

March 23, 2004

Dear Legislators,

The Tulsa World has shown its contempt for Oklahoma taxpayers again!

Ken Neal, their editorial page editor, started off by writing a nasty article about the anti-tax hike position last Sunday. We at Americans for Tax Reform sought to publish an op-ed to balance out the position, but Mr. Neal, who controls the page, rejected it. In fact, Ken Neal told ATR communications director Jonathan Collegio that **“I received Grover Norquist’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.”**

We then sent out a letter to Oklahoma legislators, activists and media showing that *The Tulsa World* would not run a taxpayer friendly op-ed. *The Tulsa World* got a hold of it and the person there who handles letters to the editor, Yolanda Logan, asked us if we would like to have it published. We accepted the offer.

But when we called her back for the details, she hesitated, then informed ATR staffer Paul Proski that she made her original offer without talking to her boss Ken Neal.

After she first called us, she went to him, and Ken Neal again said that he would not publish anything by Grover Norquist, and that he didn’t want those views in his paper. She seemed embarrassed by this, and she was upset – presumably because it put her in a bad position. Ken Neal apparently opened the door to this by writing the op-ed, and by approving an editorial cartoon blasting me. But then she re-affirmed that Ken wouldn’t publish anything from Grover. Paul thanked her for her honesty, and the conversation ended.

Consider: Ken Neal and *The Tulsa World* published a commentary is that deliberately misrepresents the Taxpayer Protection Pledge. Mr. Neal characterizes the Pledge as a commitment to Grover Norquist.

No. The Pledge is a promise made to the people of Oklahoma! 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. It reads:

“I pledge to the taxpayers of the _____ district of the state of Oklahoma and to all the people of this state that I will oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes.”

President Bush has signed the Pledge. 42 U.S. senators (including Oklahoma Sen. Don Nickles and Sen. Jim Inhofe) and 217 U.S. Congressmen (including Oklahoma Reps. John Sullivan, Frank Lucas, Tom Cole, and Ernest Istook) have signed the Pledge. Nine

governors have taken the Pledge – but not Oklahoma governor Charles Henry. 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.”

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 a single journalist as one-sided, partisan, and opposed to hearing or presenting alternative viewpoints as Ken Neal.

I wanted you to know that if you are having problems getting the pro-taxpayer point of view in *The Tulsa World* you are not alone. You can still try, though, by sending letters to *The Tulsa World* by e-mail at: letters@tulsaworld.com.

Onward,

Grover G. Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform