



Written by on March 3, 2010

## Oklahoma Offensive: Restoring Good Govt

The price of freedom is... If you know the ending of the above phrase, and you know that it means more than watching the nightly news or voting once every four years, you might be from Oklahoma. What in the Sooner State is going on? You should be mighty encouraged about some recent victories there in the cause of freedom.

Three organizations have made great headway by working to bring responsible government back to Oklahoma. Oklahoma Conservative Political Action Committee (OCPAC), Oklahomans for Sovereignty and Free Enterprise (OK-SAFE), and Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ are indeed making the influence of regular Oklahomans felt in the State House.



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### Accomplishments

The effects in state government have been remarkable. Positive changes heavily influenced, if not caused, by these organizations have made many Oklahomans sit up and take notice. People in other states are noticing as well. Evidence of core values is showing up again in campaigns and in the offices of state government, and it is typically a more conservative individual who is an office holder. In the past three years, these groups have influenced the expansion of pro-life legislation in Oklahoma. In the past two, they've easily killed all attempts to control home schooling or further restrict rights to own or use firearms. There's a better quality lawmaker in the state. Better quality lawmakers like Randy Brogdon, State Senator and gubernatorial candidate; State Representatives Mike Ritze and Charles Key; and Senators Anthony Sykes and Bill Brown, just to name a few.

What have these conservative lawmakers done? The most remarkable accomplishment has been to stop enabling legislation for the NAFTA Superhighway. While it *seems* the No-Build decision in Texas has KO'd the road that would have run north and south from deep-water ports in Mexico throughout the United States and Canada, remember Charlie Brown's yearly battle with Lucy and the football. If Texas proceeds with the highway at a future date, Oklahoma is ready, and the road can't cross the Red River (the river forms a boundary between Texas and Oklahoma)! Last year, after 15 years of trying, Oklahoma was also able to *rescind* all previous calls for a constitutional convention (a constitutional convention would possess the power to rewrite our Constitution, regardless of the stated purpose for calling the convention in the first place)! Legislation was also passed to allow voting on a constitutional amendment establishing English as the language of Oklahoma, and tax cuts have been implemented.

But it doesn't end there. Two years ago, the state passed what were considered the toughest laws on illegal immigrants of any state in the Union. HB 1804, among other things, made it more difficult for illegal immigrants to work and receive services in Oklahoma, and made it easier for law enforcement to



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partner with ICE in deporting them. Currently, the law has passed, but parts of it are still unenforceable, tied up in lawsuits. The Sheriff of Tulsa County has cross-trained 30 deputies to work with ICE, and has now caught and deported 5,000 illegal immigrants. Charlie Meadows, chairman and founding member of OCPAC, thinks the number of these workers has stopped growing and stabilized in the state, but in Tulsa County, it has dropped!

### **Let's Do Lunch**

How did they do it? Meadows, activist of the first degree, explained how the groups got started. "OCPAC began very spontaneously. The oldest of the three, OCPAC, began in 1991, as just a meeting of two men, me and one other, and has met every Wednesday but one for over 19 years. That was the year Christmas fell on a Wednesday! As others joined us, the group grew, essentially becoming a debating society. We began to develop a solid ideology and became more than could meet around one table, and then we moved toward a speaker format. We closed out 2009 with 217 dues-paying members and over 3,000 on the e-mail list."

Meadows continued, "The lunch group observed that there was a handful of true conservatives in the state house, and thought if we could get a few more over the next two election cycles, we could gain a conservative majority in the Republican caucus. Candidates had begun to show an interest in speaking to the group, and that provided the impetus to do more, so in 1999, I proposed organizing in the form of a PAC. We hoped to gain ground in the House, but didn't have much hope for the Senate. OCPAC formed from the lunch group with an agenda, and for this purpose — to promote and support constitutionalists in the state legislature who oppose expansive government, while at the same time promoting liberty, free-market economics, and Judeo-Christian standards. About five years ago, following the regular OCPAC meeting, several joined in an additional meeting to form OK-SAFE; OCPAC raises the funds and contributes to the candidates, OK-SAFE's function is as an educational lobbying group. OCPAC is a member of OK-SAFE." Meadows has been a member of the John Birch Society since 1988, crediting the JBS as a major part of his understanding of history and the role of government.

