



Grover G. Norquist

President

March 17, 2004

Dear Oklahoma legislator,

I am writing to bring your attention to the enclosed opinion piece and editorial cartoon published by Ken Neal of The Tulsa World.

I had circulated an opinion piece to Oklahoma newspapers opposing a tobacco tax increase, and encouraging a tax cut offset if policymakers decided that a tobacco tax was appropriate to fund existing programs. Ken Neal received my submission but decided not to publish it. **Instead, he decided to quote my unpublished piece to publish his own commentary critical of me, and all those like me who are opposed to tax increases.**

The largest single problem with his commentary is that he deliberately misstates the Taxpayer Protection Pledge. He characterizes the Pledge as a commitment to Grover Norquist.

On the contrary, as you can see from the copy I have enclosed, **the Pledge is a promise made to a candidate's constituents.** It is a definitive statement of those standing for election who or what will be the priority if they win office. Will the official vote for the big-spending interests, or will he or she vote for the hardworking families and businesses who pay the taxes? We are all familiar with politicians who will say anything to get elected. The Pledge distinguishes those who put their commitment into writing.

And signing the Pledge is the norm. President George W. Bush has signed the Pledge. 42 U.S. senators (including Oklahoma Sen. Don Nickles and Sen. Jim Inhofe and both candidates running to replace Sen. Nickles) and 216 U.S. Congressmen (including Oklahoma Reps. John Sullivan, Frank Lucas, Tom Cole, and Ernest Istook) have taken the Pledge. Nine governors have taken the Pledge. And 1228 state legislators (including 32 from Oklahoma) have also promised their voters that they will oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes.

At first, I assumed Mr. Neal's misstatements were due to ignorance. But when I had my communications director, Jonathan Collegio, contact Mr. Neal to point out his errors and to request that he publish a response from me, the reply was surprising. He said, **"I received Grover's letter to the legislature, and I'm not going to give the newspaper over to that. It is in my good sense not to even talk to you."**

I had submitted my piece to Mr. Neal on behalf of the over 4000 Oklahomans who are members of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), and all taxpayers in Oklahoma. Further, I wanted to share the experience I have gained in dealing with similar tax and spending proposals in other states, and I wanted to support those Oklahoma legislators who were resisting the pressure to raise taxes. But Ken Neal did not think, and still does not think, my views are worth sharing through the free press.

As president of ATR, I have been active in all 50 states for almost 20 years. Over that time I have dealt with countless journalists, both friendly and unfriendly. But I have never met one as unprofessional as Ken Neal.

Sincerely,

Grover G. Norquist