

What Happened, Mr. Obama?

BY BILL O'REILLY

Creators Syndicate

It hasn't been a great week for the Obama folks, as the scandal du jour tour has firmly taken hold. Every day it seems another federal agency is exposed as having intimidated, snooped, covered up or gone to Vegas on the taxpayer dime. Zimbabwe is even making fun of us.

On Jan. 21, 2009, in remarks welcoming his new presidential staff, Barack Obama said: "Let me say it as simply as I can: Transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstones of this presidency."

So what happened, $\dot{M}r$. President? Why so much stonewalling?

Let's take this one by one. Obama has to know that nobody is buying the assertion that U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice made a simple error when she blamed the assassination of Ambassador Christopher Stevens

on a spontaneous Muslim uprising caused by a stupid anti-Islamic video. No one believes that was an honest mistake, Mr. President.

So it is on Obama himself to explain the Rice deal
— and also to explain why armed U.S. assets in
Tripoli were not immediately sent to help the ambassador and other Americans under siege in Benghazi. But for eight months, the president has refused to

The IRS chaos is newer, and the president was forced to respond by firing Steve Miller, who ran the agency. But again, how could the powerful IRS get so out of control? Was it loyalty to a liberal president that made agents unfairly target conservatives? We need some clarity here.

On the Associated Press front, all the president has to do is what Attorney General Eric Holder refuses to do: explain in general terms why the Justice Department thought it necessary to secure the phone records of AP reporters; explain why there was an urgency to the investigation. Obama can certainly do that without compromising national security. So why isn't he doing it?

The answer to that question lies in accountability. When has Obama ever been held accountable for anything? The press largely covers for him when mistakes are made, and the public seems to be in a very forgiving mood, especially on economic matters, where, according to some polls, almost half of the voters believe the sluggish economy is George W. Bush's fault.

Sensing blood in the water, the president's ardent opponents will continue to take the scandals as far as they can. The only way this stops is for Obama to take control, admit whatever mistakes were made, explain how and why they happened, and hope the public understands.

If he doesn't do that, his second term could well be a national nightmare.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama.

Timely Injustice In Florida

Leonard

O'REILLY

BY LEONARD PITTS JR. Tribune Media Services

At great political peril, George Ryan did the right

Not to canonize the man. After all, the then-governor of Illinois was later imprisoned on cor-

ruption charges. But that doesn't change the fact that, in 2000, stung that 13 inmates had been exonerated and freed from death row in the previous 23 years, Ryan committed an act of profound moral courage, imposing a moratorium on capital punishment. In 2003, in the waning days of his term, he

death sentence in his state. Recalling what Gov. George Ryan once did provides interesting context as Floridians and death penalty opponents around the country wait to see what Gov. Rick Scott will do.

one-upped himself, commuting every

Florida's chief executive has on his desk awaiting his signature - or, dare we hope, his veto – a piece of legislation called the Timely Justice Act, passed by his state legislature in the apparent belief Florida is not killing people fast

There are 404 people awaiting execution in Florida. We learn from a report by my colleague, Mary Ellen Klas, that 155 of them have been there longer than 20 years, and 10 have been there longer than 35 years. The average wait: 13 years.

The act would require the governor to sign a death warrant within 30 days after a review by the state Supreme Court. Execution would have to take place within 180 days. Additionally, the bill bars attorneys from using certain defense strategies. Granted, it also contains provisions favorable to inmates, including one penalizing lawyers who provide ineffective counsel, but that fig leaf does not mitigate the danger of a bill that, in effect, creates a fast track to the death

This measure, I feel constrained to point out, is brought to you by the same legislative body that brought you the ill-conceived Stand Your Ground law that has lately led people to call Florida the "gunshine state." This latest sop to frontier justice is necessary,

we're told, because, as an editorial by Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers puts it, delayed executions are "an affront to justice – especially for victims' families."

Beg pardon - and I know this will be controversial -· but I'm tired ot hearing wnat we owe victim s iamilies. I speak from no deficit of compassion for them. I am, for goodness sake, a member of a vic-

tim's family, albeit his extended family. R.I.P., Ted McCov. my brother-in-law, who was murdered 20 years ago in Los Angeles.

