visiting have a chance to see it.

The video is another tool used to encourage decision makers to consider Goodland and Sherman County. The more the video is seen and the more people learn about the benefits of working and living in Sherman County, the better the chance more businesses will move here.

The council deserves a compliment for hiring McMinn and giving her a good set of goals to get things rolling. We know the members will find more things to keep her busy, and her continued success will reflect well on the city and county.

The snow and moisture this winter may be the answer to the farmer's prayers, signaling an end to the drought. It would be great for all of us if that is true, and if the economic progress that is beginning to bloom can take hold and be the beginning of a real boom. — Tom Betz

BOY, BILL GATES AND MICROSOFT ARE SO INNOVATIVE! THE NEW VISTA INTERFACE ON THAT COMPUTER IS GORGEOUS!



## Obama's first blunder

Presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) made his first misstep a few weeks ago when he joined only a handful of Democrats in opposing a Senate reform banning the increasingly widespread practice of legislators hiring their family members on their campaign or PAC payrolls. Obama has not heard the last of this vote. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), who opposes wives cashing in on their husbands' positions, voted righteously in favor of the reform and will probably use the Illinois senator's vote against him in the presidential primaries.

When a legislator hires his or her spouse on the campaign or PAC payroll, he is effectively converting contributions to his campaign committee into personal income that flows into the family's checking account, blurring the line between contribution and bribe.

In the past, senators and House members routinely hired their spouses and other family members on their public payrolls. In the early 1940s, for example, Harry S. Truman hired his wife, Bess, to work on his Senate staff. She got \$2,500 a year in salary at a time when senators themselves only earned \$8,500. But nepotism on the public payroll is now banned. So inventive congressmen and senators have filled the void by hiring family on their campaign or PAC payrolls.

Hiring family members and paying them with campaign donations is, if anything, more pernicious than doing so with public funds.



**dick morris**

• commentary

Where tax money is involved, the sin is against the taxpayer for wasting his funds. But where campaign contributions are involved, the congressman is profiting personally from the largesse of special interest donors. In plain English, that's a payoff.

There is, of course, a certain hypocrisy in the Senate action since very few senators, in fact, hire their families on their payrolls. It is, though, widely practiced in the House of Representatives, where 30 members have their families on their payrolls. But senators are much less likely to do so. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who voted "present" on the reform, hired her son, Douglas, a lobbyist, to manage her PAC, paying him \$130,000 over a four-year period. Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, then a Democrat, hired his son, Matthew, for \$34,000 and his daughter, Rebecca, for \$36,000 to work on his 2004 presidential campaign.

So the congressional ethics reform of 2007 boils down to this: The House banned the use of corporate jets but the Senate did not, even though senators are more likely to avail themselves of the luxury than is the average House member. The Senate banned hiring family

members but the House did not, even though House members are far more likely to hire their significant others to work for them.

Obama's inexplicable pro-nepotism vote may have been cast in sympathy with Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.), whose hiring of his wife, Sandi, to work on his campaign prompted an FEC ruling allowing the practice. Jackson might be afraid that the Senate action will catalyze a similar reform in the House, which could cut way back on his disposable family income.

But whatever the reason for his vote, Obama has screwed up. The public will not take kindly to a senator who pledged to clean up the political process voting to allow wives to be hired with special-interest campaign funds.

The FEC required, in allowing the practice, that the contract for the services of the family member contain the language customarily used between campaign committees and consultants. The FEC also ruled that any payment to a family member in excess of the fair market value of the services would be considered to be a "personal use of campaign funds."

But, as usual, the FEC has missed the point. Any payment from campaign money to a spouse is, in fact, an appropriation of campaign funds by the member of Congress for his own personal use, however camouflaged or disguised. The Senate was right to ban the practice and the House should follow suit.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years.

## The world of wrongevity

George Bush is as wrong as Wyoming sushi. And he seems stubbornly determined to continue to be wrong in a no brakes in a tank, down a hill, headed for a boy scout camp before the break of dawn sort of way.

He was wrong about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. He was wrong about Iraq's ties to Al Qaeda. He was wrong when he told the U.N. a mobile weather van was a chemical lab on wheels. He was wrong to call an invasion of a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 part of his war on terrorism. He was wrong to squander our national goodwill on a neo-con ideological misadventure. He was wrong about us being greeted with flowers and candy, unless by flowers and candy he meant suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices. He was wrong about how long it would take, how much it would cost, how many troops would be needed, the kind of armor required and eating a pretzel without dunking it in beer first.

