



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #13 — NOV. 9, 2011**

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### **Republicans Work (Only) Against Obama Re-Election**

(posted by Art Hotop, Nov. 9, 2011)

"Do-Nothing Republican Congress' Could Sink GOP in 2012" by Robert Creamer, Huffington Post

Nov. 7, 2011, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-creamers/do-nothing-republican-con b 1079569.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-creamers/do-nothing-republican-congress-could-sink-gop-in-2012))

The Republicans in Congress have made a wager. They've bet the political ranch that they will destroy Barack Obama's chances for re-election if they can block his proposals to produce jobs.

In fact, it's the GOP that could lose big when the votes are counted a year from now.

Republicans completely control the House. In the Senate they can use the filibuster to prevent anything from passing.

Last week, for the third time this fall, Republicans successfully blocked Obama's jobs program in the Senate. Of course this came as absolutely no surprise, since Senate Republican Leader told the world earlier this year — in no uncertain terms — that his top legislative priority was to prevent the re-election of the president.

McConnell, and his House counterpart, John Boehner, don't lose a wink of sleep over concerns that their intransigence harms the economic prospects of everyday Americans. In their view, the worse the economy gets, the more likely the voters will be to boot President Obama out of the Oval Office.

But a good case can be made that these guys will end up being too clever by half — that in fact they are providing fuel for precisely the argument that could defeat them in 2012.

McConnell and Boehner are right that it is very hard for an incumbent president to win re-election in a bad economy. And unless something dramatically changes, most Americans won't think much of their own economic circumstances when Election Day rolls around next year.

So next year's election will turn largely on one question: who does the American people hold responsible for what will likely still be a lousy economy?

Republicans are relying on the simple proposition that the guy in charge — the president — is to blame. But every day of intransigence increases the odds that in fact, they themselves will get the rap.

In 1945 Vice President Harry Truman became president when Franklin Roosevelt died in office. After the War, Truman presided over a substantial post-war recession that helped make him "unelectable" in the eyes of most pundits and politicians. GDP dropped by a whopping 12%. His political viability was complicated further when the Democratic base split into three parts. A portion followed Progressive Henry Wallace and much of the Southern Democratic white vote (the south was a Democratic base at the time) supported Strom Thurmond's segregationist Dixiecrat Party. In the April before the election, Truman's overall approval rating in the Gallup poll was just 36%.

But, Truman barnstormed the country, traveling 21,000 miles on a "whistle stop" tour where he decried the "do-nothing Republican Congress." Though the economy began a modest improvement in 1948, no one — but Truman himself — believed he had a chance to defeat Thomas Dewey — a former Governor cut out of the same elite cloth as Mitt Romney. Truman won.

Obama can do exactly the same thing. Even assuming that the economy continues to experience only modest improvements over the next year, the Obama campaign can lay the lack of progress where it belongs — at the feet of the "do-nothing Republican Congress" that is intent on stalling economic recovery for their own political gain.

And where Truman's 1946 recession was largely the result of the post war demobilization, Obama can rightly claim that this economic disaster was the product of precisely the same Republican policies that his opponents intend to re-instate if they regain control of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Not only has the GOP refused to support Democratic measures to put Americans back to work, their alternative "jobs program" features no direct, measurable job creation whatsoever. Instead it relies on the same "trickle down" economic theory that didn't create one net private sector job in the eight years before the Great Recession - and the same unwillingness to rein in the big Wall Street banks that led to the worst financial collapse in 65 years.

But that's not all. Everyone agrees that the Republican House Majority was swept into office last November precisely because of the terrible economy. But instead of job creation, they've busied themselves focusing on trying to defund Planned Parenthood, protecting Americans from the imaginary threat of Sharia Law, and fending off non-existent attack on the use of "In God We Trust." The Republican controlled House hasn't voted on a single job creation measure since John Boehner and his colleagues took power last January.

In the deliberations of the "Super Committee," Republicans have been completely unwilling to give on the fundamental question of whether millionaires should be asked to pay to put America's economic house in order. The view of the Republican leadership is that — in addition to defeating President Obama — their principal mission is to act as guard dogs for the exploding incomes of the top 1%.

In the upcoming fight over the next fiscal year's appropriation bills, there is every indication that the Republicans will demand that riders be attached limiting the power of the EPA and restricting funding for contraception — which surveys show is used by 98% of American women.

Battles like these will do nothing but strengthen the Democratic narrative that the GOP leadership is focusing on bread and circuses for its base, while it intentionally blocks measures that could provide jobs to construction workers, fire fighters, cops, teachers and millions other out-of-work Americans.