That said, there's something ... uncomfortably barbarous in this idea that we as a society owe those families blood as recompense for the pain they have endured.

More to the point, there's this: Since the death penalty was reinstated in the mid-'70s, Florida has executed 75 people. But it has exonerated 24, many of whom spent more than a decade on death row. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, Florida has the highest error rate in the

So how can a state that gets it wrong at least one time in every four want to speed up the process? Does no one care about the increased likelihood of executing someone who committed no

We are always called upon to be solicitous of the pain suffered by victims' families. Where is our solicitude for innocent people, wrong place, wrong time, people – usually indigent people of color – who are rushed, perjured, bumbled, erred and "oopsed" onto death row? Why does their pain affect us less? Why are they less deserving of our compassion? Are they not victims, too?

To his lasting credit, Illinois' former governor came to recognize capital punishment as the moral sinkhole it is. It is probably too much to hope Florida's governor will do the same. But at a minimum he must veto this mistake in waiting. The bill his Legislature has sent him imposes something that may indeed be timely.

But it sure as hell is not justice.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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YOUR LETTERS

A Job Well Done

Rhonda Mines, Yankton Chairperson, Parents for a Safe Prom

I would like to pass along a heartfelt "THANK YOU" to everyone who made this year's After-Prom Party a resounding success!

It all starts with the parent volunteers, especially those on the Parent's for a Safe Prom Committee, donated countless hours to organize and work at this year's event. Your efforts produced a party that was

attended and thoroughly enjoyed by approximately 325 Yankton High School students and their guests! This could not have been accomplished without the monetary donations of the junior and senior parents, and the support of the entire community.

Many businesses, organizations and individuals provided support in the form of services, merchandise and monetary donations to provide a safe alternative for students as they celebrated prom this year.

Thank you all so very much!

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Follow-Through **Needed In Military**

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (May 13): A breaking news story in the midst of a flurry of reports on sexual assaults in the military came under the heading "you can't make this stuff up."

The head of the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office was charged with groping the breasts and buttocks of a civilian woman in a parking lot near the Pentagon.

News accounts said the woman was a stranger to Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinsk. The incident sounds like something that might have been dreamed up for a satirical skit making fun of the military's refusal to deal with sexual assault in a serious way. Unfortunately, the allegations were

The reports led to promises from President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel to change the military culture and to consider reforms in the system.

What's imperative now is follow-through.

Similar promises have been made for decades. In 1991, for example, more than 80 women reportedly were groped at the Navy's Tailhook convention. Some women reported articles of clothing were ripped off in a gauntlet in a Las Vegas hotel corridor.

Things might be even worse now. They certainly can't be much better. The Pentagon said this month, based on an anonymous survey, that an estimated 26,000 sexual assaults involving service members occurred, compared to 19,000 the year before.

Only a small percentage of those assaults actually were reported: 3,192 in 2011 and 3,374 in 2012.

One development that might help is that women in the House and Senate seem willing to work in bipartisan fashion to compel improvement. Sen. Deb Fischer, who as a member of the Senate's Armed Services Committee met with Obama on the issue, said Washington's elected officials and the Pentagon need to make sure that the solutions produce effective

Among the possibilities under consideration is putting authority on whether to file charges in sexual assault cases in the hands of military prosecutors, rather than commanders. Hagel also has suggested revoking the authority of commanders to set aside court-martial convictions for sexual assault.

Changes are long overdue to assure victims that their reports of sexual assaults will be handled fairly and effectively.

As Hagel put it, the never-ending scandals show the military "may be nearing a stage where the frequency of this crime and a perception that there is tolerance of it could very well undermine our ability to effectively carry out the mission and to recruit and retain the good people we need.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The PRESS & DAKOTAN encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & **DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or busi-

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, May 20, the 140th day of 2013. There are 225 days left in the

Today's Highlight in History: On May 20, 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field in Long Island, N.Y., aboard the Spirit of St. Louis on his historic solo flight to France.
On this date: In 1712, the original ver-

sion of Alexander Pope's satirical mockheroic poem "The Rape of the Lock" was published anonymously in Lintot's Miscel-

lany.
In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which was intended to encourage settlements west of the Mississippi River by making federal land available for farming.