Firing the Iraqi Army and allowing the looting of an ancient civilization's artifacts while protecting the Oil Ministry... ill-advised. "Mission Accomplished"? Misguided. "Bring it on"? Wrong-o, exponential factor 13. When Omar Bradley talked about fighting the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy, he was predicting Bush. Expecting a democracy to spring up from soil drenched with the blood of ancient sectarian hatreds... critical goof. "The insurgency in its



**will durst**

• raging moderate

last throes." Erroneous. The rest of the world supporting us. Inaccurate. Creating more terrorists than he's killing. Iniquitous. Which means wicked wrong.

Counting on Iraqi President Al-Maliki to exhibit the will to succeed — delusional. "They hate us for our freedoms." Nope, sorry, that's counterfactual: they hate us for our guns and our bombs and the fact we act like our God hid our oil under their sand. Declaring anybody who disagreed with him is working for the enemy — not right. He was mistaken about Iraq falling into sectarian strife, then denying it's a civil war and we are actually winning, ooh, buddy, that's so, what do you call it, imprecise. The only thing he's gotten right is being born a Bush and declining to hunt with Cheney.

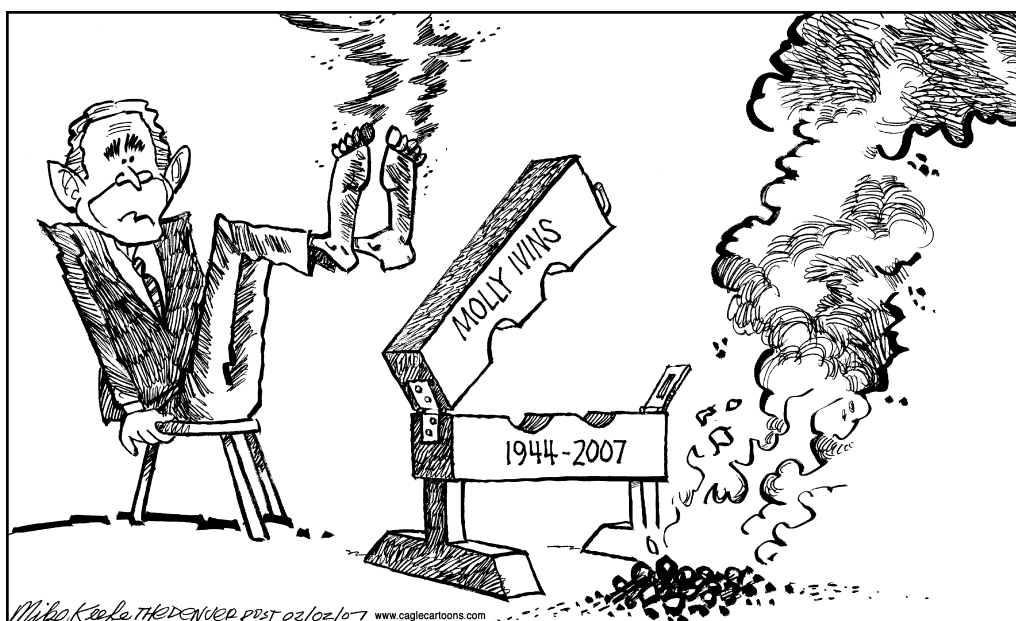
He was dead wrong when he okayed torture, stupid wrong spying on Americans, and just plain wrong declaring wartime gave him spe-

cial powers unless he's been bitten by a radioactive spider and hasn't exhibited any detectable symptoms yet. He was wrong with "stay the course" and more wrong when he argued he was never a big fan of "stay the course." He was disingenuous to ignore the November 7th wake up call that could have rolled Pete Townsend right out of bed. And incorrect to reject the suggestions of the Iraq Study Group so completely you wonder if he even read them or had anybody read them to him with his chin under the covers.

But now he speaks to the nation to announce his next plan — The New Way Forward — which involves sending more troops. Are you kidding me? That's how he gets out of a hole? More shovels? Some therapists maintain the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result. Describing exactly what we can expect for the next two years living in the president's wild and wacky not-so-wonderful world of wrongevity.

Comic, writer, actor, former radio talk show host and busboy at the Bright Angel Lodge, Will Durst, is pretty darn sure 837 wrongs don't make a right.

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