

January 12, 2015

Time for Pickings to say goodbye to Tom Coburn. John Fund is the first to pay homage to a man who actually went into public service rather than public narcissism. In a just world someone like Coburn would lead our country instead of the existing example of excrement expletive.

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Those two qualities together are rare in politicians, but they found a happy union in the 66-year-old obstetrician who is leaving the Senate early next month to battle prostate cancer. On the one hand, Coburn never retreated on his core values: He is staunchly pro-life, for traditional marriage, and resistant to all manner of fads from climate-change regulation to mindless intervention overseas. As the Senate’s “Dr. No” from 2004 to today, he held up hundreds of special-interest boondoggles and end-runs around common sense. At the same time, he maintained a standard of honest dealing and integrity that many more in Congress should aspire to.

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Coburn kudos from Andrew Ferguson at the Weekly Standard.

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Kimberley Strassel has more.

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Many was the time this reporter would stumble across some government outrage, and call Mr. Coburn's office for his take—only to discover he'd written a bill to fix the problem a year earlier. That knowledge was power; he was a formidable opponent because he knew more than the appropriators, the negotiators, the bills' authors. An all-time favorite line came from one of his staffers who, in the middle of a Coburn budget fight with Congress, wryly commented: "I don't know why they bother. Fighting with Coburn over the budget is like waging a land war in Asia. You can't win." ...

KC Johnson and Stuart Taylor, who wrote the book on the Duke Lacrosse debacle, compare it to recent events at UVA.

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Even more depressing is another comparison between the two cases. While campus journalists and many other students at Duke were refreshingly open to evidence and critical thinking as the case there unfolded, the vast majority of U-Va. students have been sheep-like. They have emulated -- or at least tolerated -- the anti-male prejudices of U-Va. academics and administrators. Some have even called for secret criminal trials in rape prosecutions.

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Not unlike the 88 Duke professors who signed a public statement in 2006, which included a thank-you to protesters who had urged the team captains' castration, those U-Va. professors who individually spoke up immediately after the Rolling Stone article were eager to see it as exemplifying a campus "rape culture" of which there is little hard evidence.

Then there is the lamentable performance of school President Teresa Sullivan, who has rivaled the shameful indifference to due process shown by Richard Brodhead, who is, alas, still Duke's president. Sullivan's sins include using the Rolling Stone article as an excuse to accuse seven unnamed fraternity members of "evil acts" and to suspend all U-Va. fraternities both before and after the accuser's story unraveled. ...

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In such an environment, it might be understandable that few students would risk being branded as "rape apologists" by defending due process. In this respect, the U-Va. student response may evidence a troubling trend over the last eight years. In any event, it surely illustrates a poisoned campus culture that has implications far beyond Charlottesville.

National Review

Coburn, a True Statesman, Steps Down

The only problem with the Senate's "Dr. No" is that he's retiring.

by John Fund

Dozens of members of Congress will be retiring next month, and some should be missed. But there is only one Tom Coburn, the Oklahoma senator the *Christian Science Monitor* has dubbed "a rabble-rousing statesman."

Those two qualities together are rare in politicians, but they found a happy union in the 66-year-old obstetrician who is leaving the Senate early next month to battle prostate cancer. On the one hand, Coburn never retreated on his core values: He is staunchly pro-life, for traditional marriage, and resistant to all manner of fads from climate-change regulation to mindless intervention overseas. As the Senate's "Dr. No" from 2004 to today, he held up hundreds of special-interest boondoggles and end-runs around common sense. At the same time, he maintained a standard of honest dealing and integrity that many more in Congress should aspire to.

This month, he took to the Senate floor to make his farewell remarks. He reminded his colleagues that they take an oath to "protect the United States of America, its Constitution, and its liberties." What's not included in that oath, he warned, is any mention that senators have a duty to provide benefits to their state.

"It's nice to be able to do things for your state, but that isn't our charge," he said. "Our charge is to protect the future of our country by upholding the Constitution and ensuring the liberty that's guaranteed there is protected and preserved."

It was that desire that drove Tom Coburn to first run from an Oklahoma House district in 1994 that had never elected a Republican. A physician, he continued to deliver babies while in office and forced the Ethics Committee to back down from its contention that such outside work was against House rules. Although wildly popular back home, Coburn retired in 2000 after three terms because he feared he might succumb to "Potomac Fever" if he stayed longer. He joked that many of his former colleagues are suffering from an addiction. "Power is like morphine," he wrote in his book *Breach of Trust: How Washington Turns Outsiders into Insiders*. "It dulls the senses, impairs

judgment, and leads politicians to make choices that damage their own character and the machinery of democracy.”

