

## THE REPUBLIC

Chuck Wells  
 Publisher  
 Email address:  
 cwells@Therepublic.com

Harry McCawley  
 Associate Editor  
 Email address:  
 harry@Therepublic.com

"We shall endeavor to make our paper the champion of the people of Bartholomew County and we shall advocate, irrespective of political considerations, all measures that have for their object the good of the community. In short, we hope to make our paper such as no intelligent person in the county can do without."

— Isaac T. Brown,  
 Founding Editor, 1875

### WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY

#### Olympians have tax loophole

*Los Angeles Times:*  
 Olympic athletes are very special people. But are they more special than, say, Nobel Prize winners, or police officers, or nurses, or spiritual gurus, or brilliant inventors or researchers whose discoveries enhance our lives?

If an election year happens to fall in an Olympics year, yes. Both presidential candidates have embraced an astonishingly silly but highly populist measure in Congress to exempt Olympic medalists from taxes, an idea that, naturally, originated with that bastion of silly but populist tax proposals, Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform.

The U.S. Olympic Committee awards honorariums in the amount of \$25,000 for each gold medal, \$15,000 for silver and \$10,000 for bronze, which means, Norquist's group sputters, that a gold medalist would be on the hook to send up to \$8,986 of his or her winnings to the IRS.

Republicans, with some Democratic support, quickly sponsored legislation in the House and Senate to make Norquist's notion law, and the White House weighed in by saying that if Congress approves the bill, President Barack Obama will sign it.

Why? There's no legitimate tax policy reason. Politicians in both parties complain endlessly about the complexity of the U.S. tax code and its many needless loopholes, yet they're only too happy to add to the complexity and drill another loophole in an election season when liberals and conservatives alike are rooting for Team USA in London.

This mindless bill should be rejected with the authority of a Kerri Walsh Jennings block.

#### Ryan is perfect running mate

*The Morning Journal (Lorain, Ohio):*  
 School opened (Aug. 11) for American voters who are confused by the partisan cacophony of this presidential campaign.

The new teacher, Paul Ryan, is the perfect choice as Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's VP running mate.

Ryan has the gift of being able to explain formidable economic issues and make them clearly understandable.

Ryan is articulate and sufficiently aggressive to blow away the smoke and shatter the mirrors that the White House spews and manipulates to create the illusion of governing in the people's interest.

To date, Romney hasn't been able to cut to the heart of the matter like Ryan can. Romney has stayed too far above the fray when close-in, hard political punches need to be thrown at the Obama White House Lie Machine.

That destruction must be stopped and the repair begun with the Nov. 6 election.

#### Where is the U.S. farm bill?

*The Oregonian (Portland):*  
 The American agricultural crisis is impossible to miss.

The worst drought in decades clutches most of the country in a death grip, with the worst impacts in the Southwest, the Midwest and parts of the Southeast.

Only 26 percent of the nation's corn crop is in good condition, compared with 62 percent a year ago. Herds of cattle ranchers are selling their stock early rather than keep trying to feed and water it.

The crisis is impossible to miss.

