



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #6 — OCT. 31, 2011**

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David Graeber of OWS / Rick Perry of Oops!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 31, 2011)

The group has been busy thinking and writing passionately this past weekend (thank you, all!), which doesn't leave me much room to editorialize here today. Gee, I hope that wasn't the plan! Anyway, please allow me get right to the heart of the matter.

Today, learn more about: 1) The man behind the Occupy Wall Street movement; 2) Why Rick Perry is toast; 3) How the Republicans have been wrong about global warming.

"The Man Behind Occupy Wall Street" by Seth Fiegerman, MainStreet

Oct. 28, 2011, (<http://money.msn.com/top-stocks/post.aspx?post=34cc0783-f824-4831-b002-493cfab7c7ba>)

(Forget the labor unions. A University of London anarchist anthropologist is the force behind the protest movement.)

When he's not busy brainstorming how to tear apart and rebuild America's democratic system, David Graeber prefers to think about simpler things, like why we still don't have flying cars.

Graeber, a professor at the University of London and a widely respected anthropologist, has achieved a new level of fame in recent weeks for his early influence on the Occupy Wall Street protests that began in New York City and have since spread around the world. *The Wall Street Journal* declared Graeber to be "the single academic who has done the most to shape the nascent movement," while *Bloomberg Businessweek* declared him to be the "anti-leader" of Occupy Wall Street who generally abstains from the limelight even as his writings, including a new book on the history of debt and the influence of money, serve as an "intellectual frame" for the protesters.

Indeed, when MainStreet managed to reach Graeber by phone, his focus was light-years away from the protests, as he was busy working on an article about his disappointment that the world doesn't yet have technology like flying cars, robots and other futuristic technology that one might have hoped would exist by the 21st century. As Graeber puts it, "I have arrived at a point where I can write about whatever I want."

Flying cars probably aren't the future that protesters are marching for around the world, but then again few can say for sure precisely what the demands of each protester in Manhattan and Oakland and Rome actually are, not even Graeber, who is based in London and shuttles between protests on a fairly regular basis.

"I'm really a conduit, it's not my ideas," he says before going on to explain just how much his ideas are engrained in the movement. Graeber, a long-time anarchist, joined the protests in the very beginning on a whim and quickly set it on a new course to make government less corrupt.

If there is an endgame to the protests, he says it's to "delegitimize" the current political system in order to make way for the kind of radical change that would create a more open and fair democracy unshackled by the interests of big money. Still, to imply the protest is a means to an end misses much of what Graeber considers to be the big point of the movement today.

"I think that our political structures are corrupt and we need to really think about what a democratic society would be like. People are learning how to do it now," Graeber says. "This is more than a protest, it's a camp to debate an alternative civilization."

In this interview, Graeber tells MainStreet how he overhauled the message of Occupy Wall Street, why he wants to keep the list of demands as broad as possible and what he would say to those politicians who want to use the protests to their advantage.

MainStreet: How did you first get involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement?

Graeber: I happened to be in the right place at the right time. There was a meeting on Aug. 2 for a general assembly to plan the Occupy Wall Street action based on an idea thrown out by *Adbusters*. Me and some friends showed up at this movement and sure enough there was a workers rally and we thought it was stupid. We said, 'Let's not play along, let's see if we can have a real general assembly.' So we started tapping people on the shoulder asking if they wanted to do a real general assembly and my friend jumped on stage saying we need to have a real general assembly and they chased her off. There was a tug-of-war, eventually we formed a circle, but it was back and forth and finally after a couple hours we managed to bring everyone away from their meeting into our meeting.

At that point, we decided on working by consensus process and we formed working groups and we decided to meet regularly afterwards. Then a couple days later we came up with the idea to call ourselves the 99% movement. I remember being the first to suggest this and was definitely the first to put it out on a list, though it was probably floating around at the time. That was really my key involvement.

MS: What was the movement like before you took control of it that day in terms of its goals and strategy?

Graeber: I think the coalition showed up on Aug. 2 and said they would do a rally

and then show up on Wall Street with a list of demands that were total boiler plate — a massive jobs program, an end to oppression, money for us not for whatever. They were nice people, but it wasn't very radical, just the usual demands.

Adbusters, when they originally threw the idea out there, they were basically marketing guys who changed sides. They thought like marketers and one of their schticks was to come up with one single demand. That makes perfect sense from a marketing perspective, but it doesn't make sense from an organizing perspective. You need to organize people around a list of grievances.

MS: Obviously, many have criticized the movement for not putting out a single demand or list of demands. If the incentive to keep it vague was to make it easier for people to join the movement, why not make the message more specific now that the protests have gained steam?

Graeber: We don't want to give up the broad-based appeal. I do think every Occupy group has brainstorming groups coming up with this stuff, so there is a very long process of how we are going to come up with alternative visions democratically. That's being done. But people have been trying to put out demands and protest since the 2008 collapse and no one shows up. We say the system is f—ed and suddenly we get hundreds of thousands of people.

I think that people are much more interested in radical change. People really don't like the way things are arranged now. Yes, they have to actually get food for their children and that's a priority and if there is an immediate [political] measure that can do that then they want it, but there is an anger at the way things are structured. It's not a matter of how far people want to go as it is how far people think they can go.

MS: Given that, is there any issue you think the Occupy Wall Street protesters should avoid talking about, or is everything fair game?

Graeber: Antisemitic banking conspiracies and pretty much anything that's racist or sexist. Basic human decency applies. There are certain times that people say something that is offensive and people start repeating it in the human microphone. But we have working groups on anything else, where you can discuss monetary reform, where you can discuss transgender issues. It's a community with all sorts of concerns.

MS: You seem to have a clearer sense of the purpose of these protests than most and you're certainly credited enough as being the architect behind them, so why not take charge of the movement more?

Graeber: I didn't want to do press stuff in the beginning because I was involved with promoting my book, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, and it seemed like a conflict of interest. We didn't have demands, and I had this book about debt, and I didn't want to make it seem like that's what we were pushing for. But I did do a lot of work with facilitation — facilitating the first really long meeting at Tompkins Square Park, working with the outreach committee, getting together a training group for legal and medical training.

MS: And what about now? Clearly you are willing to do more media appearances, why not take your place as the face of the movement?

Graeber: I think the movement has many faces and that's as it should be. Sure, I'll be one of them, but when people ask, 'Was I one of the creators of OWS?' I say, 'Yeah, me and 100 other people.' It's the same with being a spokesman. I don't think I'm in any kind of privileged position. The last time I was in Zuccotti Park was 10 days ago, though I was in Austin [Texas] just a few days ago.

MS: Does it bother you, then, to see celebrities like Michael Moore and Cornel West appear front and center at many of the rallies, garnering much of the media attention?

Graeber: I don't think it's a problem that Michael Moore comes at all and I don't think that he has tried to become the face of the movement, but I do think if someone or some organization like MoveOn.org does try to become the face of it, that's a problem. I think these people are not trying to take advantage, they are trying to help, and I think it did help. NPR didn't cover this at all for the first two weeks and someone asked them why not and they said we would need to have tens of thousands of people, or we'd need to have more violence or we'd need to have celebrities.

MS: Was it really that hard to find a way to get exposure early on?

Graeber: We were in a trap because we knew that if you want media attention, you'd have to break some windows, but none of us wanted to endanger people or engage in violence. We all decided that would not be an appropriate tactic, but we knew the media would not cover us if we didn't. Then the NYPD obliged.

MS: You're referring to the scuffles between cops and protesters, I assume. Do you think the protesters did anything to incite those incidents or was it entirely the fault of the cops?

Graeber: The NYPD was absolutely given orders to intimidate people through random force. The very first day, four people were arrested for chanting in front of a bank. Another time, two people were arrested for writing with chalk on the sidewalk.

MS: Going forward, are you concerned that Democrats — or politicians in general — will make an effort to take over the movement and use it for their own advantage?

Graeber: I'm willing to believe that the Tea Party wasn't just Astroturf in the beginning, that it eventually got subsumed by Republicans. We won't let that happen. But I'll put it this way: If Nancy Pelosi is suddenly inspired to put out a call for a debt jubilee, that would be great. Nobody is going to say that's bad because it's backed by a government we consider to be illegitimate. That won't change our long-term visions. As long as you are on the same path, what we are really arguing for is what's possible so there's no reason we can't work together.

MS: And what exactly is that path you and the other protesters are working towards?

Graeber: That path is one towards autonomous organization. What this movement is about is that even the democratic institutions we do have now have been corrupted by big money, and in the same way our movement would be corrupted if we were subsumed into that same political system. We have to maintain the integrity of this experiment.

"Why Rick Perry Is Really Starting to Annoy Me" by James Carville, CNN

Oct. 28, 2011, (www.cnn.com/2011/10/28/opinion/carville-rick-perry/index.html)

(Editor's note: James Carville is a Democratic strategist who serves as a political contributor for CNN, appearing frequently on CNN's "The Situation Room" as well as other programs on all CNN networks. Carville remains active in Democratic politics and is a party fundraiser.)