I remember that when Coburn decided to run for the Senate in 2004 after a spell in the private sector, every prominent elected Republican in and out of Oklahoma opposed him. After all, this was the man who openly circulated a list of what he called “the ten things Congress doesn’t want you to know about how it does business.”

A sore spot with him is that members of Congress frequently don’t have time to read the bills they are voting on. Thus Congress spends more than \$150 billion every year on more than 200 programs that are not authorized by law. Making room for all that spending in turn requires Congress to use “one-time” increases — often “emergency spending” measures — year after year. Small wonder that the late representative James Burke of Massachusetts once told an innocent freshman: “Your problem, son, is that you think this place is on the level.”

The Republican Congress that Tom Coburn rejoined in 2004 wasn’t on the level. Earmarks — pork-barrel projects that many members secured in secret — were at the heart of the scandals that sent Jack Abramoff and former California representative Duke Cunningham to jail. The Senate Appropriations Committee (known as the “favor factory”) was chaired by Alaska senator Ted Stevens, a self-described “mean, miserable SOB” when it came to anyone who questioned the earmark culture. When Coburn challenged his \$228 million “Bridge to Nowhere” in 2005, Stevens warned fellow senators, “If we start cutting funding for individual projects, your project may be next.”

Coburn stood up to Stevens and other pork-barrelers, and while he often lost individual battles, he won the war. The exit polls in the 2006 election revealed that corruption in government was second only to the Iraq war as the driving force behind the Democratic takeover of both chambers. Coburn, then-representative Jeff Flake of Arizona, and others reminded Republicans that they needed to return to the party’s small-government roots. They noted that in 1987, Ronald Reagan vetoed a highway bill because it had 121 earmarks in it. After the 2010 election, the earmark culture was largely dismantled; what’s left is certainly more transparent in both houses.

Transparency was a hallmark of Coburn’s efforts in Congress. It even created an opportunity for him to cooperate with freshman Democratic senator Barack Obama in passing a bill to create a government website designed to let the public see how government money is spent. Sadly, President Obama’s record on transparency has been a profound disappointment. The Government Accountability Office reported in August that the website USASpending.gov is riddled with errors and omissions.

“The administration set a goal of 100 percent accuracy by the end of 2011,” Coburn told the *Washington Times* shortly after the GAO report came out. “Three years later, the federal government cannot even break a 10 percent accuracy rate.”

That same month, nearly two-thirds of the government’s inspector generals — most of them appointed by President Obama — sent a letter to Congress warning that the Obama administration was actively blocking many of their efforts to ferret out waste and abuse. This behavior was “inconsistent with the IG Act, at odds with the independence of inspectors general, and risks leaving the agencies insulated from scrutiny and unacceptably vulnerable to mismanagement and misconduct” the 47 IGs warned.

Shows such as *60 Minutes* and other establishment-media sources have celebrated the fact that Coburn and Obama developed a friendship in the Senate that continues to this day. In 2013,

Obama even penned an essay on Coburn for *Time* magazine in which he praised his friend and said: “Each of us still hopes the other will see the light. But in the meantime, we’ll settle for being friends.”

Worthy sentiments, and while we should celebrate elected officials who can remain civil and sometimes overcome their differences to reach common ground, Tom Coburn’s contribution to Washington, D.C., culture includes his habit of not putting friendship first and letting disagreements slide or be papered over for the sake of comity. “That’s the way we got in this mess,” he told me once. “Well-meaning people who decided that in order to get along, they would spend other people’s money and mortgage the country’s future.”

Tom Coburn never forgot that members of Congress are spending the hard-earned money of the people back home. Even a lot of conservatives end up forgetting that. Here’s hoping that back in the private sector, Tom Coburn keeps up the fight for his beliefs and that he remains a constant reminder to lawmakers and the White House of ethical standards to which all should aspire.

Weekly Standard

A Model Senator

by Andrew Ferguson

"In any election," Tom Coburn often says, "you should vote for the candidate who will give up the most if they win." All things being equal, we should prefer politicians who have accomplished something in their lives beyond government work—and who are willing to sacrifice it, at least temporarily, to serve the country at a cost to their convenience and comfort. During his 6 years in the House of Representatives and 10 more in the Senate, Coburn has embodied his own principle. He went to medical school after a successful career in business and became an obstetrician when he was 35. He built a lucrative practice in his hometown of Muskogee, Oklahoma. He waited until he was 46 to seek public office, after he'd delivered 4,000 babies. First things first.