Then there is the House schedule. Last week the Boehner team published a House schedule for next year intended to guarantee that very little gets done. The House will be in session only 94 days in all of next year (including many days where votes are postponed until 6PM) and will continue its habit of going into recess virtually every third week. Yet another example of a "do-nothing Republican Congress."

It's no accident, that while the polls show that most officials in the American government have fallen into disrepute for their failure to get the economy moving again, Congressional Republicans win the prize for negative ratings. Gallup shows Obama's approval ratings beginning to edge up — from a very low 38%, up to 43%. Some other polls show it rising to 47%. The average rating from Real Clear Politics currently stands at 45.4%.

Meanwhile, Congressional job approval ranges from 9% to 16%, with a Real Clear Politics average of 12.7%.

The recent Democracy Corps poll shows that favorability for Republicans in Congress trails the Republican Party as a whole, Democrats in Congress, the Democratic Party as a whole, and President Obama.

On the other hand, the president's agenda itself is overwhelmingly popular. His jobs bill is supported by the vast majority of Americans — and becomes more popular the more voters hear about it. When its provisions were explained, 63% offered their support in the October Wall Street Journal/NBC poll. That's why it's so important for the White House to continue pressing Congress to pass the bill as a whole — and to focus on its individual parts.

Funding jobs for teachers, firefighters and cops is very popular. Repairing deteriorating schools is very popular. Building roads, ports and airports is very popular. Providing unemployment benefits for those who are out of work is very popular.

And paying for it all by taxing millionaires and billionaires has the support of two thirds to three fourths of Americans — including a majority of Republicans. An October National Journal poll found 68% of voters support the Democratic proposal for a surtax on millionaires to pay for the jobs bill.

In fact, the whole 99% versus 1% message frame that has dominated the airwaves since everyday people began Occupying Wall Street — is very popular — as are the president's executive actions to improve the economy without Congressional approval.

And what is unpopular? The Republican plan to abolish Medicare and replace it with vouchers - that is really unpopular. In fact, most polls find that 70% of voters oppose cutting Social Security and Medicare to reduce the deficit.

Creating jobs, making the 1% pay their fair share, and protecting Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will be the defining symbolic issues next year — and on every one of them Democrats hold the high political ground and Republicans have to walk through the valley of political death.

Finally, of course, is the matter of whom the Republicans will nominate as an alternative to President Obama. Unfortunately for the GOP, Presidential elections are not always referenda on the incumbent — they are choices between two living, breathing people — and in this case two clearly distinguishable futures for our country.

The conventional wisdom holds that Romney is the Republican's strongest contender. If he is — which I doubt — he is no Rocky Balboa.

There are two lines of attack on Romney that are toxic:

- He clearly has no core values. When voters accuse someone of being a typical "politician" they mean someone is a candidate who has no center—who decides what he believes depending entirely on the political winds. Romney could serve as the dictionary definition of "politician." He has done "one eighties" on everything from abortion rights to health care. He is a political weathervane whose guiding principle is only one thing: what will advance the political career of Mitt Romney? In 2004, immediately before the election, Gallup showed George W. Bush with an approval rating of 48% approval to 47% disapproval — not much different than President Obama enjoys today. But a not very popular Bush won re-election — largely by convincing large numbers of swing voters that John Kerry had no core values, that he was a flip flopper. They succeeded even though Kerry was a war hero and had a strong record of standing up for what he believed. How much easier will it be to convince everyday Americans that Romney has no core values - since he doesn't.
- Romney is the poster boy for the 1%. He feels like the guy who fired your brother-in-law. He is in fact the guy who, some time back, gathered his crowd of young Wall Street hot shots around him after he completed a big deal at Bain Capital and posed for a picture with money dripping from their mouths and pockets and ears. He's a guy who made his fortune dismantling companies and firing workers.

Of course, none of these facts are intended to make Progressives complacent — far from it. None of them guarantees we will win in 2012 — only that we can.

For the first two years of the Obama Administration, Progressives took a lot of ground. There was:

- Health Care for All Americans
- Wall Street Reform
- Avoiding another Great Depression
- Saving a million jobs in the American auto industry
- Expanding Medicaid
- Eliminating Don't Ask Don't Tell
- Expanding Children's Health
- Environmental Reform
- Expanding Labor Rights
- Expanding Civil Liberties
- Equal Pay for Equal Work

Now Obama is ending the War in Iraq.