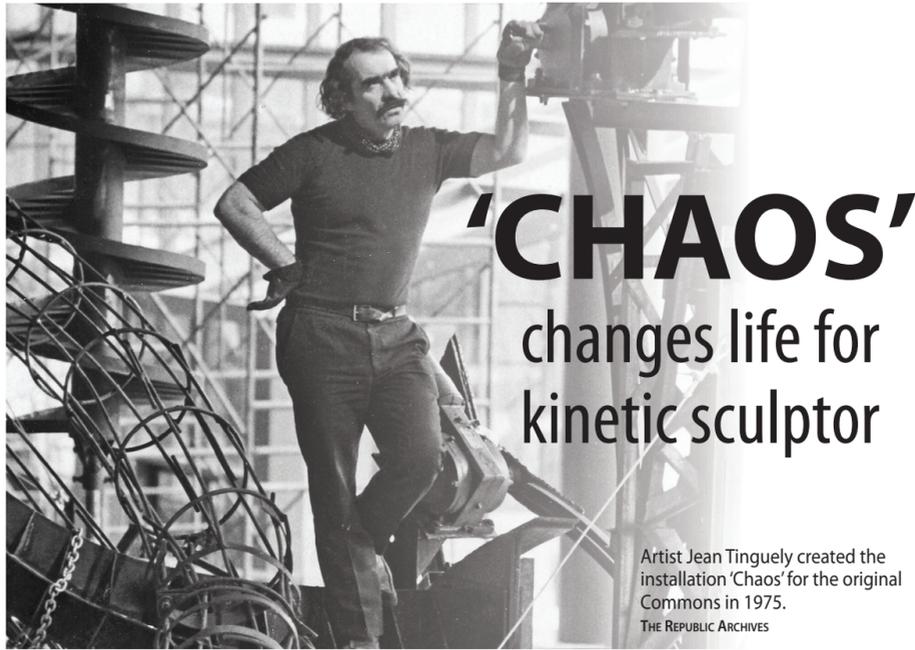
Except for the U.S. House of Representatives, which left for its August vacation — whoops, district work period — without passing a five-year farm bill, and now seems unlikely to manage one before the current measure lapses Sept. 30.

Traditionally, the farm bill has been bipartisan, as the members drawing it up represented their local crops more than their party.

This year, the Senate passed a bill by a good-sized 64-35 margin, and the House package managed an unusually bipartisan route through the Agriculture Committee.

But the House leadership refused to bring it up for debate and a vote.

It should be.  
 America's farms deserve a farm bill.



## 'CHAOS' changes life for kinetic sculptor

Artist Jean Tinguely created the installation 'Chaos' for the original Commons in 1975.  
 THE REPUBLIC ARCHIVES



Glenn Smith

AT the age of 33, and with a wife and young daughter to support, I left a promising high-tech job with Borg-Warner Corp. to embark upon a career as a kinetic sculptor, and the fair city of Columbus was to play a decisive role.

Although I worked for the Borg-Warner Research Center in suburban Chicago, I was actually stationed in Louisiana when I turned in my resignation, the connection being a division of the company that produced automotive plastics.

Hence the irony of my first scheme as an artist with dwindling bank account: a trip by auto with my young family back to Chicago to attend a small trade show dedicated to the "step" motors that I intended to use in my work. We planned as well to stop in Columbus, where, as I had been kindly informed by a former colleague, a major work of motorized sculpture was installed.

We made the 900-mile drive from Louisiana in one day, and on the next we turned onto Dearborn Street in the heart of downtown Chicago, and the entire cityscape was suddenly exalted. There, standing in loopy organic contrast to Mies van der Rohe's dark, rectilinear Federal Building, was Alexander Calder's breathtaking vermilion stabile, "Flamingo."

With the trade show out of the way, we planned next to visit the Sears Tower, and I had allowed myself to lapse into tourist mode, even though I must have known that another Calder occupied a magnificent setting in the tower's atrium. Not just any Calder, but one of his rare forays back into motorized art, and in fact that work which even today represents, in terms of the amount of money and talent lavished upon it, the high water mark of electromechanical art.

Keep in mind, as well, that Chicago considers itself to be the world capital of contemporary sculpture, and that at the time the Sears Tower was unveiled — with Calder's piece newly installed in it — it took over from the World Trade Center the title of the world's tallest building. So its atrium was, in a sense, the world's premier architectural setting.

Set against and partially occupying an imposing limestone wall and powered by hidden, smoothly operating electric motors, a set of brightly colored shapes turned, twisted and swung. Big and bold it was and in constant motion, but the effect was paltry. In fact, the motors seemed to be at work pumping psychic energy out of the surrounding space. Amid the soaring towers and crowded sidewalks, one was left with a subtle sense of despair.