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He's done so by being a pest. This is the kindest word we can come up with, though enemies both in and of out of his party prefer surlier tags like crank and headcase. Coburn commandeered every parliamentary maneuver available to a lone senator and used his mastery to slow the Senate down and draw attention to the untoward details of business-as-usual: absurd expenditures, cheap favors for the well-to-do, presidential appointments for dolts and clowns, and every imaginable accounting trick in service of parochial rather than national interests, all of it undertaken on borrowed money. His endless amendments and points of order became a kind of shaming, directed at people who long ago abandoned shame. Coburn trained an outsider's eye on the work of insiders and delivered the news, usually bad. "If we applied the same standards to Congress that we apply to Enron," he once said of congressional book-juggling, "everybody here would go to jail."

But he's also a gentleman. Much of Coburn's appeal lies in an apparently bottomless insouciance. (He once mentioned that he was well into college before he even heard of marijuana, which proves that Merle Haggard was right: They really didn't smoke it in Muskogee.) In his most passionate moments he seemed baffled that the workings of politics and government don't operate disinterestedly and out in the open, for all to see, as the Founders intended. He spent a fair amount of time in his farewell speech offering apologies. "To those of you through the years whom I have offended, I truly apologize," he said, though even the sincerest apology couldn't make him cross his view of the Constitution. "I believe the enumerated powers meant something," he went on. "When I have offended, I believe it has been on the basis of my belief in Article I, Section 8." That's the section listing the things Congress is permitted by the Constitution to do. Senators might want to get staff to look it up.

A pest and a gentleman and a man of firm principle—but not an ideologue, the off-the-shelf epithet tossed at him by a ditzy press and exasperated colleagues. His pragmatism is another reason he was always worth paying attention to. The lack of ideological rigidity most often served to expose the rigidity of others. When he sponsored a bill to cut agriculture subsidies to people who make more than \$1 million a year, he was blocked by the same Democrats who complain that millionaires are undertaxed. When he grudgingly supported the timid tax increases in the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction proposal, he was disparaged by Republicans who say our debt is a form of national suicide—but nothing to raise taxes over. Most of the time he was asking his colleagues to put their money where their mouths were. And no one ever caught him in double-dealing or hypocrisy. That cut in agriculture subsidies, for example: It applied to millionaires in Oklahoma too. They voted for him anyway.

After his farewell speech, his fellow senators gave Coburn a standing ovation. We join his countless admirers in the general applause, but we can't help but wonder: Were the senators cheering his speech or his decision to retire and—finally—leave them alone?

WSJ

How Coburn Made a Difference

The retiring senator blocked more bad ideas and lousy bills than most Americans will ever know.

by Kimberley Strassel

Members of Congress come and go, and many leave Washington no better or worse than they found it. A few make a mark, and Congress is losing one of them: Tom Coburn.

The senator doesn't leave behind him a stack of legislation with his name, or grand bipartisan deals. He doesn't leave stunts, public tantrums, an adoring press corps, or, for that matter, many adoring GOP colleagues. Mr. Coburn didn't really "do" legacy. Which is why this rather humble Oklahoman will have one.

What Mr. Coburn does leave is a more informed electorate and a better Republican Party—two groups that benefited enormously from his focus on first principles: adhering to the Constitution, limiting federal government, and protecting individual liberties. In his three terms in the House and 10 years in the Senate, he became most known for forcing Congress (in particular his own caucus) to reconcile its actions against those principles. His long-term efforts to decode the federal

government—voluminous reports on waste and fraud, demands for more transparency—were likewise aimed at giving voters the tools they need to hold members true to those principles.

The real key to Mr. Coburn's success was a skill too little valued in Washington today: hard work. He was an accountant and then an obstetrician before coming to D.C., and never lost that belief that he needed to earn his paycheck. He was in the office every morning by 7:30. He'd read every word of every report his staff gave him—and send it back with typos circled. He read every bill and objected if he wasn't given the time to do so before a vote. He'd dive into monstrous sections of the federal government—the budget, veteran affairs, disability payments, the tax code—and not re-emerge until he knew it front to back. He was a policy innovator, in particular on health care.