(Why Rick Perry's presidential bid is toast.)

When Rick Perry announced he was running for president back on August 13, to tell you the truth I got a little excited.

Now I know what you're thinking — James you are a big Democrat, why on earth would you be excited about Perry running for president? And as Ricky used to tell Lucy — I got some 'splainin to do.

This was my thinking: Perry would get in and he would be a major force. After all he was governor of the state of Texas, great hair, been around politics for a while.

He was the bona fide conservative complete with a pedigree to take on Romney. A giant fight to the death would ensue and they would bludgeon each other half to death — you get the picture.

Honestly, I enjoy nothing more than two Republicans going after each other. Secondly, when politics is interesting it is actually good for me. In case you haven't noticed, I'm a cable television commentator — the more interesting the campaign, the more coverage, the more I'm on TV — you get the drift.

Also, as some of you may be aware of, I've been known to give a speech or two in return for remuneration. The people that plan these sorts of things generally hire more political speakers when politics is interesting and in turn I'll make more money and then John Boehner and Eric Cantor will start referring to me as a job creator.

With the way things are shaping up now, the event planners might be more inclined to take a motivational speaker, a magician, or a square dance troop. Hey Rick — you are costing me airtime and money.

Third, there is a dirty little secret about political people that I'm going to share with you. These political people include operatives, politicians, volunteers, bloviators, journalists, pundits, columnists, staffers — we actually like politics and campaigns.

Maybe you, like me, are a baseball fan. If you are, you want seven games because you actually like baseball. The same goes for politics — if you really love it, you hope for a good race that goes on and you enjoy watching people who are skilled at doing this.

It is literally painful to watch Rick Perry as a candidate. The case could be made that Rick Perry is the worst debater to ever run for president.

As far as I know he can't even give a good speech. His appearance before the uber-right-winged Values Voters Summit was universally trashed.

Not only can he not give an interview, he can't even roll out his stupid flat tax plan. He steps all over it by saying, "Oh by the way, it's optional anyway." He has managed to couple the flat tax with the IRS bureaucracy in one sentence. Way to go Rick.

I'll be blunt with all you Perry supporters, it's time to butter your guy because he's toast. Every day it's a new dumb thing. From birtherism, to convoluted tax policy, to inarticulate attacks, to woeful ignorance and even stupidity on foreign policy (Pakistani country? Please), to placing his wife under such stress that she is lashing out at everything around her.

Not only is Rick Perry utterly incapable of running for president, he can't run his state, and in fact can't meet the basic requirement for any politician — he can't even run his mouth.

As if he hasn't made a big enough fool of himself, he decides to go out and have lunch with Donald Trump and falls for the birther strategy. Good God, can this guy do anything? I guess I should be fair to him, he has shown that he can get the same people he gave contracts to as governor of Texas to contribute to his campaign. Wow, what an achievement.

To tell you the truth, it's gotten so bad people in Louisiana are actually starting to make Texas jokes.

If this thing gets any worse the people in Mississippi will be making Texas jokes — then you've really hit rock bottom.

Rick, you have managed to embarrass yourself and irritate the hell out of me. So I guess you are good at something after all.

PS: See where the media is reporting that Perry is "retooling" his campaign. I think their problem is with the Indian, not the arrow.

"Skeptic Finds He Now Agrees Global Warming Is Real" by Seth Borenstein, AP

Oct. 30, 2011, (<http://news.yahoo.com/skeptic-finds-now-agrees-global-warming-real-142616605.html>)

(WASHINGTON) A prominent physicist and skeptic of global warming spent two years trying to find out if mainstream climate scientists were wrong. In the end, he determined they were right: Temperatures really are rising rapidly.

The study of the world's surface temperatures by Richard Muller was partially bankrolled by a foundation connected to global warming deniers. He pursued long-held skeptic theories in analyzing the data. He was spurred to action because of "Climategate," a British scandal involving hacked emails of scientists.

Yet he found that the land is 1.6 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) warmer than in the 1950s. Those numbers from Muller, who works at the University of California, Berkeley, and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, match those by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA.

He said he went even further back, studying readings from Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. His ultimate finding of a warming world, to be presented at a conference Monday, is no different from what mainstream climate scientists have been saying for decades.

What's different, and why everyone from opinion columnists to cable TV 's satirical "The Daily Show" is paying attention is who is behind the study.

One-quarter of the \$600,000 to do the research came from the Charles Koch Foundation, whose founder is a major funder of skeptic groups and the conservative tea party movement. The Koch brothers, Charles and David, run a large privately held company involved in oil and other industries, producing sizable greenhouse gas emissions.

Muller's research team carefully examined two chief criticisms by skeptics. One is that weather stations are unreliable; the other is that cities, which create heat islands, were skewing the temperature analysis.

"The skeptics raised valid points and everybody should have been a skeptic two years ago," Muller said in a telephone interview. "And now we have confidence that the temperature rise that had previously been reported had been done without bias."

Muller said that he came into the study "with a proper skepticism," something scientists "should always have. I was somewhat bothered by the fact that there was not enough skepticism" before.

There is no reason now to be a skeptic about steadily increasing temperatures, Muller wrote recently in The Wall Street Journal's editorial pages, a place friendly to climate change skeptics. Muller did not address in his research the cause of global warming. The overwhelming majority of climate scientists say it's man-made from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Nor did his study look at ocean warming, future warming and how much of a threat to mankind climate change might be.

Still, Muller said it makes sense to reduce the carbon dioxide created by fossil fuels.

"Greenhouse gases could have a disastrous impact on the world," he said. Still, he contends that threat is not as proven as the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says it is.

On Monday, Muller was taking his results — four separate papers that are not yet published or peer-reviewed, but will be, he says — to a conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, expected to include many prominent skeptics as well as mainstream scientists.

"Of course he'll be welcome," said Petr Chylek of Los Alamos National Lab, a noted skeptic and the conference organizer. "The purpose of our conference is to bring people with different views on climate together, so they can talk and clarify things."

Shawn Lawrence Otto, author of the book *Fool Me Twice* that criticizes science skeptics, said Muller should expect to be harshly treated by global warming deniers. "Now he's considered a traitor. For the skeptic community, this isn't about data or fact. It's about team sports. He's been traded to the Indians. He's playing for the wrong team now."

Muller's study found that skeptics' concerns about poor weather station quality didn't skew the results of his analysis because temperature increases rose similarly in reliable and unreliable weather stations. He also found that while there is an urban heat island effect making cities warmer, rural areas, which are more abundant, are warming, too.

Among many climate scientists, the reaction was somewhat of a yawn.

"After lots of work he found exactly what was already known and accepted in the climate community," said Jerry North, a Texas A&M University atmospheric sciences professor who headed a National Academy of Sciences climate science review in 2006. "I am hoping their study will have a positive impact. But some folks will never change."

Chris Field, a Carnegie Institution scientist who is chief author of an upcoming intergovernmental climate change report, said Muller's study "may help the world's citizens focus less on whether climate change is real and more on smart options for addressing it."

Some of the most noted scientific skeptics are no longer saying the world isn't warming. Instead, they question how much of it is man-made, view it as less a threat and argue it's too expensive to do something about, Otto said.

Skeptical MIT scientist Richard Lindzen said it is a fact and nothing new that global average temperatures have been rising since 1950, as Muller shows. "It's hard to see how any serious scientist (skeptical, denier or believer — frequently depending on the exact question) will view it otherwise," he wrote in an email.

In a brief email statement, the Koch Foundation noted that Muller's team didn't examine ocean temperature or the cause of warming and said it will continue to fund such research. "The project is ongoing and entering peer review, and we're proud to support this strong, transparent research," said foundation spokeswoman Tonya Mullins.

The Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature site: <http://www.berkeleyearth.org/index.php>.

Santa Fe climate conference: <http://bit.ly/rQknVi>.

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[Source of original email is unknown. –SteveB]

The economy is so bad that: I received a pre-declined credit card in the mail. CEO's are now playing miniature golf. Exxon-Mobil laid off 25 Congressmen. Angelina Jolie adopted a child from America. Motel Six won't leave the light on anymore. A picture is now only worth 200 words. They renamed Wall Street "WalMart Street". Finally, I called the Suicide Hotline. I got a call center in Pakistan and when I told them I was suicidal, they got all excited, and asked if I could drive a truck.

20111028-01	06:21	Pam	Re: Energy Saving Cooking (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #5)
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What happened to the Aral Sea? I assume it went dry or something.

20111028-03	09:27	SteveB	Re: Energy Saving Cooking (reply to Pam, above)
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Ya, I think they mainly sucked it out. But the mighty Mississippi? All that good water is just going to waste in the ocean. We'll leave the Great Lakes alone for now (except for maybe Lake Ontario).