Oklahoman and business owner Clark Curry had joined the Wednesday lunch bunch, and became an active member. He believes that no other PAC has been able to accomplish what OCPAC has — to help hold state legislators accountable to their constitutional oaths. "There are think tanks and resources, but they don't do what OCPAC does — support candidates!" Curry, a member of the National Council of the John Birch Society, adds, "The Birch Society is available for national and international issues, and OCPAC makes it happen in Oklahoma." For the first time in 100 years, this legislative session, Republicans gained control of the Oklahoma Senate, where committee chairs are very powerful.

In the past five election cycles, OCPAC interviewed 140-150 Republican candidates for office, and of those, they found that 15-20 had a well-developed conservative ideology before they came, another 15-20 had a halfway developed conservative ideology, and the rest didn't have a clue what conservatism means, or why they were even Republican. Of the 20-40 who had *any* conservative ideology, maybe half have been elected. It doesn't take a lot! Those few influence the finger-wetters, or even those who don't have anything on the ball.

Meadows remembers gubernatorial candidate Randy Brogdon's successful candidacy for the state Senate: "Randy came in halfway developed, read *The Law*, then said to his wife, Donna, 'We should govern by this book, and if we did, we'd have an entirely different government!' He's a hungry learner, and a reader, and has developed into a real leader." Political minorities can be powerful.



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Here's how it works. The interview process starts with an invitation sent to Republican candidates (OCPAC by-laws allow support of only Republicans) [along with a survey](#). In a general election race, every Republican is invited. Each is assigned a day to come and deliver a four-minute speech. Based on the speeches and how they answer the surveys, they undergo "the inquisition"! Each is asked questions about how he answered the survey questions. Meadows says, "The group never lost its debating society flavor!" So, the questions relating to a candidate's understanding of the function of government, his position on the abortion and Second Amendment questions, his understanding of capitalism, the Tenth Amendment, and local control are critical as to whether or not he receives OCPAC's financial support. OCPAC's reputation is tough but not mean, as the 10 questions are intended to identify a candidate's level of understanding and core values, and to observe passion and speaking skills. The group tries to then provide an "incentive to govern well."

### **Big Bang for the Bucks**

What in the world is that? Initially, contributions were made only to non-incumbent state legislative races, but later included what they call the "conservative incumbent protection fund," OCPAC's incentive program to support sitting lawmakers who govern well. Each must do well on the "Oklahoma Constitution Conservative Index." If they score high on the index in the two most recent years, they are awarded campaign contributions for their reelection efforts. The Conservative Index was started in 1974 by then-Oklahoman Bill Cherry to monitor the votes of legislators and use the results to measure their levels of conservatism. The index records every vote by every lawmaker on every issue, compiles the results, and then publishes them. When Cherry left Oklahoma in 1979, the project was accepted by the *Oklahoma Constitution* newspaper, and has proved a powerful accountability tool. Candidates can, and are, reminded of their votes on given issues. The incentive for a candidate in all this is to adhere to conservative ideals or the tenets of OCPAC's mission statement.

The beauty of OCPAC is in consistency. The meeting is every Wednesday, and relevance of speakers or topics is critical. Why does it work? Once a regular routine is established, and maintained, you don't have to have a lot of people. Curry adds, "It's nice we're in the capital city and legislators are available. The meeting is two miles from the capitol. It's always interesting — we have opposing views sometimes — but the group maintains its strict constitutional principles. This is work — putting in the time. I don't know if it could be replicated in other states unless there are people who want to make it happen, but Charlie Meadows' leadership and faithfulness is a large reason for OCPAC's success, and George Wallace is instrumental in a strong OK-SAFE. Debating societies accomplish nothing, so it was a monumental change when the group voted to become a PAC. In Oklahoma a PAC can support candidates. In politics, influence makes a difference. OCPAC is an all-volunteer organization, so there are no expenses — 98 percent of funds (from dues and donations) go to candidates. It's simple!"