Oklahoma Republican Tom Coburn, who is retiring from the Senate

Many was the time this reporter would stumble across some government outrage, and call Mr. Coburn's office for his take—only to discover he'd written a bill to fix the problem a year earlier. That knowledge was power; he was a formidable opponent because he knew more than the appropriators, the negotiators, the bills' authors. An all-time favorite line came from one of his staffers who, in the middle of a Coburn budget fight with Congress, wryly commented: "I don't know why they bother. Fighting with Coburn over the budget is like waging a land war in Asia. You can't win."

Another Coburn strength was his skill at practicing politics, without being political. He knew every arcane rule in the Senate and was willing to use them to force a clarifying moment. When he first arrived in Washington, some accused him of grandstanding—until they realized his interest was in shining a light on everyone but himself. The pity is that history rarely hands out awards to those who stop bad things. Tom Coburn blocked more bad ideas and lousy legislation in Congress than most Americans will ever know.

He understood power structures, and public outrage, and the long game. Despite his reputation as “antiestablishment”—cast as a precursor to today’s Ted Cruzes or Rand Pauls—he was anything but. He had an old-fashioned belief in the true power of the Senate—of convening, of finding answers—and co-wrote legislation with nearly every Democrat in office. And he was savvy. It took him a decade of floor speeches and amendments—and the phrase “Bridge to Nowhere”—to get the GOP to swear off earmarks, but he got it done. He played off [Barack Obama](#)’s stated interest in transparency to create USAspending.gov, designed to inform the public on federal outlays.

Yet it wasn’t about his image. He wasn’t cute or coy, and he didn’t engage in fool’s errands. In a recent conversation I asked Mr. Coburn about the limits of standing on principle. “There are all kinds of tactics that the right can use, but they only work if you have the leadership, courage and vision to hold until you win,” he says. He doesn’t think the GOP is there, and it is why he opposed last year’s government shutdown.

Asked what he was most proud of, he gave a typically Coburn answer: “I try not to look back; just gives you heartburn.” What he’ll miss most are some truly personal friendships he made—he names [John McCain](#), Richard Burr, Saxby Chambliss—and a weekly Bible study class that “keeps you humble and redirects you.” He also mentions his staff, who, notably, were the first people he thanked in his farewell to Congress. That gracious spirit was one reason his staff adored him.

Mr. Coburn was elected to a second Senate term in 2010 and vowed to abide by self-imposed term limits. He’s had health concerns and is leaving early. But he has no regrets. This citizen-legislator had a full life before Congress, and he’s brimming with plans for life after Congress. If all those new, incoming Republican senators are looking for a model—this is their guy.

Real Clear Politics

[U-Va. Reaction to Rape Claim: Worse Than at Duke?](#)

by KC Johnson and Stuart Taylor Jr.

Depressing similarities link the two highest-profile allegations of campus sexual assault in recent years -- the fraudulent gang rape claims against Duke lacrosse players in 2006, and Rolling Stone writer Sabrina Erdely’s multiply discredited portrayal in November of a sadistically brutal gang rape at a University of Virginia fraternity.

Even more depressing is another comparison between the two cases. While campus journalists and many other students at Duke were refreshingly open to evidence and critical thinking as the case there unfolded, the vast majority of U-Va. students have been sheep-like. They have emulated -- or at least tolerated -- the anti-male prejudices of U-Va. academics and administrators. Some have even called for secret *criminal* trials in rape prosecutions.

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Not unlike the 88 Duke professors who [signed a public statement](#) in 2006, which included a thank-you to protesters who had urged the team captains' castration, those U-Va. professors who individually spoke up immediately after the Rolling Stone article were eager to see it as exemplifying a campus "rape culture" of which there is little hard evidence.

Then there is the lamentable performance of school President Teresa Sullivan, who has rivaled the shameful indifference to due process shown by Richard Brodhead, who is, alas, still Duke's president. Sullivan's sins include using the Rolling Stone article as an excuse to accuse seven unnamed fraternity members of "[evil acts](#)" and to suspend all U-Va. fraternities both before and after the accuser's story unraveled.

And while The Washington Post's excellent work exposing Rolling Stone's errors of omission and commission was a welcome change from the newspaper's own shoddy journalism in the lacrosse case, the New York Times continued its pattern of presuming the guilt of accused males. Its Duke coverage was exposed long ago as so [appallingly biased](#) as to prompt apologies from multiple editors. True to form, the Times [disgraced itself yet again](#) in early December by running an article aggressively defending Erdely's piece just as it was collapsing.

The one encouraging on-campus aspect of the Duke case was the reaction of many students, including the award-winning news and editorial team at the student newspaper, The Chronicle.