But, seriously, this water thing is right up there behind energy, resource-wise. I think we're going to need to move a lot of water around, but it's another one of those "not in my backyard" issues (at least, for the source).

[20111028-06](#) 10:06 SteveG Re: Energy Saving Cooking (reply to all, above)

It is kind of interesting out here. Over the years they have made a lot of dams on various rivers to make electricity. Now windmills are all over the place. Some Indian Nations are getting the courts to make some of the dams to be dismantled as they interfere with treaties giving the Native Americans fishing rights. Water is a major issue, just ask Texas. There has been some talk also of building a pipeline to move some of the Great Lake water to the southwest.

[20111028-14](#) 12:25 Art Re: Energy Saving Cooking (reply to all, above)

Longer story (Nat. Geo, Smithsonian, others have great articles) but excessive draw off for irrigation of the rivers feeding water to the Aral Sea has resulted in , yes, it drying up. Almost unbelievable but shows you what tinkering by man can do in incredibly short time. This for those who don't believe man is having any impact on global climate. It's all right there in living color.

[20111028-05](#) 10:05 Pam Politics

Several things:

"Houston, we have a problem." We all know what it is. Except some of us. I heard Andrew Napolitano on the Daily Show say some amazing things. He's written a book—"It's Dangerous to be Right When the Government is Wrong"—in which he apparently defends all things Libertarian. To him government is the big bad wolf, just waiting to rip our freedoms out of our hard-working little hands. But this is what really gets me: Jon Stewart asked him what society should do about the "losers." Napolitano said the free market should sort out the winners and losers, and govt. doesn't have an obligation to bail out the losers. He said people fail sometimes, and they should just get up and try again. Jon S. said that sounded pretty Darwinian, and I certainly agree. For one thing, we're not all either winners or losers; most of us are a mixture of the two, but some are unfortunately shut out from the possibility of success (whatever that is) by circumstance, mental ability, physical ability, bad luck, or unfortunate choices that seemed right at the time (buying a house in the expectation that it would increase in value). I guess we're supposed to kick these folks to the curb and blame them for their own troubles.

When I try to boil down the political differences among Americans to the simplest positions, I come up with: those who believe every individual is responsible for his own destiny, with no help from society, vs. those who believe we are all part of a larger community and have a social contract with each other to create a society that is beneficial to everyone. That doesn't mean everyone should be equal in income or anything else, but it does mean that every citizen should be able to expect certain basic supports from that society, health care, education, and security among them. We help each other, or we go it alone.

So how do we convince those who privilege the individual above all else that "of the people, by the people, and for the people" means we are all included, not just the Donald Trumps and Michael Jordans?

Elizabeth Warren is right (she is SO right) when she says no one gets to the top by himself. (I sure do hope she gets elected to the Senate.) Those of us who lean toward communitarianism (NOT socialism) think about the many people in need; those whose hero is Ayn Rand worry more about the comparatively few cheats who game the system. Some of us view people with compassion, some with suspicion. How do we bridge the gap between them?

I like Art and SteveG's challenge to come up with our own solution to the budget crisis. I'm no economist, so I'll have to rely on common sense (my own, for what it's worth), as will we all, I guess. But we can't do any worse than Congress already has.

I saw the footage of the Iraq vet getting hit in the head. And I definitely saw the police lob tear gas and little bombs at the people trying to help him. OWS needs to get the police on their side. When they start bringing in the National Guard from other parts of the country, we'll know we're in big trouble. That's what they did in Beijing at Tiannamen Square. Troops from the countryside were brought in from rural areas to police the city. The rural troops were suspicious of city folk to begin with, and they were all strangers to each other as well. Local police might have had a different view of things.

Americans have the right to peaceable assembly, and that's that. Fox News is trying to convince the nation that OWS is losing sympathy. One of the things I find most disturbing these days is the popularity of Fox News. Its audience is being brainwashed. I live in the South, so I feel the conservatism that fuels the Right. Scary.

I know Fox has a huge audience, but we shouldn't forget that "majority rules" is not necessarily the way to arrive at the right conclusions. There is something called the "tyranny of the majority" too.

20111028-04	09:49	SteveB	Fw: Lawns
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[Source of original email is unknown. –SteveB]

GOD said: "Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But, all I see are these green rectangles.."

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But, it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it—sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you got for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: *Dumb and Dumber*, Lord. It's a story about...

GOD: Never mind... I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis...

[20111028-07](#) 10:15 Pam Re: Lawns (reply to SteveB, above)

I love this. I have no grass left in my front yard, and I'm working on eliminating it in the back yard too. I have shrubs and flowers, and I do spread pine needles over the bare spots, and it looks really nice, if I do say so myself. I have noticed that more people are getting rid of grass and going "natural." No Chemlawn for me. :-) You can tell a lot about a society by the sort of landscaping it goes in for.

[20111028-08](#) 10:39 SteveB Re: Lawns (reply to Pam, above) & "Perfect Suburban Lawn"

My Dad had this huge yard that I and my two brothers always had to mow. We were well paid—my father was a very fair man—but it was a big job. I always told him he should blacktop all of it and paint it green. I can remember not being able to grasp that this might be kind of expensive...at least he never paved it.

Now that I think about it, maybe this isn't as good as making it into prairie, or some of the things you can do in Florida, or just killing all the stuff like Pam is doing! :-)

Perfect Suburban Lawn

It started even before you moved in
When they were building your new house
And cut down the 100-year-old oaks
To keep the leaves out of your lawn.

Now when the bright dying leaves
From my trees enter your domain
You blow them into my yard
With your noisy gadget.

In the singing spring
How you must hate my dandelions
And their delicate seeds which you poison
To achieve your unmarred grassy perfection.

I don't even know your name, neighbor
Your only contact with me is to complain
About teenagers parking or partying
A beer can or two errantly tossed.

Anal retentive obsessive compulsive
Do you even talk to your children?
I see you mow and rake and spray
Then leave in your golf cart alone.

Your young daughter
Loves to come to my house
Knocking on the front door
Sometimes buck naked, neighbor.

Do your children know your name?
Is your bitch wife kept satisfied?
Do you ever let them so much as step
On your perfect suburban lawn?

©2000 Steven W. Baker

[20111028-09](#) 10:40 SteveG Re: Lawns (reply to SteveB, above)

Dandelion wine is pretty good, easy to make. Fried dandelion blossoms aren't bad either. Grass wine, no, don't think so, at least not that type of grass.

[20111028-10](#) 10:44 SteveB Re: Lawns (reply to SteveG, above)

Have the feds started eliminating the medical grass yet in Washington, like I guess they are in California?

Montana is very liberal with that too, though very, very conservative otherwise. They prescribe it for, now can you believe this, pain! That is such a joke, but hey, if it works...but I guess maybe not much longer.

I don't know why the feds don't just legalize the stuff and make a bunch of tax money...leave people alone...get a lot of these millions we're supporting in prisons out of there.

[20111028-11](#) 11:16 SteveG Re: Lawns (reply to SteveB, above)

Medical marijuana is here and pain is one of the reasons it is prescribed. It seems to be community by community and the script allows you to grow a certain number of plants. Periodically the feds come around and tear up the plants and arrest the people, but as far as I can tell there is no jail time. There also seem to be several commercial growers spread through the vineyards and through the national forests. One field had over 10,000 plants.

I just read an article in the *New York Review of Books* by Jef Maddrick and Frank Portnoy about the desirability of prosecuting at least some of the bankers responsible for our economic collapse. Here's how they conclude:

...if investing institutions and individuals come to believe that bankers cannot be trusted, the underpinnings of the market will be eroded. Without solid, well-functioning markets, the economy cannot adequately and efficiently allocate capital to high-valued uses and create jobs. Lack of ethics and corrupt behavior will channel the nation's resources to uses that are wasteful and unproductive, as they arguably have for several decades now as too many unethical practices have gone unchallenged.

After the Great Depression, things were shaken up. FDIC came in; banks were split up according to function, and I don't know what else. Steps were taken. We need to take steps now to restore people's confidence, steps that I'm sure will not please Wall Street, the big banks, or the lobbyists. One thing I've thought about is the way ALL of us are exposed to the vagaries of the market, through pension funds if nothing else. Didn't it used to be that you could save your money, put it in the bank where it would earn a set amount of interest and be safe? People would save up for things and know their money would be there when they needed it. People who wanted to take risks and possibly make more were free to do so, but they didn't affect the savers. I am a saver. I am not rich—duh—but I like to know that what I have is what I have. Nowadays we're told we have to invest if we have any hope of a comfortable retirement. People are told to invest, as if it were a prudent, safe thing to do. Remember those grainy, old-timey ads for E. F. Hutton or whatever it was? I know business needs capital, but does it really need to come from some little old lady's nest egg in Florida?

