

Worst of times . . . and the best



POWER UP!

Stuart Solomon and Kathy Taylor: With heartfelt appreciation to our entire community, you have our very best wishes for a safe and happy 2008!



READERS FORUM

By **STUART SOLOMON AND KATHY TAYLOR**

This community will long remember 2007.

It was a year when residents in Tulsa and surrounding communities experienced the worst ice storm in our state's history. The devastating storm presented enormous challenges for our community and our citizens. At the storm's peak, AEP-PSO had 226,000 homes and businesses without service in Tulsa — more than 75 percent of the company's Tulsa-area customers.

The ice downed thousands of power lines and the Tulsa urban forest was severely damaged in many locations. More than 5,000 restoration workers from across the United States came to help our city "Power Up." They have our profound gratitude for their assistance during this crisis.

Despite the devastation of the ice storm, what we will remember most about 2007 is how Tulsans came together and rose to meet the enormous challenges of getting our community back on its feet. Many in our community provided tremendous leadership throughout the event. We worked together to create and



STEPHEN HOLMAN / Tulsa World file

A utility crew works on a snapped power line in Tulsa on Dec. 11.

implement Operation Power Up! This innovative first in the country program helped Tulsans get needed repairs to their homes so that their power could be restored.

The list of political and civic leaders, government entities, social organizations and businesses that pulled together to overcome

the challenges of the storm is enormous. AEP-PSO and city employees worked side by side with private contractors and utility workers from across the United States to get the job done. Tulsa County Commissioners and employees, EMSA, the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the Community Service Council,

state Emergency Management, Gov. Brad Henry and many others provided invaluable leadership and help.

Also, a well-deserved thanks goes to Tulsa media outlets that worked diligently to get critical information to citizens.

All across our area, neighbors reached out to help each other.

This response has once again proven Tulsa's generous spirit and can-do attitude.

With heartfelt appreciation to our entire community, you have our very best wishes for a safe and happy 2008!

Stuart Solomon is president of AEP-PSO. Kathy Taylor is mayor of Tulsa.

Hate crimes legislation valuable

By **NATHANIEL BATCHELDER**

Clarification is needed to explain why hate crimes deserve special prosecution when some would argue that a crime is a crime, so why give special treatment to some groups.

All violent crimes are heinous but hate crimes are different. They target not only an individual but the entire population the individual represents. Hate crimes send a message to a population that it is in danger of similar acts of violence and hate.

Hate-crime laws emerged out of America's outrage at the actions of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and others whose pleasure was to terrorize people they found unacceptable.

Our American sense of fairness is assaulted when someone of a particular religion or race is a target of hate violence simply because of who he or she is. Hate crime legislation communicates to the haters that society does not tolerate this behavior. Most Americans support national and state laws calling



A MESSAGE

Nathaniel Batchelder: Waking up to the injustice of hate violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people, responsible citizens petition to have sexual orientation added to existing hate crime laws.

READERS FORUM

for prosecution of hate crimes.

It is a misunderstanding that such laws give special justice to certain groups. Many will recall the race riots in south central Los Angeles years ago and the appalling image on live TV of a white truck driver pulled from his vehicle and hit in the head with a chunk of concrete by a black man. Few will remember

that the attacker was prosecuted under California's hate-crimes law for his violence against the white driver. The language "on account of race" protects people of all races, just as "on account of religion" protects people of all religions.

Others ask how can we possibly interpret the perpetrator's motivation? That issue is addressed every day in murder cases when prosecutors ask juries to determine whether a death was manslaughter or rises to the intention of first-degree or second-degree murder. The prosecution and sentence hinge on decisions about motivation.

Most hate crimes involve beatings or other acts of violence short of murder. A fistfight in a bar may be a crime but not a hate crime. Beating up someone because of race and writing racial epithets on their unconscious body would be a hate crime.

Violence against homosexuals has its own name as a sport called gay bashing. Police

and prosecutors have, until recently, largely ignored violence against homosexuals. Indeed, historically, the police themselves have participated in violent raids on gay clubs to harass and intimidate gays.