Though still operating and kept in good repair, Calder's "Universe" is now almost forgotten, this work in which so much had been invested not even mentioned on his official website. If a Chicagoan today speaks about "the Calder," it is always the superb Dearborn Street stabile, unveiled at the same time as "Universe," to which he refers. And the obvious conclusion is that Calder, like many a famous artist, had been imposed upon late in life to create a work that had not really engaged his imagination.

Still, it is curious that I did not worry myself at the time with the question of why a multicolored piece animated by several hard-working motors was so much less engaging than a rigid, monochromatic assembly of steel plates.

Columbus turned out to be far more satisfying in terms of mechanical art. Columbus was a company town, but Cummins Inc. was not the typical company. Its management had an enlightened policy of commissioning world-famous architects to design and otherwise enhance the town's public buildings, one of which was a downtown shopping mall designed by Cesar Pelli. In The Commons area of that mall, as I was soon to learn, was installed a major work, "Chaos I," by none other than the Swiss/French sculptor Jean Tinguely. That work, moreover, had been un-

veiled in the same year, 1974, as Calder's two Chicago pieces and represented no less a landmark in Tinguely's oeuvre, since it was at that time — and still is, I believe — his major installation in the Americas.

What a strange scene presented itself to our little family! A wood-planked, vaulted space, cool and hushed in contrast to the blazing streets outside, and at its center, a fragment of the stupendous black machinery that had built America. But this fragment had never dreamed of being permanently consigned to the scrap yard; indeed, it moved and vocalized with the same casual energy of the Midwestern life that surrounded it for hundreds and thousands of square miles on every side; and so — if memory serves me correct — we each enjoyed a slice of pizza.

And here a critical insight: I've since realized that "Chaos I" had been influenced by Calder's stables, for its backbone consisted of a huge plate of steel; but Tinguely, with his typical wit, had hinged and motorized this such that the whole — mounted in a small circular pool for safety, and with its superstructure burdened with a menagerie of creaking pulleys, belts and wheels — turned slowly back and forth like a giant weather vane or a plow seeking its path.

This was not the polished mechanical art of my dreams; and one must wonder, as well, what the Cummins engineers thought of it, for the diesel engine must be crafted with an even greater precision than its gasoline-powered brethren.

Nonetheless, Tinguely's work had a mysterious aesthetic presence entirely lacking in Calder's "Universe," not to mention that here was a large piece of motorized sculpture that had been welcomed as the centerpiece of a public space, in a shopping mall, no less!

I had much to think about on the long drive home, but my crazy decision to become a kinetic sculptor seemed now not so crazy.

*Glenn Smith is a sculptor living in New Orleans. This article is adapted from the third chapter, "Art as Industry," of "Aesthetic Wilderness: A Brief Personal History of the Meeting Between Art and the Machine, 1844-2005," Birds-of-the-Air Press, 2012.*

## U.S. higher education needs schooling on current system

By DANIEL AKST  
 Newsday

THANKS to a ferocious report from a Senate committee, we now know that the for-profit college industry is a business rife with abuses. Little is spent on instruction, and the most vulnerable people are encouraged to apply by "recruiters" who often use boiler-room sales tactics. Most students drop out, only to find themselves burdened with student debt yet lacking a degree to help them pay for it.

When the report came out, the committee's Republican minority complained that the panel should have probed traditional nonprofit colleges as well. But trying to cover the vast nonprofit higher-ed sector, which educates something like 90 percent of the Americans who attend college, would have diluted the focus and given unearned legitimacy to outfits mainly interested in making a quick buck.

The Republicans had a point. Some of the same problems the committee uncovered in the for-

profit sector are festering in the nonprofit sector as well.

Now that Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin's committee has laid bare the foul deeds of the for-profit sector, perhaps it should shine a light into the hallowed groves of traditional academe.