Here's what I'd do first. Split the banks—like they used to be. Let the investment banks go off on their own, and let regular banks be safe places for deposits and savings. Speculation is a fever; it's contagious, so we need to isolate it. Second, tax all financial transactions and eliminate those automatic, computer-generated activities that make the market bounce around all over the place. All this volatility makes me seasick. My husband's portfolio goes up and down like a roller coaster. Third, force, or strongly encourage, corporations with huge reserves to invest a certain percentage of that money in something that contributes to social well-being, like sustainable energy, education, job training programs, etc. Fourth, tighten up the laws that permit corporations to "hide" money off-shore and force them to pay the taxes they owe by eliminating some of the more ridiculous loopholes. Fifth, massive campaign finance reform. Limit spending by ALL candidates to a reasonable amount. Allow campaigning for ONLY two months before elections. How you'd get around the internet on that one, I don't know, but TV, radio, and print could be controlled. OK, so there's my plan. It's your turn. :-)

But I just thought of one more thing. I laid out five specific things I would do if I were in government—or try to do. I can negotiate them, argue them, explain them, but until someone changes my mind, those are my ideas (gleaned from others, of course). When Obama was campaigning last time, he promised specific things: close Guantanamo. What else?

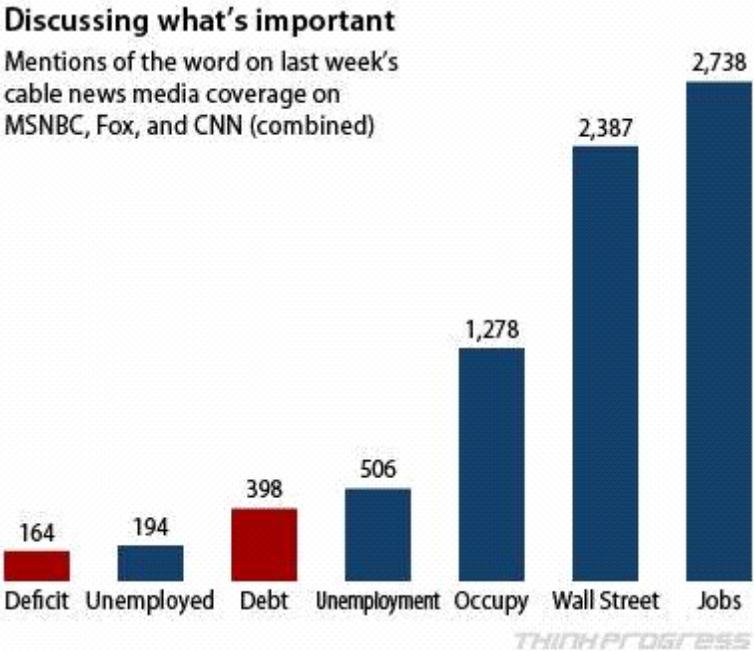
Now when candidates run for office, they go to great lengths (just look at Romney!) to weasel their way around specifics. They work very hard at not saying anything, so as to seduce the most possible voters. Once they're in office, they do what they had in mind all along. What we are left with is a choice among candidates, not among policies. This 9-9-9 and 20% crap is a feeble effort to appear to be saying something specific, but it's obviously a bone thrown to the Republican base. We vote according to how well a candidate speaks or looks or makes jokes or plays the saxophone. We vote for "hope" or "change" or an "outsider" or "values." None of those terms means anything in the context of actual policies about specific things. One thing OWS could do, now that it has the world's attention, is ask some pointed questions of the candidates, publicize those questions, and see what happens. Will the American people demand answers?

From the *New York Review of Books*, Nov. 10, 2011:

The perennial problem of government is not to choose the best rulers, but to hold bad rulers responsible for their failures....Bad philosophers try to improve the human condition by telling the world how to behave. They deceive themselves, imagining that the world will dance to their tune. Good philosophers improve the human condition by asking questions and correcting errors. The method of good philosophy is to explain and understand how the world behaves, not to prescribe. —Freeman Dyson

"How Occupy Has Shifted the National Debate" by Cory Doctorow, BoingBing

Oct 28, 2011, (<http://boingboing.net/2011/10/28/how-occupy-has-shifted-the-national-debate.html>)



Prior to Occupy Wall Street, the dominant narrative in US politics was about debt and deficit reduction, and the attendant austerity measures that entailed. A study of keywords from network newscasts shows that the national policy discussion has shifted in the wake of the Occupy demonstrations, with an increased emphasis on unemployment and fairness (this shift is also visible in print media).

The debt/deficit discussion was fueled by organizations like *Peterson's Fiscal Times*, funded by hyper-rich individuals to promote an economic ideology grounded in cuts to social programs.

This sea-change can't be attributed only to the Occupy movement – it also correlates with the White House's "pivot" toward jobs and the economy – but there is no doubt that Occupy Wall Street has played a major role in bringing attention to the plight of working America. Even House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., acknowledged the occupiers' grievances when his office announced that he would be giving an address "about income disparity and how Republicans believe the government could help fix it." One would be naïve to believe Cantor would ever support such measures, but it nonetheless marked a dramatic departure from the GOP's usual class-war stance. (Cantor later canceled the speech when he learned he would be greeted by protesters.)

Please add this to the blog. When exposed to rational scrutiny, the legislation is fatally flawed and Americans are registering increasing distaste for Obamacare.

If the Democrats would have allowed discussion and debate, maybe this wouldn't have happened...wasted time, wasted money and bad law. Instead, they refused to allow any Republican participation, refused to permit any amendments to even be offered. They blocked out alternative views and then blamed the Republicans for not rolling over and voting for a bad bill.

"U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law: Poll" by Alina Selyukh, TownHall

Reuters | Oct 28, 2011, (http://townhall.com/news/politics-elections/2011/10/28/us_support_waning_for_obama_healthcare_law_poll)

Americans' opinion of President Barack Obama's healthcare reform in October reached its lowest point since the law passed in March 2010, according to a monthly poll by the non-profit, non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

The view of the law has been roughly evenly split since its passage, but in October 51 percent said they had an unfavorable opinion, while 34 percent said their opinion was favorable, poll results released on Friday showed.

In September, the split was 43 percent to 41 percent. And October's gap is closest to the one the poll tracked in July 2010, when the division was 50 percent to 35 percent.

The gap widened largely because the law appeared to be falling out of favor with Democrats, whose support dropped to its lowest point of 52 percent from 65 percent in September.

Although Democrats were still much likelier to view the law favorably than Republicans or independents, the percentage of Democrats who said they and their families were better off under the healthcare law dropped significantly to 27 percent in October from 43 percent in September.

As Republican candidates are gearing up in the effort to unseat Obama in 2012, the healthcare law has become one of the major sticking points and Mitt Romney's campaign has fielded shots at his own healthcare law in Massachusetts that, his opponents argue, closely mirrors Obama's.

The Kaiser poll in October found that almost three-quarters of Americans and about 70 percent of likely Republican primary voters didn't know enough about former Massachusetts Governor Romney's law to form an opinion about it, judge its effectiveness or compare it to Obama's.

The Kaiser Health Tracking Poll surveyed a nationally representative random sample of 1,223 Americans 18 and older between October 13 and 18 through telephone interviews.

How many people can really say they understand the new medical insurance law? How many can really understand their own current coverage? Even with the new law we have a minimum of 50 different state laws that determine for each state how insurance companies operate within their boundaries – I am uncertain if there is a separate set of laws that cover Washington, D.C. I have been 10 months fighting with one insurance company and one provider to get two claims processed correctly. The provider states there are too many insurance plans for them to keep track of and after a certain point refuses to work on the claims. The insurance company subcontracted with another insurance company to cover my claims because the insurance originated in Indiana and I moved to Washington State. One claim was finally resolved after 2 appeals and the 2nd is in the process of the first appeal – all because of confusion and misunderstandings of the process of getting claims paid properly. Until there is a

single payer system and lobbying is removed from the insurance legislation all of us are at risk in our medical coverage.

20111029-01	00:06	Dale	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to SteveG, above)
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Your opening statement says it all. The disgraceful way the legislation was introduced and rammed through, without virtually any of the lawmakers understanding what was in the bill and the ramifications...very sad. THIS behavior is what earns Congress low marks with the public and created much of the rancor between parties.

There are barrels of (liberal) ink being spent on trying to spin that the GOP is obstructionist. There are good reasons for stopping bad laws from being passed. Many of us are happy that failed Obama policy is not being perpetuated.

As much as the Freshman Tea Party advocates are castigated, they are responsible for one very important improvement — the elimination of Earmarks. I haven't seen much appreciation being offered up, but this is exactly the kind of reform most of you have advocated. How about acknowledging that it hadn't happened and wouldn't have happened without the Tea Party forcing acceptance by the Old Guard of both parties.

It's time to suck it up and admit it.

20111029-02	11:03	Pam	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Dale, above)
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I have read that OWS is making overtures to the Tea Party. Both are disgruntled with the status quo. Politics makes strange bedfellows, eh? If the Tea Party put the kaibosh on earmarks, good for them. We don't hate them for their GOOD ideas. There's plenty else to object to.