But last fall the Empire struck back. All of the corporate, special interest money fought back with a vengeance. It fought back because that's the nature of change. The forces of the status quo don't just roll over and play dead. They do everything they can to hang onto their money and power and privilege.

Now we have to hold our ground and prepare a winning counter offensive — and it won't be easy, especially in light of the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that magnifies the power of corporate cash.

But if they win — if America has President Romney or Perry or Cain, Senate Majority Leader McConnell and Speaker Boehner — they have made it crystal clear what they will do. They will return America to the Gilded Age. They will roll back the twentieth century — they will rip apart the entire social contract.

They will privatize Social Security, destroy Medicare, emasculate the labor movement, cut taxes further for corporations and the wealthy. They will create new radical conservative facts on the ground that they hope will entrench conservative power for generations.

But they believe their real key to victory is lack of enthusiasm among Progressives. They believe that Progressives — and many in the Democratic base — will stay home next November.

They will be wrong.

That's because over the next year, the progressive forces in America will rise to the battle. In their own way, the Occupy movement has already shown that Progressives will stand and fight.

They will rise to the battle because they realize that the 2012 election is not just about two people running for President. It is about a moral question. It's about two competing sets of values. It's all about how we see ourselves as a nation — as a society. It's about whether we will be a society based on the precepts of radical conservative social Darwinism, or a society rooted in the progressive values that have always defined the promise of America.

We will not allow them to destroy Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

We will not allow them to destroy the American labor movement.

We will not allow them to destroy the middle class.

We will not allow them to destroy the American dream.

And we will remember a central lesson of history: that before change happens it seems impossible. And after change happens it seems inevitable.

American history — human history — is the story of ever-expanding human freedom. There may be ups and downs, but when you back up from the big chart of history, the trend is up.

I believe that our time is no exception — that next year — in this crossroads election — we will do what is necessary to assure that America once again re-commits herself to create a brighter future for the next generation than those that went before.

That's what the revolutionaries that created this nation did. That's what the soldiers who fought and died to defend it did. That's what the sit-down strikers who created the labor movement did. That's what the freedom riders who fought for civil rights did. And that is precisely what we will do again in 2012.

### **FotM NEWSLETTER #13 (Nov. 9, 2011)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20111109-00</a>		Art	<b>Republicans Work (Only) Against Obama Re-Election</b> by Art ("Do-Nothing Republican Congress' Could Sink GOP in 2012")
<a href="#">20111108-05</a>	22:03	Art	Re: Write to the Super Committee (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #12)
<a href="#">20111108-01</a>	11:49	Pam	The Protestant Work Ethic
<a href="#">20111108-02</a>	17:12	Jim	Jared Diamond
<a href="#">20111108-03</a>	18:22	Jim	Income & Wealth
<a href="#">20111108-04</a>	20:58	SteveG	"Bill Clinton Raps GOP, Obama: End 'Dysfunctional' Politics"

<a href="#">20111108-05</a>	22:03	Art	Re: Write to the Super Committee (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #12)
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And I did. Thanks.

<a href="#">20111108-01</a>	11:49	Pam	The Protestant Work Ethic
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People everywhere are generally so inefficient it's a wonder to me when anything works. SteveB's right; we do forget how much we are able to take for granted; electricity that stays on is maybe the most important. Niall Ferguson was on the "Daily Show" last night, and he said there are six reasons why the West dominates the rest of the world. Let me see if I can remember them all. Representative democracy, the scientific revolution, the work ethic. Shoot, I've lost the other three. The one that struck me most, I guess, was the work ethic one. We can thank the Reformation and the Protestant influence for that. Success was a sign of God's favor, ergo, if you were successful, it must mean God loves you. If you weren't, it was your own fault. Not every culture has that as an underpinning.

<a href="#">20111108-02</a>	17:12	Jim	Jared Diamond
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One of my personal favorite people with thought-provoking ideas is Jared Diamond.

His first big book was *Guns, Germs and Steel* that explored the reasons why the Europeans were in a position to "conquer" the native tribes in North and South America rather than having flotillas of ships from the Western Hemisphere sailing to Europe for conquest. It was made into a series on PBS that some of you may have seen but I would encourage you to read the book as general background material.

His second book was called *Collapse* and was about why societies in the past or present are self-destructing usually by abusing their environment.

