

## Obama letting down gays after pledging his support



**CLARENCE PAGE** says the president promised during the campaign to be a fierce opponent of 'don't ask, don't tell.' It hasn't worked out that way.

**A**S if he didn't have enough headaches. President Barack Obama has to decide not only whether to deploy more troops to the war in Afghanistan but also whether gays and lesbians will be allowed to serve in it.

Although confidential surveys show thousands are serving, officially homosexuals are still banned from military service unless they are willing to comply with a hastily constructed "don't ask, don't tell" policy that Congress passed in 1993. In short: Your superiors won't ask whether you're a gay, lesbian or bisexual as long as you stay in the closet.

How has it worked out? Worse for gays and lesbians in some ways than what they had before. As a candidate, Obama promised to be a fierce advocate for gay rights in the fight to overturn "don't ask, don't tell." As president, he is still an advocate, but fierce? Not so much. In fact, not at all.

Some of his supporters in the gay rights community are getting mightily impatient. Maverick conservative and openly gay blogger Andrew Sullivan eloquently endorsed Obama's candidacy, but you could not tell from his review of Obama's Saturday speech to the Human Rights Campaign, the world's largest gay political group. "Much worse than I expected," he wrote on The Atlantic magazine's Web site. "(The president) failed every test" — by offering no specifics on key issues — "this speech was highfalutin bull (bleep)." (Censorship mine.)

I appreciate Sullivan's point. I used to think that allowing gays in the military would weaken national security. I have since discovered how much our national security would be weakened without them.

I was led to this view not so much by what military people have said but by what military commanders have done. The discharge numbers indicate that tolerance for gays and lesbians in the ranks actually rises sharply when the military is called upon to perform its primary mission, which is to fight wars.

Discharges under "don't ask, don't tell" doubled from 617 in 1994 to 1,273 in 2001, the Defense Department reports. But despite assertions by the Pentagon that nothing has changed, discharges under the "don't ask, don't tell" law took a nosedive after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks led to new wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. By 2007 such discharges dropped sharply in half to 627.

It even has become a challenge for some gay personnel to get themselves discharged after revealing their homosexuality on purpose. Some who came out of the closet on purpose, like the famous case of Army Sgt. Darren Manzella, were told to get back in. Manzella, whose story was broadcast on *60 Minutes*, served as an openly gay soldier in Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division, for more than two years before he was honorably discharged in 2008.

The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, an advocacy group formed in response to don't ask, don't tell, estimated more than 500 gay troops are serving openly like Manzella. For their commanders, "don't ask, don't tell" apparently has become "look the other way and keep marching."

Attitudes about equal rights for gays appear to have evolved within the military as they have in the civilian world. A 2006 Zogby International poll found 73 percent of the military personnel were comfortable with the idea of serving with gays and lesbians. About one in four U.S. troops who served in Afghanistan or Iraq told Zogby pollsters they knew a member of their unit who was gay.

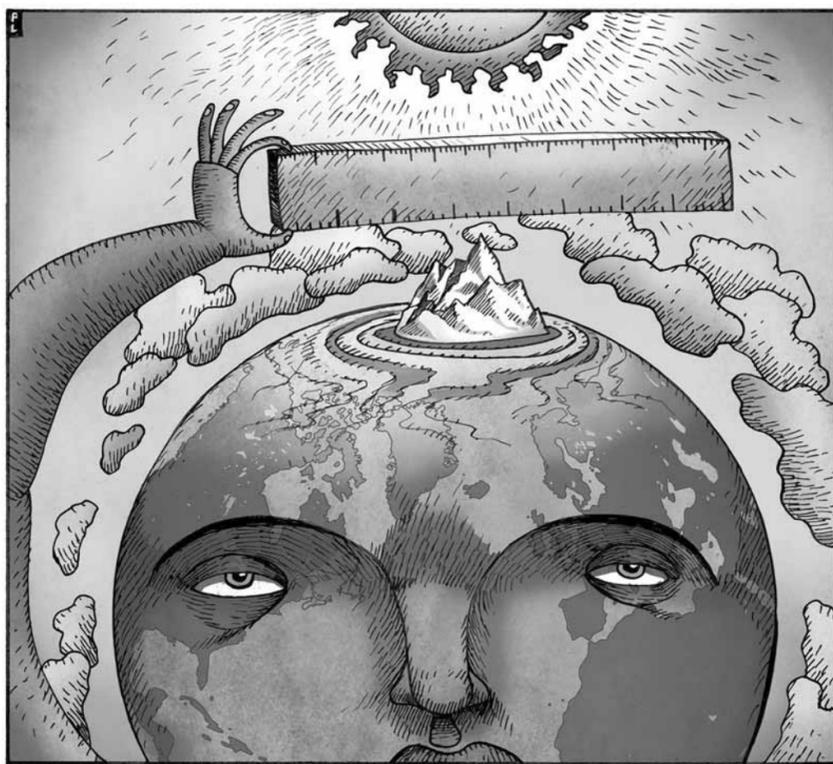
Today's military and the reporters who cover them report a generation gap in the ranks on this issue. The older personnel are opposed to gays and lesbians serving openly. The younger ones tend not to think of the issue as a big deal either way. They have bigger issues to worry about. Or, as we used to say about racial integration when I was a Vietnam-era Army draftee, there are no bigots in foxholes.