Dale, you've raised two important issues, and—wouldn't you know?— I'd like to respond. I agree that the whole health care debate in this country has been mangled since the 90s and Hillary's leaving doctors out of the closed-door discussions. Obama moved in the right direction and enacted some good policies: youth stay on parents' plan until age 26, and so on. But, much as I follow this issue, I have never had a clear picture of what Obamacare does exactly. There's talk of various ways of getting insurance, but no suggestion of eliminating the plethora of insurance companies that choke the present system. The truth is, there are too many layers and too much paperwork. A single payer would eliminate all of that. I wrote in an earlier post that my idea would be to divide the country up into manageable quadrants with each in charge of administering its own plan, consistent with all the other quadrants. I'd even go so far as to put doctors on salary and ease the pressure to see more patients and prescribe more tests than are reasonable. Give them a good salary (in Canada most doctors earn about as much as a tenured college professor), give them bonuses somehow, but let them be doctors, not businessmen. I would really like to hear what doctors themselves have to say. Howard Dean is the only one who comes to mind who has spoken out in a big way. I'd like to ask them what they need to do the job they want to do. Is it more equipment, more access to big hospitals, more time to spend with patients? I've only looked at this from a patient's point of view, and from where I stand there is a lot to be desired, mostly in regards to insurance.

I don't believe anyone can deny that the Republicans have been obstructionist. Just ask Mitch McConnell. If Obama suggests it, the Republicans shoot it down, even when they've supported it in the past—whatever that might be. You can all think of examples. But let's set that aside and stop the "he said" "she said." What kind of system would be best? One that brings down costs (greatly reduce bureaucracy and the endless paperwork), emphasizes preventive care and wellness, provides universal coverage, and offers a predictable salary structure for physicians that doesn't overburden doctors. I've never understood HMOs, but everything I've heard about them has been bad. The three programs that do seem to work are Kaiser Permanente in California, the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, and the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. One could perhaps include the Barnes Clinic in St. Louis and the one in Texas—starts with an A (Anderson?) Let's look at Sweden, Canada, France. For all our Europhobia, we could learn something from them. They went one way after WW II, we went another. I'd rather be old and sick in Holland

than here. I'm not advocating "socialized medicine," whatever that is, but we need something a heck of a lot simpler, more inclusive, and more efficient than what we have now.

Some organizations work well, some don't. The Guggenheim Foundation, for example, functions professionally and smoothly. Steve G's insurance companies obviously do not. We need good people in charge, good rules and regulations, and patients given priority. Insurance companies are out to make money. That's a huge problem right there. Poor Obama keeps trying to make incremental changes, which only confuses people and makes things more complicated. Here's an idea. How about having various groups (political parties, doctors, patients, the AARP) propose their own health plan to the American people, then have a referendum on which policy most people like better. Plans without epithets applied (socialist, job killer, death panels), simply plans that the ordinary Joe can wrap his head around. Does anyone at all believe anyone would vote for our present system—except the insurance companies? If Obamacare is losing public support, it's because it hasn't been explained clearly and simply enough and, most importantly, sold to the American people. More people know what's in Budweiser than in Obamacare.

I'll respond to Dale's other argument in a separate post.

20111029-13	14:52	Pam	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Dale, above)
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Well, Dale, after disagreeing with a bunch of what you have to say, I find myself agreeing with just about everything you say here. We do need to scrap the Rube Goldberg contraption we call health care and design a new, sleek, efficient, fair system that pays doctors fairly, treats all patients equally (i.e., covers ALL), and drastically cuts down on paperwork and bureaucracy. I don't see health insurance companies as they work today having a place in this new system. We need to cut out the middle-men and get insurance co. employees out of the business of making decisions in place of doctors. Single-payer. Maybe if I say it often enough, it will sink in.

I never used to support term limits, because I thought politicians should be "professionals." I have changed my mind. (It is possible to change one's mind. I have changed mine on a number of issues.) Back in ancient Greece, every citizen (adult, free male) was required to serve in the government. They were chosen by lot and served for one year. I believe the generals served longer, but I'm hazy on that. Of course, all those men had nothing to do but make sure their slaves were doing their jobs and sit around all day discussing everything under the sun. I'm not saying we should do anything like that. But I do think a "citizen" government would be preferable to the professionals we have now, whose main goal in life is to be re-elected. Four years for Pres. with a possibility of four more is OK. The House and Senate could be, say, three to five years, then over and out. I don't know how I'd organize it, but I have come to see that term limits just might be a good thing. You don't have to be a Senator to have influence. Just look at Robert Reich or Andrew Sullivan or David Brooks. They have influence AND they speak/write in a way that is straightforward and unambiguous—unlike our mealy-mouthed politicians. Let people go into government to serve—like joining the Peace Corps—not to enrich themselves with wealth and power.

20111029-04	12:22	Art	Re: "Why the House Republicans Are Right to Oppose Tax Increases" (reply to Dale, above)
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You need to read legislative proposals from the tea talkers more carefully. They eliminated the use of the word earmarks, not the earmarks. Somewhere I have a few good examples of the new tea talkers earmarks. Same old game, just a new name.

20111029-03	11:49	SteveG	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to all, above)
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I also questioned how many people really understand their current insurance policy, which most do not. They do understand what it costs them per month or pay period, but beyond that very little is understood. Even membership representatives of insurance companies understand very little of the insurance coverage. I say this after having a dozen or so conversations with insurance companies over the past few months. Further, providers of

medical services have little understanding or patience to understand medical insurance. Unless one deals with it day in day out over an extended period of time insurance is exceptionally difficult to understand. The typical insurance company operates with an average of 15% administrative costs, which is not bad. But compare that to the administrative costs of a single payer system of 2% - Medicare. Again, as long as there are 50 different rules of insurance, the extreme profit motive, and the money lobbyists throw out there all remain the same.

It is time to cease the 9% congressional approval rating and start working toward solving the problems at hand by developing consensus building.

20111029-06	12:32	Art	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to all, above)
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E-mail below I sent a few months ago and this is the one that really pushed me over the edge. For all the whacking at the current administration's health care plan (and the President has said all along it needs more work), the fact is that, as a supposed member of the developed world, we are a disgrace when it come to health care. The facts are all there if you want more, but the current system is a disaster and the real kicker is it also costs a lot more. Would thing even right wingers would cringe at that.

One of the things about being retired is that you have time to actually read and pour over some of the political things that are ongoing. I try not to be too boorish but some things just really get to me.

Read today that our new House Majority Leader, Congressman Bonehead, stated in a speech, as he goes off to fix Obamacare, that the USA has the best health care in the world,

I cannot believe that any even remotely thinking political leader can say that in view of the facts. This is well documented from many sources but among them the CIA World Factbook. In point of fact we are 49th in the world in life expectancy, just a few points ahead of Lybia, God help us. Even worse in infant mortality, those that die in the first year, we are behind Cuba not to mention all the rest of the modern industrial world. The United states is 19 out of 19 in "avoidable mortality", in other words things that could be fixed.

Finally and this is the real kicker, we spend 17% of our GDP on healthcare, European nations spend about 8%, yet in virtually every category, their citizens are much healthier.

What worries me is, if Bonehead goes after healthcare really believing ours is the best in the world , what possible good can come out of starting from that kind of flawed logic? Oh, there is one other thing, if you are very rich, medical care in the USA is no so bad. Maybe Bonehead has a more restricted constituency in mind.

20111029-08	13:20	Dale	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Art, above)
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Not to reduce your passionate and well founded writing to just the comment below, I agree with this sentence. It seemed for a brief moment when the subject of health care reform first was introduced, there was some constructive discourse. Unfortunately, it broke down into two battling camps and a "winner, loser" environment. (Notice no finger pointing here.)

If there is genuine interest in developing a policy and approach that the country can rally around, albeit not everyone, but at least most people, I believe it will come about by throwing out the controversial law that was passed and restarting. I would like to see open discussion of a variety of options with the goal of having HEALTH CARE SYSTEM reform, not just insurance reform. This would include reforming legal, pharmaceutical, physician delivery, insurance and the whole system, so that the "right" goals are given priority and rewarded. I also don't think it needs to be in a single, all-encompassing bill, but could be introduced and passed in parts.

I find myself in the massive group of people who don't understand the nuances of health care reform, find the complexity overwhelming and just don't have the time to tackle studying it in depth.

Like everyone else in this forum, I am really tired of dealing with people (in Congress) who are consumed with taking credit or handing out blame. I admire and support those who have strong values and I accept that there are opposing opinions.....I just can't handle the attitude or posture that leads elected officials to ACT more on how it will affect their own personal well being instead of the benefit of the people who elected them. I find myself distrustful of both the Republican and Democratic Congressmen/women, including Obama, who I know are in constant campaign mode. I feel like I have to read between the lines on every speech, every issue they choose to support or decry and every vote they cast. Maybe this is why I favor term limits so much. If being an elected official were a limited, public service function and not a career, my hope is that most/some of this conflict would be reduced.