Waking up to the injustice of hate violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people, responsible citizens petition to have sexual orientation added to existing hate crime laws. Some 80 percent of Americans support adding sexual orientation to laws on the books.

Today's opposition to hate-crime laws is new, appearing to be a tactic to avoid including language protecting people "regardless of sexual orientation." Let the opponents be reminded that this language would also protect heterosexuals from marauding gangs of violent homosexuals.

Nathaniel Batchelder is director of The Peace House in Oklahoma City. He may be contacted at www.PeaceHouseOK.org.

Perspective on global warming

By **RICHARD WADDELL**

Critics increasingly refer to the "global warming cult." Compare this conflict with a historic controversy that began with Copernicus in the 1500s. At that time astronomers could predict the relative movement of planets based on past observations. Copernicus offered a predictive model based on the heretical idea that the Earth and planets move in orbits around the sun. Scientists who accepted the heliocentric predictive model were severely ridiculed and were likely labeled with something equivalent to "heliocentric cult."

If critics had tried they could probably have found 400 scientists to sign a petition dismissing the heliocentric cult. This is the number of names U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe gathered dismissing the global warming concept. The senator describes the signers as being scientists but quite a few are economists. Economics is sometimes described as being the "dismal science," but that hardly qualifies the signers to pass judgment on the predictive models used to evaluate global warming. Other signers were meteorologists and other scientists but we have no way of knowing which of these signers understands the global warming models. Not even all me-



WARNING

Richard Waddell: Most of us can see a significant danger — global warming — looming on our horizon.

READERS FORUM

eteorologists have the requisite mathematical skills.

Anyway, taking a vote isn't the best way to establish scientific truth. The more traditional method is for a researcher to write a paper describing his studies. After publication, the author's peers will typically offer criticism and possibly even praise.

Critics complain that the global warming cult won't debate the issue. Galileo tried to debate the heliocentric theory with laymen and look where that got him — placed under house arrest. Critics should realize the debate among climate scientists is ongoing. Some of the critical 400 should join the ongoing debate, tell their colleagues how the predictive models are deficient and offer suggested changes. Better yet, develop their own predic-

tive model and publish the methods and results.

Some detractors, such as William Gray of Colorado State University, don't believe accurate mathematical modeling of climate change is possible. Lay people who know it is not possible to make accurate weather predictions a week or more in advance, tend to agree. However, the climate models used to predict global warming don't have the same purposes as weather forecasts. Weather forecasts typically predict temperatures, pressures, humidity values and precipitation at specific locations. Climate models, on the other hand, predict average values over large areas.

Running the simulation model over a previous time period and matching predictions with observations is a reliable way to validate such models. Current climate models don't agree with each other to the final degree in predicted temperatures, but they all indicate a warming trend. We can see the validating observations with melting of glaciers, melting of polar ice and record-breaking temperatures.

As a lay person, I accept the notion that global warming is a serious problem and that human activity probably contributes to the problem. I take this position based on climate model predictions and



JOHN MCCONNICO / Associated Press file

Scientists say global warming is thinning the icebergs of Greenland.

statements issued by the American Meteorological Society, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other organizations.

Inhofe and other politicians need to take seriously the threat of global warming. We generally do not elect politicians for their scientific knowledge; we elect them to make sound decisions.

Consider the allegorical decision I face if I drive to the golf course and become aware of an intense electrical storm on the horizon. Suppose also I am with a competent meteorologist who tells me that if I play the 18 holes, the probability of my being struck by lightning is about one in six, the odds

for Russian roulette. If I don't have enough common sense to stay in my car, I need professional help.

Most of us can see a significant danger — global warming — looming on our horizon. Most qualified researchers put the odds for serious damage to our planet at well over one in six, and politicians need to take this threat seriously.

We need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we put into the atmosphere. If we could do this we would — at the same time — reduce our dependence on foreign oil giving ourselves a win-win solution.

Richard Waddell is a retired engineer and operations research analyst.