A group of 28 retired generals and admirals, including retired Army Gen. John Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued a letter in late 2007 calling on Congress to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" act. Yet the firings continue.

Busy as he is on other issues, Obama owes at least a timetable for action on the big issues of concern to gay and lesbian communities that enthusiastically supported his election. The equal rights fight calls not only for outreach to opposing views but also leadership, commitment and action that spends some political capital.

That's a tough call for any president, but as his predecessor might say, Obama is "the decider" now.

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## Perry ignores best sources for climate-change advice

■ Agriculture engineer heads panel on warming

By RONALD SASS

**A**S Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency respectively consider legislative and regulatory ways to cut greenhouse gases and limit climate change, Texas' governor is opposing such action with comments that are seriously out of sync with mainstream science and dangerous for the future of the state.

Gov. Rick Perry earlier this year stated, "The idea that carbon dioxide is a toxic substance is a bit hard for this agricultural scientist [himself] to get his arms around."

Not convinced a real climate issue exists, Perry asserts current congressional efforts to reduce greenhouse gases are "going to come down to this: Are the Democrats in Congress willing to stand up and say we are fixing to raise everyone's cost of living in America on some science that still is yet to be solidified?" Climate change is a complex and crucial scientific subject with major ramifications for Texas, such as increased drought in West Texas, rising sea level and increased storm intensity along the Gulf Coast and hotter temperatures over the entire state. I believe that our governor has the responsibility to seek the best expert advice on climate matters and find ways to mitigate or adapt to these impacts on the economic and cultural future of Texas.

That is not what Perry is getting. Instead of consulting climate scientists from Texas universities and technical personnel from potentially impacted businesses and industry, he justifies his opposition to carbon dioxide regulation based on a report from a committee he created, headed by an agricultural engineer, rather than a climate scientist, he hand-picked. That committee contends more than 99 percent of the global warming potential of greenhouse gas is "natural" rather than man-made. The implication is that man-made contributions to the atmosphere are too minor to influence climate. In other words, Perry was advised that the world could burn as much fossil fuel as it likes without consequence.

At best, this is sloppy science; at worst, it reflects dishonesty and manipulation. The data table in the panel's report duplicates a table presented by Monte Hieb, an employee at the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training and an advocate of coal. Hieb, who is not a climate scientist and has not published any peer-reviewed scientific papers on causes of global warming, contends that most of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is due to natural processes, not man-made, but he does not provide any observational

data or theoretical calculations to support his ideas. He also argues that the effects of water as a greenhouse gas completely overshadow any damage created by excess levels of carbon dioxide.

Indeed, water is a major greenhouse gas, representing 90 percent of the baseline greenhouse warming, which maintains the average temperature of Earth at 57 degrees Fahrenheit. But this does not mean man-made activity has an insignificant role in global warming. Other gases, mainly carbon dioxide, account for the remaining 10 percent or so of greenhouse gases, or a temperature change of 5.7 degrees Fahrenheit. A doubling of these "other" greenhouse gases, then, would result in an additional warming of 5.7 degrees Fahrenheit, a value that closely matches the consensus view of modern climate scientists and published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international body of leading scientific and political experts with recognized experience in climate-change studies.