20111029-16	18:12	SteveG	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Dale, above)
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Tort reform, election reform , election finance reform, term limits, health care system reform, insurance reform, etc. All great ideas that have been parts of some rhetoric or another by Democrats and Republicans for 60 some years. It all isn't going to happen, no matter how long we discuss it as long as our government is for sale to the highest bidding lobbyist. That isn't going to change in the near future either.

20111029-17	19:30	Art	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Dale, above)
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Dale, Hard to argue with your train of logic.

Then it comes to fourth grade finger pointed : "He hit me first!!!". We do know that Cantor and his thugs took the position after the 2008 elections to not cooperate with anything coming from the President's office. That's documented. We also know Slimy McConnell made his infamous statement after 2010 " His primary goal was to make President Obama a one term president". So with that documented evidence at hand, I would say that, even if some olive branches were extended initially, the republics pretty much became the party on "No" early on.

When I was a young Armor Lieutenant in Vietnam I was taught, 'If you get caught in an ambush, do something, even if it's wrong'. In other words the worst thing you can do is sit there being paralyzed. Health care reform is one of the things this nation desperately needs in my opinion. Our system plagued by greed and corruption, is ridiculous. Moreover we have great examples all over the world of health programs that really work. By the way there were a number of bills out there to help the economy but I think everyone underestimated the magnitude of the problem It took FDR 10 years and many think WWII to get us out of the last depression caused by, oh my, wall street greed with margin buying.

So, my take is better the bill which I repeat, the President has said needs more work, than nothing. I think it desperately needs tort reform too, but unlike the republics who sign life binding pledges and generally act like zombies in many ways, the Democrats are a more fractious lot. Many of them did politic to stick in stupid things - remember that bozo from Kansas? So I agree many of Dems are pretty slimy too but right now I'm forced to chose my poison.

What's the fix? Do you really think the Republics have anything positive in mind?

20111029-22	23:31	Dale	Re: "U.S. Support Waning for Obama Health Care Law..." (reply to Art, above)
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I am distracted by the name calling but I will try to pay attention to the points you are making. Respectfully, Dale

If you really want to be fired up about Occupy Wall Street, read this. Brokers are salespeople, not fiduciaries. Their interests are in their own income and their company's profits. If their clients happen to make money too, that's OK. Keep this in mind as you get the figures on how much they make.

"Morgan Stanley Smith Barney Said to Change Broker Pay Structure" by Michael J. Moore, *Businessweek*

Oct. 25, 2011, (<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-10-25/morgan-stanley-smith-barney-said-to-change-broker-pay-structure.html>)

Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, the world's largest brokerage, plans to adjust its compensation structure to boost profitability, according to a person familiar with the discussions.

The new pay policies are set to go into effect in 2012, said the person, who declined to be identified because compensation decisions aren't public. The New York-based firm is raising the minimum amount of revenue a broker must generate to avoid pay cuts to \$300,000 from \$250,000, the person said.

The plan includes bonuses aimed at giving financial advisers more incentives to bring in new clients and increase lending to customers. The changes may bring down the division's compensation ratio as President Greg Fleming seeks to achieve Chief Executive Officer James Gorman's goal of a pretax profit margin of more than 20 percent at the unit.

"Greg Fleming is very focused on expense discipline, expense management," Morgan Stanley Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat said on a conference call last week. "What he's focused on is reducing the lower productivity FAs and that brings with it some incremental cost savings as well."

Compensation costs amounted to 62 percent of the global wealth management division's net revenue in the first nine months of the year, down from 63 percent in the same period of 2010.

Brokers who produce less than \$300,000 will receive a payout of 20 percent of that revenue, instead of 32 percent or 34 percent, the person said. The average annualized revenue per adviser in the third quarter was \$747,000. The firm is also changing the makeup and vesting schedule of bonuses for employees who have been with the firm a minimum of five years.

Reuters reported the pay changes earlier today.

Financial advisers' bonuses based on revenue production will be reduced by 1 percentage point across the board, the person said. Brokers can earn as much as \$442,500 under new bonuses that pay as much as 0.40 percentage point on new client assets and 0.50 percentage point on new mortgages and other loans sold to customers, according to the person.

Morgan Stanley bought a controlling interest in the joint venture two years ago and has the option to buy the business outright from Citigroup Inc. over the next three years. The division, which Fleming took over in January, had 17,291 advisers and \$1.56 trillion in client assets as of Sept. 30.

The brokerage will operate with a "mid-teens" pretax margin by the first half of 2013 "irrespective of the market," Fleming, 48, said today in an interview on Bloomberg Television with Erik Schatzker. Rising equity markets and higher interest rates may push the margin to 20 percent, he said.

Chew on this for a while. I suppose all the liberal sites didn't mention these statistics. You want facts...you want numbers....there is more to the story than the one spin coming from a liberal news mill.

"Why the House Republicans Are Right to Oppose Tax Increases" by D.J. McGuire, BearingDrift

July 18, 2011, (<http://bearingdrift.com/2011/07/18/why-the-house-republicans-are-right-to-oppose-tax-increases/>)

As the latest attempt to resolve the debt-ceiling issue careens toward its conclusion, the pundits, experts, et al are lamenting the refusal of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives to accept tax increases as part of any debt-ceiling/deficit-reduction deal. The arguments aimed at the GOP have only two problems: history and economics.

Yes, that's harsh, but it's also true. Here's why:

History: This may surprise folks, but permanent tax increases after World War II are actually less than three decades old. Much of the 1940, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s involved tax reductions, tax shifts, and a slew of temporary tax increases. The first structural tax increase since FDR came from none other than Ronald Reagan in 1982. Eight years later, George H. W. Bush agreed to another one. The last of the three came courtesy of Bill Clinton in 1993 (only one, Reagan, dealt with a split Congress, the other two had Congresses wholly controlled by the Democrats).

Reagan and Bush's tax increases are repeatedly cited as the hallmarks of bipartisanship, reason, and common sense. The deficits of the time paled in comparison to our current trillion-dollar-figures (our budget didn't hit 1T until 1987), but they were considered big back then, and Reagan himself – followed by his VP and anointed heir – swallowed hard and accepted some tax increases in order to reduce the deficit. That's the story everyone sees, reads, and hears.

Here's the part they missed: within three years of each tax hike, the deficit rose to record levels. Funny how that epilogue gets cut from the story.

The 1993 tax hike, meanwhile extended the post-recession "slowth" (think what we're experiencing now) for another three years. Only by 1996 did the economy recover to a pre-recession state. The next year, Clinton and the Republican Congress agreed to the second of four major tax cuts in thirty years (1981, 2001, and 2003 being the other three) and the only one to be accompanied by spending cuts. The next four years saw the only federal budget surpluses in four decades.

So how did tax increase lead to record deficits two out of three times while a tax cut preceded a surplus boomlet? That goes to the economics. First off, we need to realize the importance the economy has on tax revenue. I did a quick regression on revenue and economic growth since Fiscal Year 1983 (when Reagan's tax hike took effect), and I found that for each % of GDP growth in Year X, revenue rose 0.38% of GDP in Year X+1. That means a policy that reduces GDP growth by a 1% would in the current economy cost Washington \$759 billion in revenue over the next ten years. So clearly, the economy has a tremendous effect on the federal revenues.

The question becomes how best to go forward from there. In the Old Keynesian model, tax increases are always better than spending cuts, because the tax multiplier is by theory lower than the government spending multiplier. However, those multipliers are coming into serious question these days. Numerous economists are putting the "multiplier" at less than 1 (making it an actual divider) and some even have it at zero. Thus, spending hikes have been found to be less effective – and spending cuts less damaging – than previously believed.

Meanwhile, on the tax side of the ledger, the supply-side revolution has forced economists to see both sides of the aggregate economy (instead of relentlessly focusing on demand, as Keynesians do). Tax reductions done properly can increase capital, and thus grow the economy without inflationary pressures by increasing aggregate supply. Thus any effect on aggregate demand that comes from spending reductions is counter by demand and supply increases from the tax cuts. Thus the economy can grow while government shrinks and the budget balance is initially unaffected, and the resulting growth can lead to increased revenue.

In certain cases, that increased revenue could cover some spending increases, or even the initial lost revenue from the tax cuts (thus was born the tax-cuts-pay-for-themselves argument, which was meant only for certain tax rate reductions by themselves, but ended up being used to hide spending hikes along with tax reductions).

Unfortunately, only once was this tax-and-spending-cut model adopted: in 1997. That surpluses followed for four years should have made its superiority clear. Sadly, it did not.

In fact, the lack of spending cuts is the where history and economics come together to explain why opposing tax increases now is the right idea – the spending cuts promised in 1982 and 1990 never materialized, while the reductions for 1993 were replaced in 1995 by the Republican Congress' own plans to balance the budget and the eventual 1997 deal.

