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A few facts about Rick Perry's Texas

By Ryan C. Ebersole



Perhaps inevitability due to overall GOP discontent with their crop of presidential candidates, Texas Gov. Rick Perry has thrown his Stetson into the ring. Perry enjoys popularity among the American Right, who often cite his record as Texas governor as the way forward. However, a closer examination of Texas under Rick Perry ought to give any American a shudder.

Perry and his supporters like to tout his record of job creation in Texas. Granted, 38% of American jobs created since 2009 have been in Texas, but that hardly tells the whole story. In fact, unemployment under Rick Perry has actually increased from 4.3 percent in 2007 to 8.3 percent in 2011. This is due to the fact that, while Texas has created some jobs, it has failed to keep up with its own population growth. It is behind 25 states in terms of unemployment.

Additionally, a good chunk of the jobs that Perry touts are very low-paying jobs. In fact, 10 percent of all workers in the state are paid at or below the state's minimum wage. This statistic ties Texas with Mississippi as the states with the highest percentage of workers at the minimum wage level. The number of minimum wage jobs in Texas has jumped 150 percent since 2007.

Texas also lags behind in wage increases. Between 2007 and 2011, the average wage per work-

er has increased 5 percent in the United States, 9.3 percent in California, and 2.5 percent in New York. In Texas, the average wage per worker increased a paltry .06 percent.

Perry likes to use his condemnations of the federal government's debt and spending as applause lines. However his track record on Texas's debt tells a different story. Texas's public debt increased from \$98 billion in 2001 to \$216 billion in 2011, and the solidly Republican state's debt has actually increased faster than the U.S. national debt in the same period. Currently, Texas is looking at a \$25 billion shortfall on its \$95 billion two-

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year budget.

Despite his claims that "Texas has the best health care in the country," a quarter of all Tex-

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ans lack health insurance - well above the national average of 15.4 percent. In fact, 13 of Texas's congressional districts are in the nation's bottom 30 in regard to rates of insured citizens. Additionally, Texas has one of the nation's most restrictive Medicaid thresholds, including denying access to impoverished people who are childless.

Education is another area where Rick Perry has nothing to brag about. Contrary to his claims that Texas has the highest SAT-taking rates in the nation, it ranks only 22 of the 50 states. Even less impressive: Texans have the fifth lowest SAT scores of all the 50 states, and the state is the third least literate.

Perhaps this may be due to Texas having the 47th lowest spending rate on education in the nation. Either way, these woes aren't likely to improve with Perry's \$10 billion cut to education in his recent budget. Perry also rejected \$830 million in federal aid to Texas schools.

Not surprisingly, Perry clings to abstinence-only sexual education for Texas students. Despite evidence to the contrary, Perry claims that "abstinence works," citing his "personal life" as evidence. By 2009, over 94 percent of Texas school districts had adopted abstinence-only sexual education. This education included curriculum emphasizing

that birth control is ineffective, contrary to the facts. These programs combine an overemphasis on sexually transmitted diseases and death with Christian views of morality. Many public school districts use handouts containing Bible verses as part of their sexual education.

Texas has the third highest teen pregnancy rate in the nation. Texas has the highest teen repeat pregnancy rate as well as the third highest rate of youths with HIV.

Not surprisingly, the state of Texas is also the nation's largest polluter and is fighting against the Environmental Protection Agency's attempts to curb its excessive culture of pollution. Perry is most upset about the EPA's rejection of his state's "flexible permit" policy which would cut costs to polluters at the expense of the environment.

Rick Perry and his record are often touted by conservatives. However, based on his record as Texas governor, what could we expect from a Perry presidency besides: low paying jobs, higher teen pregnancy and STD rates, declining education standards, creationism in the curriculum, state-sponsored prayer, and more pollution?



Ryan C. Ebersole writes for the People's World.

Honor the troops, leave Afghanistan

By PW Editorial Board

The Aug. 6 crash of a Chinook helicopter in Afghanistan, downed by armed insurgents using a rocket-propelled grenade, is said to mark the biggest one-day loss of U.S. troops since the war started nearly 10 years ago. The tragedy is once again turning a bright spotlight on the urgency of speedily ending this country's longest war.

