



# Greater Houston Pachyderm Club



Newsletter

P O Box 22531 Houston Texas 77227-2531

March 2006

AFFILIATED WITH THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

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**Pachyderm Luncheons Every Tuesday**  
**Double Tree Guest Suites**  
**5353 Westheimer (two blocks west of the Galleria)**  
**Noon-1:15 PM \$14.00 per person No Reservations Required**  
**Parking \$1.00**

## Speakers

### March 7<sup>th</sup> 2006

**NO MEETING!** Primary Elections for State and Local Offices, Republicans vote on four "sense of the people" (non binding) resolutions:

- Voter ID: Should photo identification be required to vote?
- Private Property Protection: Should private property be protected from being taken for economic gain?
- Spending Cap: Should government bodies be required to restrict spending increases to the growth of population plus inflation?
- Appraisal Cap: Should the cap on property appraised value increases be changed from 10% to 5%.

### March 14<sup>th</sup> 2006



Speaker Kim Ogg is the executive director of Crime Stoppers of Houston. She is a former chief felony prosecutor with the Harris County District Attorney's Office and past director of the Mayor's Gang Task Force in Houston. Ogg is the author of "Texas Gangs: the Legal Handbook," available through the Texas District & County Attorney's Association at (512)474-2436.

### March 21<sup>st</sup> 2006



Speaker Fred Zeidman is currently serving as Chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. He is Chairman of Corporate Strategies Inc. in Houston. Previously he was a Director of Governmental Affairs in Greenberg Traurig's Washington, D.C. office. Prior to joining Greenberg Traurig, Fred served as Managing Partner of WoodRock & Company. He has served as a prominent business leader for a number of companies, including his time as Chief Executive officer of InterSystems, Inc., an ASE listed industrial service company. As an active participant in community, political, and non-profit organizations, Fred was appointed by President Bush in 2002 and He received an MBA from New York University, and is a graduate of Washington University.

**March 28<sup>th</sup> 2006**



J.P. Bryan, Texas Historian, Texas Historical Foundation  
CEO Torch Energy Advisors

Texas has a rich legacy of history, including how and when we gained our independence to become a state, as well as the men and woman who wove a tapestry of faith and commitment to serve.

J.P. Bryan is widely recognized for his colorful descriptions of Texas history. He will vividly relate the variety of characters that helped in the battle of San Jacinto. Mr. Bryan has written many articles and

given speeches pertaining to Texas history. Even though Texas is populated by many from across the country, all will attest to the fact that the history of Texas is magnificent!

## ***President's Message***

Vice President Cheney was recently involved in a tragic hunting accident. The real story was the feeding frenzy of the left-leaning press justified by the notion of the "people's right to know." One reporter even asked the White House press spokesman the very probing question, "Scott, would this have been more serious if Mr. Whittington had died?" Apparently, under the theory of immediate press entitlement, information being provided to these "professionals" should take precedence over medical treatment, concern for a friend or cooperation with the investigation by the local authorities.

I'd like to tell you a story in which I was involved about the press and the dedication of individual reporters to their craft. You decide if the reporter acted responsibly and in line with the best interests of "the people."

Remember the stand-off at the Branch Davidian compound outside of Waco? Remember when Attorney General Reno finally decided to storm the place and enforce the law how it seemed as if the Davidians knew they were coming? And that because of this fact, several law enforcement officers lost their lives or were seriously wounded? Here is a part of the story.

There was testimony that a reporter knew a woman who worked for a major ambulance company in Waco. When the ATF notified the service, with which they had a contract, that there should be several ambulances standing by on a certain date in a staging area near the compound, she told her acquaintance, the reporter. He began to investigate in order to fulfill his dedication to the "people's right to know." A cameraman working on the story with him tried to find the compound but couldn't. When a rural mail carrier (you know - the type with a magnetic "U.S. Mail" sign on their own vehicle) stopped and asked him if he could help him since he looked lost, the reporter told him that he needed to find the compound since he was investigating a "big story" and that the ATF was about to raid the compound. You guessed it, the mail carrier wasn't a mail carrier but a Branch Davidian with a magnetic "U.S. Mail" sign so he could patrol the area without raising people's suspicion. Of course, the Davidians were then warned and officers were terribly injured and killed.

The media employer of the reporter was, of course, very sorry, but the public has a right know after all. When it was sued by the families of the dead officers, the media outlet asked its insurance carrier to defend it and pay any judgment. I do insurance coverage work for insurance companies. Insurance only covers "accidents." You get the picture. I am also a former prosecutor. I felt like everyone involved should have been prosecuted. But, you know after all, the "people have a right to know."

Fairness, balance and dedication to the truth as well as the larger notion of responsibility seems far removed from most of the press these days. Arrogance and an agenda for personal political beliefs and a superior attitude seem to have taken their place in much of the press corps. A free society is only possible when people are informed. But a dedication to sensationalism and self-promotion in the press does nothing to advance freedom or knowledge. Just look at Dick Cheney's hunting trip.

***Bob Shults***

## Welcome New Members

John T. Cato    Mark Ellis    Mike Holsey  
Lynn Bradshaw-Hull  
Ann McCulloch    Allyson Nixon  
Lea Pipitone    Paul Pipitone  
Judge Reece Rondon  
Charles A. Rosenthal    Frank Rynd  
Mary Sergesketter  
Kevin Taylor    Steve Waas    Douglas Warne

### **What ever happened to the Swift Boat Veterans – Ask their Lawyers!**

You remember the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, former members of the Swift Boat organization in which John Kerry served during his somewhat abbreviated Vietnam tour of duty (four months). Unwilling to allow a person they considered “unfit for command” to be elected to the nation’s highest office and named Commander in Chief of the armed forces he had denigrated during and after the Vietnam war, they turned a blinding light on the lack of leadership and personal integrity that characterized Kerry’s tour of duty. In a large measure, some credit this organization with turning the tide against a Democrat triumph in the 2004 elections.