So, to recap, tax increases have been tried three times in 30 years: twice, they led to broken spending-cut promises and record deficits, and the third set of reductions were scrapped by a new Congress (albeit in favor of other cuts). Meanwhile the tax cuts of 1981 were followed by the 1982 hike, and the 2001-3 set of reductions came with massive spending hikes that at the time were records.

The one time spending reductions without tax increases were enacted, they actually came to fruition and led to our only budget surpluses since 1970. That should be the lesson learned today. Unfortunately, it appears that, for now, only the House Republicans have learned it.

20111029-05	12:31	Dale	"The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics"
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These are not my words, but I would ask that you give them serious consideration. They come from a "moderate" website, one given to looking at both sides of the argument. But for the threat to the debt ceiling, the need for budget cutting and entitlement reform would not even be in the political debate at all.

"The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" by Logan Penza, The Moderate Voice

Aug. 9, 2011, (<http://themoderatevoice.com/119194/the-case-in-favor-of-the-tea-party-budget-tactics/>)

Keith Hennessey injects something that has been missing from the debate over the debt ceiling negotiations and their aftermath — the argument in favor of the "Tea Party's" tactics. I don't agree with all of it, but it is far better than the common practice of just assuming stupidity and/or evil as the explanation for every policy disagreement.

Particularly strong is Hennessey's "necessary" segment, where he argues that but for the threat to the debt ceiling, the need for budget cutting and entitlement reform would not even be in the political debate at all.

The President's key implicit and false assumption is that deficit reduction would have been enacted without this legislative threat. He argues that, since both sides agree on the need to reduce the deficit, the threat was unnecessary.

Let's review recent history:

1. In January the President's State of the Union address focused on increasing government "investment."
2. The President offered his second budget speech only after House Republicans passed the Ryan budget. He claimed to match Republicans' \$4 T of deficit reduction, but later conceded that he was proposing \$2.7 T over the same timeframe. He still has not provided scorable policy specifics.
3. The Senate Democratic majority never began the budget process, providing no venue for negotiations with the House Republicans.

4. The President began his negotiations with the Speaker only after Republican leaders made clear that a debt limit increase must be accompanied by equal or greater spending cuts.

Had Congressional Republicans not taken a clean debt limit increase hostage, there is no way Washington would have [promised to] cut [future] discretionary spending as much as it just did.

The legislative threat was necessary to achieve spending cuts and deficit reduction.

The fact is that congressional Democrats have, ever since seizing control of Congress in 2007, avoided using the budget process in favor of ad hoc continuing resolutions and special budget bills. As a result, those who are concerned about the runaway fiscal train have been systematically denied any tools to even have that debate at all without resorting the extraordinary measures like the debt ceiling.

Maybe the debt ceiling was the wrong vehicle for that debate, but congressional Democrats made it so it was the only vehicle in the garage at all."

20111029-07	12:40	Art	Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Dale, above)
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Not sure I can buy this logic. The fact is the Administration was/is facing an economic crises of epic proportions. Main focus has been and should be on righting the economy and getting folks back to work. The real fact also is the President offered one heck of a deal this past summer of 3 dollars in cuts for 1 dollar of taxing the super rich. If the republics really cared about the country and the economy they would have agreed but that would have made the President look good and they can't have that.

Then to have the tea types challenge the debt ceiling to fund programs already approved by Congress was the height of irresponsibility.

20111029-09	13:35	Dale	Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Art, above)
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Art, you have dangled a hook that is too hard to pass up.

One could argue that the height of irresponsibility was to put the needs of the public behind the self-interest of the Democratic elected officials. Instead of immediately focusing on "...an economic crisis of epic proportions", the President and both houses run by the Democratic party chose to go for the glory of what they mistakenly thought would be a legacy creating bill, resulting in government take-over of health care. The image of FDR-like fame was what they sought, while the economy went further into the tank. Well they created a "New Deal" alright. A New Deal of massive unemployment, deficits to be paid by future generations and a totally stagnant business sector. That's either irresponsibility or incompetence. Or both.

20111029-12	14:29	Pam	Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Dale, above)
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The Democrats "seized" Congress? I thought it was called, "being elected."

20111029-15	17:53	Dale	Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Pam, above)
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"Not my words." The voters made a mistake and now recognize it. In a sense, they did "seize" control once they were elected and shut out discussion of opposing views. That was his point.

[20111029-14](#) 15:14 Pam Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Dale, above)

I wonder why FDR enjoys such fame? Oh, I know. He instituted Social Security, income tax, the WPA, the CCC, restored the nation's confidence, and probably saved us from revolution. There has to be a balance of power between business and government. I have yet to see a time when our government had too much power (show me evidence and I'll concede this point, but only if you go back before the Bush years), but when business rules, we have had massive social disruption, unemployment, unfair wealth distribution, and depressions. We've seen anti-trust laws enacted and an end to monopolies and unfair competition. We've seen the FDA, the FAA, the Environmental Protection Act, the FDIC, Food Stamps, WIC programs, school lunch programs, and more. None of those was the doing of business interests. Show me an example of an altruistic act undertaken by business that was voluntary. I don't trust the government we have now (and have had for a decade), but I trust the idea of democratic government. I don't trust the profit motive. I know that the desire for profit leads to research and development, and that's a good thing. But when big business and finance are as unregulated and monolithic as they are today, I see nothing good coming out of it.

[20111030-01](#) 11:41 Pam Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Dale, above)

I assumed you quoted it because you agreed with it. Isn't it funny how the Democrats blame the Republicans for obstruction, and the Republicans do the same with the Democrats. I'll go on the record, saying the Republicans are worse, but let's agree (OK?) that all of Washington is a bunch of snarling vipers. I think the reason the Democratic Congress suffered such a "shellacking" is because people were fed up with government in general. The truth is the country has not been better off now that the Republicans are in. People are still angry. My guess (hope) is that the current crop will, well, come a cropper. I am always amazed when people vote against their own best interests. The rich never do, but the lower-income folks often vote in ways that don't make sense—from THEIR point of view. Propaganda is alive and well.

[20111029-20](#) 19:47 Art Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Dale, above)

Come on Dale. And this batch of republicans haven't done that? Bonehead's statement that tax increases are not to be discussed is evidence enough. What kind of deficit discussion is that?

[20111029-21](#) 19:48 Dale Re: "The Case in Favor of the 'Tea Party' Budget Tactics" (reply to Art, above)

Touché. Both parties and their respective leaders have used the same lame tactics.

[20111029-10](#) 13:42 Larry Fw: "To All My Values Employees"

This came from an old friend and classmate of mine. I googled the company and the man who wrote this.....

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

"Michael A. Crowley, PE is the owner of Crowley & Associates, Inc. and was President and an owner of Crowley, Crisp & Associates, Inc. and Michael A. Crowley, PC. As President of Crowley & Associates, Inc., Mike is a lead designer of water supply, treatment and storage projects, regional sewage lift station design, and residential and commercial site development projects and is responsible for the management of the firm. Mike's industry background includes over 20 years experience in the civil engineering field inclusive of executive level

responsibilities in Marketing and Project Management. Prior to founding Michael A. Crowley, PC, Mike held positions with several engineering firms in North Carolina and Maine. Mike holds a B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering from University of Maine and a Master of Business Administration from Boston College. Mike is a member of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and holds professional registrations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Indiana, Maine, Tennessee, Australia, and Trinidad & Tobago, West Indies. Mike is a native of Norridgewock, Maine. The Crowley family resides in Wake Forest.”
[<http://www.crowley-crisp.com/Principals/tabid/55/Default.aspx>, —SteveB]

To All My Valued Employees,

There have been some rumblings around the office about the future of this company, and more specifically, your job. As you know, the economy has changed for the worse and presents many challenges. However, the good news is this: The economy doesn't pose a threat to your job.

What does threaten your job however, is the changing political landscape in this country. Of course, as your employer, I am forbidden to tell you whom to vote for - it is against the law to discriminate based on political affiliation, race, creed, religion, etc.

Please vote for who you think will serve your interests the best. However, let me tell you some little tidbits of fact which might help you decide what is in your best interest. First, while it is easy to spew rhetoric that casts employers against employees, you have to understand that for every business owner there is a back story.

This back story is often neglected and overshadowed by what you see and hear. Sure, you see me park my Mercedes outside. You saw my big home at last years Christmas party. I'm sure all these flashy icons of luxury conjure up some idealized thoughts about my life. However, what you don't see is the back story.

I started this company 12 years ago. At that time, I lived in a 300 square foot studio apartment for 3 years. My entire living space was converted into an office so I could put forth 100% effort into building a company, which by the way, would eventually employ you.

My diet consisted of Ramen Pride noodles because every dollar I spent went back into this company. I drove a rusty Toyota Corolla with a defective transmission. I didn't have time to date. Often times, I stayed home on weekends, while my friends went out drinking and partying. In fact, I was married to my business — hard work, discipline, and sacrifice.