There is a very good TED talk by him from the year 2003 shortly after the book came out. When you watch this you will hear a very good summary of our problem today.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/jared\\_diamond\\_on\\_why\\_societies\\_collapse.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/jared_diamond_on_why_societies_collapse.html)

He also has another evolutionary book... *Why Sex is Fun*, if you have extra time.

20111108-03	18:22	Jim	Income & Wealth
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Some of the recent posts have been talking about two different things and blurring the difference. I am talking about income and wealth.

The income tax only taxes current income and not the wealth or assets you have been able to accumulate over the years with income. Of course some times that accumulation is in a form that does provide you with some current income and other times it is things like your house and car that are not directly producing current income, but may affect how you spend your money.

20111108-04	20:58	SteveG	"Bill Clinton Raps GOP, Obama: End 'Dysfunctional' Politics"
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"Bill Clinton Raps GOP, Obama: End 'Dysfunctional' Politics" By Jim Meyers, Newsmax

Nov. 8, 2011, (<http://www.newsmax.com/Headline/bill-clinton-book-obama/2011/11/07/id/417175>)

"I wrote this book because I love my country and I'm concerned about our future," Bill Clinton tells readers of his new book, *Back to Work*.

"We've got to get America back in the future business."

In *Back to Work: Why We Need Smart Government for a Strong Economy* scheduled for publication today, the former president takes President Barack Obama to task on several issues, criticizing his handling of the debt limit and his promotion of nuclear energy.

But he saves his harshest criticism for what he calls the "antigovernment" movement, including the tea party, that seeks to reduce the role of government, cut spending and taxes, and scale back regulations in an effort to stimulate the economy and cut the deficit.

In his post-presidency, Clinton not only has remained a powerful voice within the Democratic Party but also has become popular with Republicans, including many of his former critics. A recent poll found that Clinton's favorability rating stood at 67 percent, his highest rating since leaving office, with his favorability among Republicans at 40 percent.

On economic issues, Clinton's views carry great weight. In the 1990s, he worked with congressional Republicans and presided over a booming economy that saw the creation of more than 22 million new jobs and the longest period of peacetime economic expansion in American history. When he left office, he was the first post-War World II president since Eisenhower to leave the nation with a budget surplus.

In his new book, the former president argues that the government and the private sector — as well as Democrats and Republicans — need to work together to assure a bright future for America.

"I believe the only way we can keep the American Dream alive for all Americans and continue to be the world's leading force for freedom and prosperity, peace and security, is to have both a strong, effective private sector and a strong, effective government that work together to promote an economy of good jobs, rising incomes, increasing exports, and greater energy independence," Clinton writes.

He observes elsewhere: "There remains a lot of space for a real, productive debate, areas in which both Democrats and Republicans could contribute to bipartisan solutions that actually get our country back in the future business."

Clinton criticizes Obama and the Democrats for failing to raise the debt ceiling in November and December 2010, when they still controlled both houses of Congress, leading to a partisan battle over the budget that made the United States look "weak and confused" to the outside world.

It also led to Standard & Poor's downgrading of America's long-term credit rating on the belief that American politics "have become dysfunctional," according to Clinton.

Clinton also takes issue with Obama on nuclear energy.

"The one area where I disagree with the administration on energy policy is in the provision of large loan guarantees to nuclear power," he writes.

The nation needs to consider the "relative economic and energy benefits of other options," he asserts, including solar power and other clean fuel sources.

Clinton explains that he campaigned on behalf of Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections, but was thwarted because Democrats failed to formulate a national message to counter the wave of antigovernment sentiment that swept many Republicans into office.

He also criticizes Obama and the Democrats for not strongly touting the steps they did take to stabilize the U.S. economy, and concedes that the current state of the country is "a mess."

Clinton consistently chides the "antigovernment" forces and argues for a strong role for government, rejecting calls for spending cuts and tax increases.

"Even though I strongly favor a multiyear plan to bring our budget back into balance, if we cut spending or raise taxes a lot when the economy is still weak, it will slow down economic recovery," he states.

The former president offers 46 specific proposals "to increase bank lending and corporate investment, to create more jobs that pay well, and to make sure we have enough people trained to fill them."

Among the proposals: End the "mortgage mess," lower corporate tax rates while reducing credits and deductions, build a 21st-century infrastructure, encourage the creation of new green-technology jobs, and provide disincentives to laying off workers.

Clinton's strongest message, as the title of his book suggests, is the need to put Americans back to work.

"It's heartbreaking," he writes, "to see so many people trapped in a web of enforced idleness, deep debt, and gnawing self-doubt. We have to change that. And we can."

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

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