In general, traditional colleges are charging more and teaching less compared with decades ago. Students are skating by with less study even as grade inflation keeps their marks up. And there is evidence that many students make little progress.

In one study, nearly half of students tested at 24 schools showed no gain in critical thinking, reasoning or writing in their first two years. More than a third had no gains after four years.

The most illustrious professors at many campuses spend the least time in the classroom. Many professors teach their own research interests rather than what students need to know. And at top business and law schools, coursework is too often taught by faculty who have never met a payroll or spent a day in court.

And too many students fail to graduate. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, an international think tank, reported in 2010 that the United States had the lowest graduation rate (46 percent) of the 18 countries it surveyed.

America's system of higher education is the envy of the world, with good reason. And advanced education is crucial, not just for the health of our economy but for the health of our society.

The impulse to have every American complete some higher education is a noble one.

But it cannot succeed unless we reform our campuses to become more efficient as well as more effective, and reform our high schools so that graduates have a strong foundation in the essentials.

Maybe it's time for them to consider whether the great mass of students are getting enough profit from nonprofit colleges.

*Daniel Akst is a columnist for Newsday and a member of the newspaper's editorial board.*

## Spending 'right' on education

By J. PUCKETT  
 McClatchy-Tribune News Service

It's August, which for most school districts and local governments means it's time to put the budget knives away and live with whatever decisions have been made.

It's also time to remember an important lesson: how a school district spends money is just as important as how much it spends.

For roughly 40 years, K-12 student performance has barely budged in the United States, though inflation-adjusted spending has doubled. Math and literacy test scores for U.S. students at age 17 have remained flat since the 1970s. And on most international measures, we're moving down.

Consider two U.S. students — one who graduated from high school in 1994, and one who entered kindergarten that year. On average, after adjusting for inflation, \$25,000 more was spent on the kindergarten student over the next 13 years (1994-2007) than on the 1994 graduate. Despite this, the younger student's test scores were no better than the older student's.

Some school systems understand the importance of spending their education dollars efficiently. Using data from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and the National Center for Education Statistics, we compared graduation rates in the 50 states over consecutive 10-year periods, 1989-1998 and 1999-2008. We found that the top 25 percent of states in terms of spending efficiency realized an average 1 percentage point increase in graduation rates for each additional \$3,000 in per-pupil spending. Comparable spending increases among those in the bottom-performing quartile failed to prevent declines in graduation rates.

Part of the problem has to do with the haphazard way education dollars often are spent.

California, for instance, in 2009 earmarked more than \$41 million to hire more gym teachers to fight childhood obesity, though there already were plenty of phys-ed teachers in the state and no evidence that hiring more would reduce obesity.

Indeed, California spent an additional \$16,071 per pupil (in constant 2008-09 dollars) between 1999-2008 than between 1989-1998. But graduation rates rose by less than 1 percentage point. This placed it 29th among the 50 states in terms of outcome per dollar.

Another problem with spending practices is that new education initiatives are rarely reviewed for effectiveness after they're launched — and almost never canceled, even if they have little value.

Rather than focusing entirely on spending levels, policymakers, educators and parents need to start focusing on value: spending that improves educational outcomes.

Consider how we invest in teachers. Currently, seniority-based teacher pay accounts for 10 percent of all U.S. school spending. Yet, longevity doesn't necessarily assure effectiveness. School districts also reward the attainment of advanced degrees, spending \$8.6 billion annually on salary premiums. Yet there is no proven correlation between advanced degrees and teaching quality. At the same time, most school systems invest little time, effort, and money in providing teachers feedback that will help them improve their teaching skills.

Spending right means making tough trade-offs: Cutting favored initiatives that no longer work, getting more from the same investment, and subjecting new spending proposals to the unforgiving value test.

*J. Puckett can be reached at BCG, 2501 N. Harwood, Dallas, Texas 75201; website: www.bcg.com.*