The circumstances of the helicopter's downing point to a disturbing aspect of today's war in Afghanistan. The Chinook was carrying 20 members of the Navy SEALs' elite Team 6, on their way to aid other Special Forces units hunting a Taliban leader said to be responsible for armed insurgent activities in the area.

Throughout all of this, civilians in Afghanistan and here at home are increasingly opposing the war. Recent polls in the U.S. show some 55 to 60 percent opposing the war. In Afghanistan opposition to the war reportedly exceeds 80 percent.

If we can't afford the lost and devastated lives, neither can we afford the huge financial outlay. At the same time the far right is touting the rising deficit as a pretext to demand draconi-

an cuts to domestic human needs programs, the Afghan war is costing the U.S. \$100 billion a year. Economists warn that the total costs of the war, including the ongoing treatment and rehabilitation of physically and psychologically wounded veterans, will be vastly greater.

President Barack Obama called the deaths in the helicopter downing "a reminder of the extraordinary sacrifices made by the men and women of our military and their families, including all who have served in Afghanistan."

Earlier this year the president took an important first step toward winding down the war, when he announced that 10,000 U.S. troops would leave Afghanistan by the end of 2011, and another 20,000 by next summer, as a down-payment on complete withdrawal by the end of 2014.

The best way the president and the Congress can honor the memory of the troops who died is to greatly speed up that plan.

The best way we all can honor them, and the many innocent civilians who have also suffered and died in the war, is to work actively for that speedy end, wherever we're involved.

The Afghan war is costing the U.S. \$100 billion a year.

The kids aren't all right, new report shows

By Dan Margolis

The recession hasn't been good for anyone, but children have been especially hard hit, even "over the past year, as the country slowly climbs out of the recession," says a new report by the Children's Defense Fund.

Child poverty dropped 27 percent between 1992 and 2000, the report shows, but went up 28 points between 2000 and 2009.

The problems facing children, CDF President Marian Wright Edelman wrote, are "the greatest threat to America's national security."

The report, titled "The State of America's Children 2011," paints a dire picture, with particular emphasis on "children of color in America who now constitute almost 45 percent of all children, and will be the majority of children in 2019 - just eight years from now."

More than a third of Latino and black kids, and a tenth of white kids, live in poverty. For the newest generation, those under the age of five, the poverty rate is even worse: 41.9 percent of black, 35 percent of Latino and just under 15 percent of white children are in poverty.

80 percent of black and Latino students in public schools and around half the white students aren't able to read at their grade level. And while 81 percent of whites graduate high school eventually, only about 60 percent of black students do.

Unemployment rates for teens 16-19 years old were higher in July 2010 than at any point in the past 50 years.

Income has become more unequal for all Americans over recent decades, taking a toll on young people: "In 2008, the income share for the richest 10 percent of U.S. households was 48.23 percent, just slightly below its 2007 record high level of 49.74 percent. The average income for the bottom 90 percent of households in 2008 was at



its lowest level in more than a decade. The one-year income drop for this group in 2007-2008 was its largest since 1938."

At the same time, by 2009, welfare payments were less than half the 1970 real dollar amount.

Underfunding of social services budgets seems to have endangered the physical safety of children: "About 40 percent of children who were abused or neglected in 2009 received no services following the investigation of their maltreatment and many more received far fewer services than they need."

With a list of statistics, the report makes the point that the U.S. could provide far better for its youth. According to the report, the U.S. ranks first in GDP and the number of billionaires, last in relative child poverty, last in protecting kids against violence and 30th in infant mortality rates.

Also, while the U.S. could put more money to alleviating poverty, the statistics also suggest that more rational spending of the same money could benefit young people: The U.S. ranks first in student expenditures, even though it ranks 31st in math scores and 17th in reading scores.

By 2009, welfare payments were less than half the 1970 real dollar amount.

In Conn., fight for jobs is on

By Joelle Fishman

I don't want to rob my son of his future," Joe Guerrero, a construction worker unemployed for over two years, told Rep. Rosa DeLauro, Democrat, at a round table discussion on jobs held at the Second Star of Jacob Church in New Haven, Conn.