Meanwhile, my friends got jobs. They worked 40 hours a week and made a modest \$50K a year and spent every dime they earned. They drove flashy cars and lived in expensive homes and wore fancy designer clothes. Instead of hitting Nordstrom's for the latest hot fashion item, I was trolling through the Goodwill store extracting any clothing item that didn't look like it was birthed in the 70's.

My friends refinanced their mortgages and lived a life of luxury. I, however, did not. I put my time, my money, and my life into a business — with a vision that eventually, some day, I too, will be able to afford these luxuries my friends supposedly had.

So, while you physically arrive at the office at 9 am, mentally check in at about noon, and then leave at 5 pm, I don't. There is no "off" button for me. When you leave the office, you are done and you have a weekend all to yourself. I unfortunately do not have the freedom. I eat, ****, and breathe this company every minute of the day. There is no rest. There is no weekend. There is no happy hour. Every day this business is attached to me like a 1 day old baby.

You, of course, only see the fruits of that garden — the nice house, the Mercedes, the vacations... You never realize the back story and the sacrifices I've made. Now, the economy is falling apart and I, the guy that made all the right decisions and saved his money, have to bail out all the people who didn't.

The people that overspent their paychecks suddenly feel entitled to the same luxuries that I earned and sacrificed a decade of my life for. Yes, business ownership has its benefits but the price I've paid is steep and not without wounds. Unfortunately, the cost of running this business, and employing you, is starting to eclipse the threshold of marginal benefit and let me tell you why:

I am being taxed to death and the government thinks I don't pay enough. I have state taxes. Federal taxes. Property taxes. Sales and use taxes. Payroll taxes. Workers compensation taxes. Unemployment taxes. Taxes on taxes. I have to hire a tax man to manage all these taxes and then guess what? I have to pay taxes for employing him. Government mandates and regulations and all the accounting that goes with it, now occupy most of my time. On Oct 15th, I wrote a check to the US Treasury for \$288,000 for quarterly taxes. You know what my "stimulus" check was? Zero. Nada. Zilch.

The question I have is this: Who is stimulating the economy? Me, the guy who has provided 14 people good paying jobs and serves over 2,200,000 people per year with a flourishing business? Or, the single mother sitting at home pregnant with her fourth child waiting for her next welfare check?

Obviously, government feels the latter is the economic stimulus of this country. The fact is, if I deducted (Read: Stole) 50% of your paycheck you'd quit and you wouldn't work here. I mean, why should you? That's nuts. Who wants to get rewarded only 50% of their hard work? Well, I agree which is why your job is in jeopardy. Here is what many of you don't understand .. to stimulate the economy you need to stimulate what runs the economy. Had suddenly government mandated to me that I didn't need to pay taxes, guess what? Instead of depositing that \$288,000 into the Washington black-hole, I would have spent it, hired more employees, and generated substantial economic growth. My employees would have enjoyed the wealth of that tax cut in the form of promotions and better salaries. But you can forget it now.

When you have a comatose man on the verge of death, you don't defibrillate and shock his thumb thinking that will bring him back to life, do you? Or, do you defibrillate his heart? Business is at the heart of America and always has been. To restart it, you must stimulate it, not kill it. Suddenly, the power brokers in Washington believe the mud of America are the essential drivers of the American economic engine.

Nothing could be further from the truth and this is the type of change you can keep. So where am I going with all this? It's quite simple. If any new taxes are levied on me, or my company, my reaction will be swift and simple. I fire you. I fire your co-workers. You can then plead with the government to pay for your mortgage, your SUV, and your child's future. Frankly, it isn't my problem any more. Then, I will close this company down, move to another country, and retire.

You see, I'm done. I'm done with a country that penalizes the productive and gives to the unproductive. My motivation to work and to provide jobs will be destroyed, and with it, will be my citizenship.

While tax cuts to 95% of America sounds great on paper, don't forget the back story: If there is no job, there is no income to tax. A tax cut on zero dollars is zero. So, when you make decision to vote, ask yourself, who understands the economics of business ownership and who doesn't? Whose policies will endanger your job? Answer those questions and you should know who might be the one capable of saving your job. While the media wants to tell you "It's the economy Stupid" I'm telling you it isn't.

If you lose your job, it won't be at the hands of the economy; it will be at the hands of a political hurricane that swept through this country, steamrolled the Constitution, and will have changed its landscape forever. If that happens, you can find me in the South Caribbean sitting on a beach, retired, and with no employees to worry about.

Signed, Your boss, Michael A. Crowley, PE , Crowley, Crisp & Associates, Inc., Professional Engineers, 1906 South Main Street, Suite 122, Wake Forest, NC 27587, Phone: 919.562.8860 x22, Fax: 919.562.8872

[Source of original email unknown. – SteveB]

For all who use Snopes and believe them honest: SNOPEX EXPOSED

I heard years ago that Snopes was a left-wing operation and found it odd that there was absolutely nothing negative to be found about Obama when he was running for President. I should have known that George Soros was behind them too.

Most of us have gone to Snopes for verify information that we were not sure about. Now, come to find out, Snopes is not the paragon of truth we thought it was. I just eliminated them as a source of honesty and integrity.

Please read and pass on to your email friends.

Snopes is heavily financed by George Soros, a huge financial supporter of Obama!

In our Search for the truth department, we find what I have suspected on many occasions. I went to Snopes to check this out and they said it was false and there were no such dockets so I Googled the Supreme Court, typed in Obama-Kagan, and guess what? Yep you got it. Snopes lied. Everyone of those dockets are there. So Here is what I wrote Snopes:

Referencing the article about Elena Kagan and Barack Obama dockets: The information you have posted stating that there were no such cases as claimed and the examples you gave are blatantly false. I went directly to the Supreme Courts website, typed in Obama Kagan and immediately came up with all of the dockets that the article made reference to.. I have long suspected that you really slant things but this revelation is really shocking. You exist behind a veil of half truths and distorted facts.

Hoping you will be honest and forthcoming in the future is probably expecting too much. That being said, if you really didn't know THIS then your investigative reporting is a sham.

Kagan was representing Obama in all the petitions to prove his citizenship. Now she may help rule on them. Folks, this is really ugly. Chicago Politics; and the beat goes on and on and on...

Once again the US Senate sold us out! Well, someone figured out why Obama nominated Elena Kagan for the Supreme Court.... Pull up the Supreme Courts website, go to the docket and search for Obama. Kagan was the Solicitor General for all the suits against him filed with the Supreme Court to show proof of natural born citizenship. He owed her big time. All of the requests were denied of course. They were never heard!

It just keeps getting deeper and deeper, doesn't it? The American people mean nothing any longer. It all comes down to payback time for those who compromised themselves to elect someone that really has no true right to even be there.

Here are some websites of the Supreme Court Docket: When you look up some of these hearings and guess what?? Elena Kagan is the attorney representing Obama!!!

Check out these examples:

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-8857.htm>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-8857.htm>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-6790.htm>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search..aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-6790.htm>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-724.htm>

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=/docketfiles/09-724.htm>

If you are not interested in justice or in truth delete this. However, If you hold sacred the freedoms granted to you by the U.S. Constitution By all means, please PASS IT ON.

[20111029-18](#) 19:43 Art *Starship Troopers*

Ever read *Starship Troopers* by Heinlein? The movie was just silly and the book only slightly less so, but the political premise is a planet that got tired of stupid politicians after one war to many, and took over. Only those who served could vote and they made it very difficult to serve. You had to really want it. Concept was that anyone who went through the Hell of service would probably care about who got elected. They were citizens. Everyone else could practice business etc but not vote.

Nice.

[20111029-19](#) 19:45 SteveB Re: *Starship Troopers* (reply to Art, above)

I too like some of the governmental elements found in sci-fi! In Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, set far, far in the future, men learned, apparently, the lesson of our Founding Fathers, that the best government is the one that can function the least.

In *Ringworld*, by Larry Niven, a far future, incredibly advanced civilization was based on a super-conducting plastic. It allowed huge amounts of energy to be expended on things like floating anti-gravity buildings, etc. The problem was, though, that in their space travels, some ship brought back an alien bacteria that loved to eat the superconducting plastic. End of far future, incredibly advanced civilization.

[20111030-02](#) 17:44 SteveBA "Electric Vehicle, Lithium-Ion Battery Investing for Imbeciles"

Here is an interesting article about the electric cars and the lack of economical feasibility note the peter principle reference. Again it illustrates the Obama misguided moves into green energy.

"Electric Vehicle, Lithium-Ion Battery Investing for Imbeciles" by John Petersen, Seeking Alpha

Oct. 30, 2011, (http://seekingalpha.com/article/303460-electric-vehicle-lithium-ion-battery-investing-for-imbeciles?ifp=0&source=email_authors_alerts)

—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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