In 1902, the United States ended a three-year military presence in Cuba as the Republic of Cuba was established under its first elected president, Tomas Estrada

In 1932, Amelia Earhart took off from Newfoundland to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. (Because of weather and equipment problems, Earhart set down in Northern Ireland instead of her

intended destination, France.) In 1939, regular trans-Átlantic mail service began as a Pan American Airways plane, the Yankee Clipper, took off from Port Washington, N.Y., bound for Marseille,

In 1942, during World War II, the Office of Civilian Defense was established. In 1959, nearly 5,000 Japanese-Amer-

icans had their U.S. citizenship restored after renouncing it during World War II. In 1961, a white mob attacked a busload of Freedom Riders in Montgomery,

Ala., prompting the federal government to send in U.S. marshals to restore order. In 1969, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces captured Ap Bia Mountain, referred to as "Hamburger Hill" by the Americans, following one of the bloodiest battles of the

Vietnam War. In 1970, some 100,000 people demonstrated in New York's Wall Street district in support of U.S. policy in Vietnam and Cam-

In 1988, Laurie Dann, 30, walked into a Winnetka, III., elementary school classroom, where she shot to death 8-year-old Nicholas Corwin and wounded several other children. After wounding a young man at his home, Dann took her own life.

In 1993, an estimated 93 million people tuned in for the final first-run episode of the sitcom "Cheers" on NBC. Ten years ago: The Bush administra-

tion, concerned that a wave of attacks

overseas could spread to the United States, raised the terrorism alert level to orange. The United States banned all beef imports from Canada after a lone case of mad cow disease was discovered in the heart of Canada's cattle country

Five years ago: Sen. Edward Kennedy was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor; some experts gave the Massachusetts Democrat less than a year to live. (Kennedy died in August 2009.) Hillary Rodham Clinton defeated Barack Obama in the Kentucky Democratic primary, while Obama won in Oregon. President Jimmy Carter's White House chief of staff, Hamil-Olympic gold medal figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi and her professional dance part-ner, Mark Ballas, won ABC's "Dancing with

One year ago: A two-day NATO summit hosted by President Barack Obama opened in Chicago; the allies declared the end of the long and unpopular Afghanistan war was in sight even as they struggled to hold their fighting force together in the face of dwindling patience and shaky unity Thousands of protesters marched through downtown Chicago, airing grievances about war, climate change and a wide range of other complaints. Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, 60, the only man convicted in connection with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988, died in Tripoli, Libya. Robin Gibb, 62, who along with his brothers Maurice and Barry, defined the disco era as part of the Bee Gees, died in Lon-Today's Birthdays: Actor-author

James McEachin is 83. Actor Anthony Zerbe is 77. Actor David Proval is 71 Singer Joe Cocker is 69. Singer-actress Cher is 67. Actor-comedian Dave Thomas is 64. Rock musician Warren Cann is 61. Former New York Gov. David Paterson is 59. Actor Dean Butler is 57. TV-radio personality Ron Reagan is 55. Rock musician Jane Wiedlin (The Go-Go's) is 55. Actor Bronson Pinchot is 54. Singer Susan Cowsill is 54. Actor John Billingsley is 53. Actor Tony Goldwyn is 53. Singer Nick Heyward is 52. TV personality Ted Allen is 48. Actress Mindy Cohn is 47. Rock musician Tom Gorman (Belly) is 47. Actress Gina Ravera is 47. Actor Timothy Olyphant is 45. Rapper Busta Rhymes is 41. Áctress Daya Vaidya is 40. Rock musician Ryan Martinie is 38. Actor Matt Czuchry is 36. Actress Angela Goethals is 36. Actress-singer Naturi Naughton is 29.

Thought for Today: "Intolerance of am-

biguity is the mark of an authoritarian personality." — Theodor W. Adorno, German philosopher (1903-1969)

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FROM THE BIBLE You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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