The meeting was the first of a series in each Congressional District during the August recess organized by We Are One, a coalition of union and community groups spearheaded by the Connecticut AFL-CIO. Similar actions for jobs are being held across the country.

"Connecticut workers want Congress to act on the jobs crisis with the same urgency that was brought to the manufactured political crisis over the debt ceiling," said Lori Pelletier, secretary treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO.

"It is a real struggle being unemployed and trying to keep up with health care premiums and hold onto our home," said Alexandra Ferreira at the round table. "Leadership of the Congress changed hands last year on the promise that they would create jobs, but they haven't even tried," she added.

Ferreira's testimony was part of a panel of workers from construction, manufacturing, education and a student.

DeLauro highlighted the recommendations of The Task Force on Job Creation co-chaired by United Steel Workers president Leo Girard, as well as her own bills for an infrastructure bank to jump start massive construction projects, extension of unemployment benefits, protection of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and Pell Grants, and a bill to prohibit employers from discriminating against the unemployed.

The Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Progressive Caucus are traveling to cities across the nation to hold hearings on jobs, with standing room attendance.

Para honrar a las tropas, ¡EEUU fuera de Afganistán!

Por Marilyn Bechtel

Se reporta que el derrumbe este 6 de agosto de un helicóptero Chinook en Afganistán, derrumbado por insurgentes armados utilizando una granada a propulsión de cohete pueda ser la mayor pérdida en un solo día de tropas norteamericanas desde el comienzo de la guerra hace casi 10 años. Subraya una vez más esta tragedia la urgencia de poner un rápido fin a la guerra más larga de la historia de nuestro país.

Aunque reclamen los generales militares como siempre que se está logrando progreso, resulta difícil distinguirlo en el lugar del combate.

Mientras en un momento determinado los campos principales de batalla estaban en el sur y el sureste de ese país, ahora los insurgentes armados, que suelen decirse colectivamente "Talibanes," aunque estén involucrados varios grupos distintos, han ganado terreno sustancial en otras zonas del país. El helicóptero estaba a menos de 100 millas de la capital, Kabul, cuando fue derrumbado por fuego antiaéreo en la provincia de Wardak.

Las circunstancias del derrumbe del helicóptero también apuntan a un aspecto perturbador de la guerra actual en Afganistán. A bordo del Chinook estaban 20 integrantes de equipo élite No. 6 de los "SEALS" de la Marina que estaban volando para ayudar a otras unidades de las Fuerzas Especiales que cazaban a un líder de los Talibanes, el supuesto responsable de las actividades insurgentes armadas en la zona.

Mientras los esfuerzos por "ganar corazones y mentes" han sido siempre menos exitosos, la campaña militar norteamericana ha cambiado su enfoque más y más a uno de asesinatos de líderes claves de la insurgencia. La instancia más espectacular ha sido, por supuesto, el asesinato de Osama bin Laden en Pakistán hace unos meses. Conn Hallinan hizo comparar a la estrategia actual de "atacar de noche" al programa Fenix de asesinatos llevado a cabo durante la guerra en Viet Nam.

En meses pasados el presidente tomó un primer paso importante hacia una reducción a la guerra con el anuncio de que 10.000 tropas norteamericanas iban a ser retiradas de Afganistán antes del fin del año, y otros 20.000 para el verano que viene o antes, como un enganche a la retirada completa programada para fines del 2014 o antes.

Para el presidente y el Congreso la mejor manera de honrar a la memoria de estas tropas que cayeron el 6 de agosto, y a todos los caídos que los precedieron, es darle mucho más prisa a ese plan, retirando lo más pronto posible a todas las tropas y a todos los contratista, abriendo camino hacia las negociaciones que deben tomar lugar tanto dentro de Afganistán mismo que a nivel regional.

Para nosotros, nuestra mejor manera de honrarlos a ellos y a los tantos civiles inocentes que también han sufrido y muerto en esta guerra es trabajar activamente por lograr un rápido fin a los conflictos, dondequiera que estemos involucrados.

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