During the many months when Brodhead and his professors were treating lacrosse players as presumptively guilty pariahs, student journalists dispassionately analyzed events and repeatedly scooped the national and local news media. Chronicle commentators, [most notably Kristin Butler](#), eviscerated the cowardice of campus elders. Students also recognized Durham District Attorney Mike Nifong's lies far sooner than did their teachers, and worked to change the system by registering voters to oppose Nifong at the ballot box.

The responses of the vast majority of U-Va. students to the Rolling Stone fiasco were far less inspiring. It was, of course, predictable that self-styled victims' rights activists would embrace Rolling Stone's version of events. Less predictable, and more striking, was the uncritical acceptance of Jackie's wild tale by the student newspaper, the Cavalier Daily. Until late December, its coverage mirrored Rolling Stone's, even as various off-campus publications shredded Jackie's varying accounts.

Instead, the newspaper's executive editor, Katherine Ripley, was [busy sending tweets](#) with the hashtag #IStandWithJackie about how the Jackie story "resonated with me." (Ms. Ripley hasn't revealed which of Jackie's mutually contradictory stories she believes; her most recent tweets have utilized the #IStandWithSurvivors hashtag.) Assistant Managing Editor [Julia Horowitz proclaimed](#) that "to let fact checking define the narrative would be a huge mistake."

Even U-Va. fraternity members, President Sullivan's most immediate targets, meekly accepted their ill-considered suspension without critical scrutiny either of Jackie's now-discredited claims or of their own alleged complicity in a supposed "rape culture." While a national organization of fraternities demanded that Sullivan apologize, the fraternities at U-Va. made no such demand.

Indeed, the school's fraternity council recently joined with the student council and various victims' rights groups [to recommend that the state of Virginia change its laws to hold secret trials](#), with the public excluded, in all criminal prosecutions for rape -- a stunning call for star-chamber-style railroading of accused males.

The student coalition also expressed hope that the university would provide accusers access to legal counsel (their recommendations contained no reference to accused students' need for lawyers), while ordering all future U-Va. students to take a course in "Women and Gender Studies." At Duke eight years ago, by contrast, a similar curricular proposal won support only from the most extreme anti-lacrosse faculty members, and even the Brodhead administration elected not to embrace it.

What explains this difference between students at Duke in 2006 and U-Va. now? We cannot be sure. But we do know that the past eight years have witnessed a profound effort to devalue due process for students accused of sexual assault, regardless of the merits of the accusation. This trend, which was [ably analyzed by Peter Berkowitz](#), has been accelerated by Obama administration demands that campuses significantly weaken their already weak procedural protections for accused students or face crippling cutoffs of federal funds. The inevitable result will be more convictions -- whether the accused was guilty or not.

Today's students have been bombarded with the president's assertions that "one in five women on college campuses has been sexually assaulted during their time there" and similar claims by other officials, journalists, and academics. As Slate's [Emily Yoffe has observed](#), this absurd figure (which since has been discredited by the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)) implies that the typical college campus has the same rate of rape as war-torn areas of the Congo.

Yet powerful media voices, ranging from the New York Times to Huffington Post to BuzzFeed, have touted the claim while aggressively promoting the dubious "rape culture" narrative. They've done so through dozens of articles portraying sexual assault accusers who failed to prevail in campus disciplinary cases as victims of gender discrimination.

And the nation's most prestigious universities, including U-Va. and Duke, have pushed such ideologies of resentment -- in their reeducation-camp-style "orientation" sessions for new students, in the extremist race/class/gender teachings that dominate many humanities courses, and in the kangaroo-court disciplinary systems that have censored expression of "offensive" political views as well as railroading dozens of students on rape charges that appear to be based on flimsy evidence.

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KC Johnson is a history professor at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. Stuart Taylor Jr. is a Washington writer and Brookings Institution nonresident senior fellow. They co-authored the 2007 book "Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case."

So you're against the private ownership of guns?

Well then who needs this?

When you already have this!



Think about it.

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Sanity Test

WHICH ONE IS THE REAL ENEMY?

A. THUG

B. NYPD
COP



IF YOU SELECTED 'B', THEN SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY



The day
Al Gore
was born,
there were
130,000
glaciers
on earth.

Today,
only
130,000
glaciers
remain.



Liberalism is a simple concept: if you
have it, I want it. If you
do it, I'll control it.
And if I don't get my
way about everything,
I'll whine like a
five year-old.



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