Although the Swift Boat Veterans have faded from the news, no good deed goes unpunished. Since shortly before the 2004 elections and continuing through December 2005, members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) who supported Kerry have filed lawsuits targeting Carlton Sherwood, producer of “Stolen Honor,” the film that addressed Kerry’s anti war activities and their impact on POW’s in North Vietnamese detention, and Vietnam Veterans’ Legacy Foundation (VVLFF), the successor organization to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. One lawsuit by VVAW member Kenneth Campbell attempted to block the film on the basis that his appearance in the film (in a few seconds of file footage of the Winter Soldier “hearings” in Detroit) and implications that he lied about personally committing or witnessing war crimes were defamatory. Apparently, he is seeking vindication in court that he didn’t lie and actually did commit war crimes!

Late last year, a second former member of the VVAW, Jon Bjornson, brought a similar lawsuit, although he was not mentioned in “Stolen Honor.” In his effort to counter the implication that he was a “fraud and a liar” who made up stories of atrocities committed by US soldiers in Vietnam, he has included in his suit the VVLFF (which did not exist at the time Stolen Honor was filmed), which has on its board four decorated veterans, each of whom served more than five years as POW’s in North Vietnamese prisons. Apparently suing POW’s is a winning legal strategy for a veteran against the war.

The VVLFF has filed a countersuit against John Kerry and others relating to the suppression of “Stolen Honor.” Kerry spokesman David Wade told the Washington Post, “This is simply more of the same smears and sleaze against a decorated Vietnam Veteran [John Kerry, in case that is not clear] from more of the same serial liars who disgraced themselves in 2004 [Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, in case that is not clear].”

The Vietnam Veterans Legacy Foundation is an organization created to better educate and inform the public about the Vietnam War, its events, its history, and the men and women who sacrificed to serve their country. You can read about VVLFF at [www.vvlf.org](http://www.vvlf.org), which has links to all the relevant legal documents and a place to make a donation, if you are so inclined. Defending ones honor can be an expensive proposition.

**Jim Heimer**

## **“The TTRC Initial Meeting ” by Robert Stevenson, CPA**

Governor Perry appointed the Texas Tax Reform Commission last November to come up with a revenue model for the state that is fair, broad based, modern, understandable, and competitive. They are going to lower property taxes and replace those revenues with other taxes so as to comply with the recent Texas Supreme Court ruling that school property taxes are an unconstitutional state property tax.

Every pachyderm understands that this action was taken because our lieutenant governor trusted the democrats in the senate to do the right thing. In one regular and two special sessions of the 79<sup>th</sup>, they used the rosebush bill to stop any meaningful legislation that would fund public education, reform public education, and most definitely cap appraisal growth.

The governor has had enough with senate democrats, the lieutenant governor, and the rosebush bill, so here we are with a bipartisan tax reform commission chaired by democrat John Sharp. Let’s hope they come up with a recommendation for the legislature well before June 1, 2006. Let’s look at what this commission is dealing with.

According to James LeBas, a commission staff member and a former revenue estimator for the state comptroller, Texas relies more on local taxation than most states to finance government and education. Of the 50 states, Texas ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in local taxation and 49<sup>th</sup> in state taxation. This ratio of state to local taxes is just the opposite of the ratio in most states. Other important facts reported at the commission’s inaugural meeting were:

The Texas tax system consists primarily of taxes on lifestyle. The more expensive your home, car and possessions, the more state and local taxes you pay.

Texas businesses pay an average \$1,658 per employee for public education, but the price per employee varies substantially by industry, with the oil and gas industry paying approximately \$11,000 per employee and the service industry paying about \$400 per employee.

The service sector provides most of the state’s job growth, but pays the least in state taxes.

Texas business taxation has no unifying theme, but business pays very high property taxes, substantial sales taxes, excise taxes, severance taxes, and some of them even pay franchise taxes.

Chairman Sharp pointed out that only one in 16 companies pay franchise taxes in Texas. Newspapers have repeatedly reported that the number is one in six, but that evidently is the number of companies that file a franchise tax return, not the number that actually pay the tax.

The tax system in Texas does not reflect our economy and property tax does not tax most of the growth in our economy. The state taxes capital intensive businesses higher than most states and service businesses less. This discourages capital investment in Texas and does not allow state revenues to benefit from our growing economy. Although sales taxes do increase when the economy grows, with most of the growth in untaxed services, the state’s revenue growth lags economic growth. Texas taxation is still based on an industrial revolution model that is outdated and if not changed Texas will become less competitive with other states over time.

The Texas population has grown faster than almost any other state and projections call for that to continue for the foreseeable future. But with the high population growth Texas has seen declines in per capita income and per capita spending on essential services such as public education, CHIPs, medicaid, and law enforcement. The more we grow, the less the current tax system provides adequate state revenues to meet state needs. Based on current conditions, Texas will have a less educated workforce and lower average household incomes in the future.

The legislature has been given a June 1 deadline to revise the state’s school funding system, so John Sharp and his fellow commissioners are under some time pressure to complete their job. The governor will then call a special session of the legislature and he will want his report from the Tax Reform Commission before the session. The commission is now holding public hearings across the state seeking input from all Texans. I have been told they will be in Houston in late February or early March and that will be their last stop. I plan on being there and I’ll let you know what happens.

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