For Texas and Texans, our governor needs to seek the best scientists available. Texas has an abundance of such experts who are willing to give sound advice to the policy-forming process. All three tier-one universities in Texas — Rice University, Texas A&M and the University of Texas — have faculty members who are experts in climate science. Why are we not, for example, calling on the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at Texas A&M University for help? The entire faculty of this prestigious department supports the view published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and agreed on by the vast majority of climate scientists around the world, namely that: (1) It is virtually certain that the climate is warming and that it has warmed by about 0.7 degrees Celsius over the last 100 years; (2) it is very likely that humans are responsible for most of the recent warming; (3) if we do nothing to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases, future warming will likely be at least two degrees Celsius over the next century; and (4) such a climate change brings with it a risk of serious adverse impacts on our environment and society.

Our response to climate change is too important to the future of the world for the government of a state the size and stature of Texas to rely on faulty scientific misinformation. The future prosperity of Texas rests on taking the correct action in solving the climate problems associated with carbon dioxide emissions. No matter what solution is finally agreed on, it must be one based on and informed by expert scientific advice.

Sass is the fellow in global climate change at the Baker Institute and the Harry C. and Olga K. Wiess Professor of Natural Sciences emeritus at Rice University.



## Nobel Prizes show women have the brains for science



**FROMA HARROP** says the women who won in biology and chemistry credit a 1971 law that required universities to hire women or risk losing federal funds.

**T**HE recent award of Nobel Prizes in biology and chemistry to three women dredges up Larry Summers' suggestion in 2005 that differences in the female brain may account for the dearth of top women scientists. Now President Obama's economic adviser, Summers was then speechifying as president of Harvard.

Carol Greider, who just won a Nobel for biology, recalls being astounded by the remark. "I thought he couldn't possibly say that," the Johns Hopkins biologist told me. "I looked up the transcript, and he really said that."

Summers' defenders attacked Nancy Hopkins, the MIT biologist who walked out in protest when he made the controversial statement. Writing in The Harvard Crimson, professor of government Harvey Mansfield accused Hopkins of committing a "scandalous

act of obscurantist intolerance."

Whatever. Hopkins now feels a certain vindication. And she traces the Nobel Prizes for Greider and Elizabeth Blackburn, a biologist at the University of California, San Francisco, to a 1971 law that required universities to hire women onto their faculties or risk losing federal dollars.

Shortly after the regulations went into effect, Hopkins received calls from MIT and Harvard asking her to apply for a job. "I was a true affirmative action hire," she told me. In the late 1960s, places like Harvard, Cal Tech and MIT had virtually no women teaching the sciences. Today, women account for just under 15 percent of MIT's science faculty.

Another beneficiary of the new law was Mary-Lou Pardue, who now holds a chair in microbiology at MIT and has belonged to the National Academy of Sciences since 1983. She

recounts the story of her hiring.

In 1971, MIT put a letter in Science magazine urging women to apply for teaching jobs. Already recognized as exceptional in her field, Pardue sent MIT her resume.

Pardue half-laughingly recalls MIT's response: "It was obviously a form, saying: 'Thank you for your letter. We've had hundreds of responses to our ad.'" Someone who later heard Pardue give a talk contacted MIT, which then called her in for an interview.

No one seriously argues that these women scientists suffered the trauma of Jim Crow racism. But the bias they faced — and still face — is far more subtle and often unconscious, which makes it extra hard to address.

Communications can be complicated. As Pardue puts it, "You can't go up to a man at a meeting and say, 'Let's have a drink, and I'll tell you about my science,' without getting more than you bargained for."

Greider, 48, moved up in a more gender- enlightened time. But the biologist still finds it odd when she is the only woman out of 40 speakers at a conference.

"There doesn't have to be overt exclusion

or putting people down in order for there to be some small bias that does keep one group at the top," she says. "It could be very small things, such as a man feeling more comfortable introducing male students at a meeting."

Greider attributes her and Blackburn's advancement to Joseph Gall, a cell biologist now at the Carnegie Institution. Gall became legendary both for his work on telomeres (the protective caps at the end of chromosomes) and support of women researchers (Pardue also trained with him).

"There's not anything innately different in the topic of telometry that makes it attractive to women," Greider says. Rather it was a "founder effect," in which Gall's students would go out to various universities and train other women in the field.

Younger scientists like Greider more easily brush off the ignorance contained in Summers' comment. "I learned early to put blinders on and do what I do," she said.

As we can see, that's been good for science.

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