In 2005, not long after OK-SAFE formed, Meadows threw his own hat into the congressional ring. Twenty-one days later he withdrew, but not before meeting Pastor Paul Blair, former Chicago Bears offensive tackle, and they became friends. During a subsequent breakfast meeting, they decided to establish Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ — an organization designed to reach pastors and Christians battling the culture war. Curry says, "Paul Blair has been an asset to the work we do. He'd really been burdened about our nation's Godly heritage. Recently, local John Birch Society members drove to Haskell County, Oklahoma, to more than 90 percent of the churches there because of an issue regarding a monument of the Ten Commandments on the county courthouse grounds. Members delivered a letter regarding JBS's *Overview of America*, and a DVD supplied by Blair through



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Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ. OCPAC had voted to present a commendation plaque to Haskell County Commissioners encouraging them regarding their stand on the monument. The reason for the DVDs was to encourage church members in their stand. The lawsuit is on appeal, so for now the monument stands, even though the court says it comes down. Paul's influence has been good for the JBS in the Oklahoma City area. He's really opened the doors in reaching pastors. With his leadership many pastors are standing up for what's right in America. He's saying, 'I'm tired of backing up — we're not backing up any further. We're drawing the line.'" Along with Blair and Curry, OK-SAFE president and JBS member George Wallace worked to organize Clouds Over America, an effort cosponsored by Oklahoma chapters of the John Birch Society and by Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ to educate pastors. (Clouds Over America 2 was held January 22-23 with over 40 pastors in attendance, one traveling to Oklahoma from as far away as Wyoming.)

### **Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way**

To keep all this going requires persistence and a commitment to the agenda. OCPAC has grown every year. The first election cycle raised \$4,000 and made four \$1,000 contributions to candidates. Three of those candidates won. In 2008, \$33,000 was raised. Over the years, a little over \$100,000 has gone to 72 different candidates; 36 of them have been elected to the legislature. OCPAC does the contributing, OK-SAFE does the educating. When Randy Brogdon got elected, he became the moral conscience of the state Senate and was so powerful at persuading colleagues toward conservatism that the Senate became as, if not more, conservative than the House.

Meadows has this advice for serious activists, "Read the book *1776* [Pulitzer Winner] by David McCullough. In history, it's a miracle that the colonists prevailed. What they did and what we must take from their experience is that you must rely on God and stay at it and *not give up*. This book encourages serious activism. Next, understand the signers of the Declaration of Independence were not agrarian reformers, Marxists, or rabble-rousers, and had nothing to gain financially by signing. They were the wealthiest, most powerful men in the colonies, and they pledged everything. Most lost their fortunes, some their lives and the lives of their families, but they lived by their sacred honor as they gained their objective and that was liberty. It is that spirit that is needed to restore this nation. Keep this thought in front of you in this battle."

Curry adds, "It's taken us years to get in this mess, it'll take us years to get out. We've worked hard, but the changes must be gradual. We can't do it immediately. Larry McDonald's [late Representative of Georgia's Seventh District, and then-chairman of the JBS] encouragement was to repeal unconstitutional items *in the reverse order that they were created*, which allows for the least amount of disruption, but you must first understand the Constitution. This is the part that OCPAC plays — it has supported a core group, not even a majority, of elected officials, with a rating system in place to evaluate their performance and incentivize them to adhere to it. We've capitalized on it. The toughest nut to crack, though, is dollars. They call it economic development, but it's really redistribution of wealth. The real battle is against unconstitutional expenditures."

There is recent encouragement with over 35 groups (OCPAC, OK-SAFE, Oklahoma JBS, Tea Party, 9.12, End the Fed, etc.) joining forces to promote limited, constitutional government in Oklahoma via the new Oklahoma Constitutional Alliance. At the heart of many of these organizations are well-educated, activist Birchers. JBS Coordinator Mitchell Shaw says, "Oklahoma is the state to follow. And it is *all* being done by volunteers!" Ultimately, the perspectives of the JBS on history, events, and the forces that direct the course of this nation are invaluable. The JBS is different in its understanding of the



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conspiratorial view of history and without it one will always have an incomplete understanding of what is influencing America. Curry, Wallace, Meadows, and Blair all agree that it has strategy and capabilities others lack.

That eternal vigilance is paying off.

— Photo by Erin McGregor — Activists (from the left): Charlie Meadows, George Wallace, State Senator Randy Brogdon, and Clark Curry



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